

Disability Worker Screening

Information for sole traders

What is disability worker screening?

From 1 February 2021, Queensland will commence the new disability worker screening system. The new screening checks will determine whether a person is cleared or excluded from working in certain roles with people with disability. The paramount consideration is the right of people with disability to live their lives free from abuse, violence, neglect or exploitation.

Both the NDIS worker screening check and Queensland disability worker screening check fall under the disability worker screening system administered by the Queensland Government.

It is important for you to understand the changes to screening in Queensland, your obligations and the impact for you and your sole trader business. If you employ staff members you can find information on screening requirements through our dedicated fact sheets 'FAQs for NDIS employers' or 'FAQs for state-funded employers'.

Do I need a disability worker screening check?

From 1 February 2021, sole traders starting work will need a disability work screening check if they are:

- An NDIS registered provider in a risk assessed role. Risk assessed roles include key personnel or managers, those directly delivering NDIS supports or services and those with more than incidental contact with people with disability
- A state-funded provider delivering disability supports or services.

NDIS registered providers working in non-risk assessed roles and unregistered providers may also apply to be screened. NDIS participants engaging unregistered providers can ask them to be screened.

What about workers who have a valid yellow card or yellow card exemption?

If you already have a valid yellow card or yellow card exemption, you won't need to get a disability worker screening check straight away. You can keep using your existing card until it expires, is suspended or is cancelled.

When can I start working?

Queensland has passed legislation to support a 'no card, no start' approach to disability worker screening. This means that sole traders who are registered NDIS providers working in risk assessed roles or who are state-funded providers of disability supports or services are required to be screened and must have a clearance before they can start work. The changes are consistent with the reforms in the blue card system and are designed to increase safeguards for people with disability who receive funded supports and services.

'No card, no start' rules do not apply to sole traders who are registered NDIS providers working in non-risk assessed roles or unregistered NDIS providers. Sole traders in these categories can begin work after their application is lodged.

Applying for a worker screening check in Queensland

To apply as a sole trader, you must be an NDIS or state-funded provider delivering supports or services to people with disability in Queensland.

People who can't apply

If you have been issued a yellow card negative notice, yellow card negative exemption notice or a disability worker screening exclusion that has not been cancelled, you cannot apply for an NDIS worker screening check. It is an offence under the *Disability Services Act 2006* to make an application and penalties will apply.

Getting ready to apply

Sole traders will need to register as an employer for access to either the NDIS Worker Screening Database or the Queensland Employer Portal.

- **NDIS Worker Screening Database**

If you are delivering NDIS supports or services you will need to register to access the NDIS Worker Screening Database (NWSD). The NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) is responsible for the operation and administration of the NWSD which will hold a register of workers who have applied for or hold an NDIS worker screening check across Australia. The NWSD will be operational from 1 February 2021. In the lead up to commencement, the NDIS Commission will release further information about the access and use of the NWSD. You will be issued with an NDIS employer ID number. You will be asked to enter this on your application form.

- **Queensland Employer Portal**

If you are delivering state-funded disability supports or services only, you will need access to the Queensland Employer Portal (the employer portal). Those sole traders who already have access to the 'Yellow Card Online' portal will be contacted to confirm instructions for transition to the new employer portal. If you do not have an existing login you will need to register for the employer portal via the [Worker Screening website](#). You will be issued with a state employer ID number. You will be asked to enter this on your application form.

How do I apply?

From 1 February 2021, applicants can apply online via the [Worker Screening website](#) by:

1. Registering for worker portal access including online identity check
2. Completing the online application questions
3. Making payment through BPOINT (online), cheque or money order (or defer payment to a nominated representative)
4. Verifying your application

If you do not have online access and wish to make an NDIS worker screening application, please phone the Worker Screening Unit on 1800 183 690 to request a manual form to complete.

A detailed guide has been developed for workers to provide step by step support through the application process, including details on how to register online and completing the identity check.

How much does the application cost?

The following application costs will apply:

- NDIS worker screening application: \$138
- Combined NDIS worker screening application and blue card application: \$153
- Queensland disability worker screening application for paid workers: \$103.40
- Combined Queensland disability worker screening application and blue card application for paid workers: \$118.40
- Volunteer applications: Free

How does the online identity check work?

An online identity check process will be introduced as part of registration for the worker portal. This will confirm your personal information against Queensland government records to confirm you are who you say you are. The process will be similar to the current blue card identity check. Alternative processes will be in place where a person is unable to validate their identity online. Successful applicants will receive a card with a photo for facial authentication.

Application verification

After you have completed the online application form and payment has been made, the application is required to be verified by you. Verification is the last step in the application process and once this is complete it becomes a “valid application” and will be assessed by the Worker Screening Unit (WSU).

- **NDIS supports or services**

You must access the NDIS Worker Screening Database (NWSD) to verify your application. The NWSD will contact you by email and request that you verify that you will be delivering NDIS supports or services.

The NWSD will send automatic reminders to you, 28, 21, 14 and 7 days before the verification request expires. If you do not verify your application before the verification request expires, the NWSD will notify the WSU, which may cancel the application.

The NWSD will also display information to help you know whether you are eligible to work. For applications in progress the ‘eligible to work’ status will read “No”. Only workers subject to ‘no card, no start’ will be prohibited from starting work in Queensland while their application is processed.

After a clearance is issued, the ‘eligible to work’ status in NWSD will be set to “Yes”. You will be notified if there is any change to your ‘eligible to work’ status.

- **State supports or services**

You must access the employer portal to verify your application. An email will be sent requesting that you verify your intent to deliver state-funded disability supports or services.

You will have 15 days to complete your verification before the request will expire. If you do not verify your application before the verification request expires, the WSU may cancel the application.

What if I need a blue card too?

If you are delivering services or supports to children with disability, you will need both a disability worker screening clearance and a blue card. Workers who need both checks can lodge a combined application for the one fee.

A combined application can be made via the [Worker Screening website](#) using the above application process or by manual form for those with no online access. Combined applications cannot be submitted to Blue Card Services directly.

The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services (Disability Services) is responsible for processing the disability worker screening component of the application. Disability Services will forward your application details to Blue Card Services who are responsible for processing the blue card application component.

If you have any questions relating to your blue card application, please contact Blue Card Services via email – info@bluecard.qld.gov.au or by calling 1800 113 611 (freecall in Queensland) or 07 3211 6999.

What happens next?

After you have verified your application, the WSU will:

- ü Complete checks to determine if you have any assessable information (such as criminal history, disciplinary information or other relevant information)
- ü Review any assessable information received and contact you for further details if required
- ü Decide the application

What is an interim bar?

During the application process if assessable information is received that is of concern, an interim bar may be imposed on you. This will prohibit you from working while your application is in progress if you could otherwise commence because you were working in a non-risk assessed role or working for an unregistered provider. You will be notified if this occurs.

It is an offence for a person to carry out disability work while an interim bar is in effect. Penalties apply for non-compliance.

How am I notified of the screening outcome?

Once an outcome is available you will be sent correspondence by the WSU. Successful applicants will be sent a disability worker screening card. Sole traders undertaking NDIS work can also access outcomes through the NWSD.

Applicants who have been approved to work will be issued a clearance. Applicants who have not been approved to work will be issued with an exclusion.

It is an offence for an exclusion holder to carry out disability work. Penalties apply for non-compliance.

How long does the application process take?

The new online processes will make screening easier, quicker and more efficient. As part of the screening check, we rely on other departments to provide us with relevant information so processing times can fluctuate.

If you have no assessable information to review, your application will be processed quickly. It will take longer if assessable information is received because that information needs to be carefully reviewed before a decision is made.

You can login to the worker portal to obtain updates on the status of your disability worker screening application. Once a decision is made you will be notified of the outcome.

How long is a clearance valid for?

An NDIS worker screening clearance is valid for five years from the issue date unless it is cancelled earlier. A Queensland disability worker screening clearance is valid for three years from the issue date unless it is cancelled earlier.

Can worker screening checks be used in other states or territories?

From 1 February 2021, NDIS worker screening checks (clearances and exclusions) are portable across roles and employers within the NDIS. This means that workers issued with an NDIS worker screening clearance can use it across Australia. Workers issued with an NDIS worker screening exclusion are prohibited from engaging in NDIS work anywhere in Australia.

Queensland disability worker screening clearances and exclusions for state-funded disability supports or services are only valid within Queensland.

What if I have a change to my criminal history or other relevant information?

If a person who has been issued a clearance has a change to criminal history or other information relevant to the screening process (assessable information), they must notify the WSU. A reassessment of their eligibility to hold the clearance will be conducted. If it is necessary to suspend your clearance during the reassessment process, you will be notified.

It is an offence for a person who has been suspended to carry out disability work. Penalties apply for non-compliance.

How do I keep up to date with news about NDIS Worker Screening?

Updates and important information for the disability services sector is regularly released through the 'Latest News' link on the [Worker Screening website](#).

What if I need help?

The easiest and quickest way to get help is by reading through our detailed fact sheets and user guides or accessing the [Worker Screening website](#).

If you can't find the information you need through the available resources, you can contact:

- Queensland Worker Screening Unit: email workerscreening@dssatsip.qld.gov.au or phone 1800 183 690
- NDIS Commission: 1800 035 544
- Blue Card Services: 1800 113 611 or (07) 3211 6999