



The Place To Be

Media release

Geoff Howard MLA, Member for Ballarat East

6th March 2009

BALLARAT EAST SPORTING CLUB VOLUNTEERS URGED TO APPLY FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

Sporting clubs in the Ballarat East Electorate with volunteers or staff who work with children should take advantage of local information sessions being held in the region to determine if they require a Working with Children Check, Geoff Howard MP said today.

Information sessions are being held across Victoria to help sporting clubs and associations understand if paid or volunteer staff need to apply for a Working with Children Check.

“The Working with Children Check aims to prevent people who are a safety risk – such as child sex offenders – from working with children and these checks are being phased in across occupational categories,” Mr Howard said.

“Workers or volunteers in sport or recreation activities are required to apply for a check by June 2009.

“This means that people who work or volunteer in athletics, football, soccer, gymnastics, swimming, basketball, cricket, martial arts, netball and tennis will need to apply for a check if they have regular, direct and not directly supervised contact with children.”

Mr Howard said the information session would provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of who needs to apply for a check, how to apply for a check, what obligations sports club have regarding club employees and volunteers, and what exemptions may apply.

Residents in Ballarat East can attend an information session at the Ballarat Town Hall, Sturt Street on the 21st of April or in Daylesford at The Food Gallery, 77 Vincent Street on the 22nd April. Sessions at both venues will be held at 2pm and 7pm.

Deputy Premier and Attorney-General Rob Hulls said the checks were designed to keep Victorian children safe.

“More than 400,000 Victorian children between the ages of five and 14 participate at least once in organised sport outside of school hours and it is important to ensure this is occurring in an environment which is safe and secure,” Mr Hulls said.

He said more than 416,000 applications had been received by the Working with Children Check unit between April 2006 when the check was first introduced, and February this year.

In carrying out Working with Children Checks, the Department of Justice conducts a national criminal history check and considers findings from relevant professional bodies. People who have committed a relevant criminal offence or had a relevant disciplinary finding against them are assessed by the Department to determine if they are suitable to work with children. Applications from adults who have committed a sexual offence against a child are refused by the Department.

The checks are subject to ongoing monitoring and if a person commits an offence after receiving a Working with Children Check card, their right to hold a card is reassessed.

Contact: Geoff Howard MLA Member for Ballarat East 5331 7722

It is a criminal offence to work or volunteer in designated fields without a valid check, with a maximum penalty of up to two years' jail and/or a \$27,000 fine. Employers and organisations are legally obliged to ensure that relevant employees and volunteers undertake a check and can face criminal sanctions if they fail to do so.

Employees and volunteers can register interest in attending an information session by visiting www.justice.vic.gov.au/workingwithchildren or calling 1300 652 879.