

News releases - John Rau

Stronger protections for children pass State Parliament

John Rau

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New laws paving the way for more effective working with children checks and greater rights for foster carers and children in care have passed State Parliament.

The *Children's Protection Law Reform (Transitional and Related Amendments) Bill* enables elements of the Government's child protection reform agenda to begin, transitioning to the new *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

The Bill also enables consequential amendments to existing legislation.

It amends the Births Deaths and Marriages Act to allow for a name change of a child under guardianship, at the discretion of the Chief Executive of the Department for Child Protection.

A further consequential amendment will ensure financial or other assistance to be provided to an approved carer of children or young people are secured, including when care continues for children who are 18 years and over.

The transitional arrangements pave the way for the public release of regulations necessary to support the introduction of working with children checks in South Australia.

The current two-tiered system for working with children checks – where currently checks can involve either a national criminal history check or a check through the Screening Unit within the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion – will soon be replaced by a single, centralised process run by DCSI.

People convicted of a prescribed offence, such as murder, will automatically be barred from working with children, regardless of whether they have sought clearance.

Regulations providing more detail on who needs a working with children check will be released for public consultation once they are finalised.

Background

The changes form part of the Government's response to the Nyland Royal Commission, which was delivered to Government in August 2016.

The new laws will have a staged commencement, with the first set expected to commence in February.

Quotes attributable to Child Protection Reform Minister John Rau

These changes represent part of our ongoing reform to child protection that help break the cycle of abuse and better protect those young South Australians who need our support.

Working with children checks are an important measure that can help keep children safe, and these new measures will better ensure employers and volunteer groups have accurate, up-to-date information about people who may be working directly with children.

All of these changes will help contribute to a stronger, more effective child protection system for our State.

Quotes attributable to Education and Child Development Minister Susan Close

For staff, the new laws enable greater ability to act proactively to protect children and young people at risk of further harm.

The Bill respects the professional judgment of those who know the children, young people, families and carers.

This year, the State Government also appointed a Commissioner for Children and Young People after the Children and Young People (Oversight and Advocacy Bodies) Act 2016 was passed in Parliament.

Once children are in the care of the State Government, we want to do everything we can to ensure they receive the best possible support and services.