



Guidance Notes: Blue card requirements for Ministry Agents

C/2.1.5.2

Purpose

This guidance note provides basic information about blue card and exemption card requirements for people wishing to work with children and young people (aged under 18 years) in a congregational setting within the United Church in Australia, Queensland Synod (the Church). Additional information may be obtained from bluecard.qld.gov.au. This is a general guide only and if you need specific advice please contact the Synod office or Blue Card Services.

NOTE: The General Secretary may stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment of stipend or wage, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice.

Scope

This guidance note applies to ministry agents within the bounds of the Queensland Synod. The [Guidance Notes: Blue card requirements for Lay Workers \(C/2.1.2.11\)](#) is the correct reference document for lay staff or volunteers wishing to work with children and young people (aged under 18 years) in a congregation.

What are your blue card obligations?

1. You must hold a valid blue card or exemption card which is linked to your congregation

No card, no start:

- No card, No Start will mean that paid workers must have a blue card (not just a pending application) before they can start working with children.
- You can continue to work in paid employment, volunteer, run your business or undertake your student placement as long as you submit your renewal application **before your current card expires**.
- If you don't apply to renew your card before it expires, you will be subject to the No Card, No Start policy and will not be able to continue **working or volunteering** until a new blue card has been issued.

Change in Blue Card Status:

- If a person applying for a blue card has a charge for a serious offence that has not been resolved at court, their application will be withdrawn, and they will be unable to re-apply until the charge has been finalised.
- If a blue card holder has a **change** in their police information and they are charged with a serious offence, their blue card will be automatically suspended, and they must cease child-related work immediately.
- In both cases, the person must **not** work or volunteer with children for the entire period that their blue card is suspended or withdrawn. Failing to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence and carries significant penalties: the organisation may be subject to a fine of up to 200 penalty units or two years imprisonment.



1. Ministry agents appointed as volunteers or employees

This section refers to ministry agents who are engaged as an employee (and paid a wage) or ministry agents who are engaged on a volunteer basis (such as lay preachers).

1.1. Apply for a blue card

- 1.1.1. On the application form, you should list the details of your presbytery chairperson as the organisation's contact person;
- 1.1.2. Pre-populated [forms](#) are located on the synod webpage

1.2. Validate your blue card

- 1.2.1. If you already hold a blue card you will need to have your card validated;
- 1.2.2. Your card can be validated via Blue Card Online Services, and the email from Blue Card Services provided to the presbytery council as proof that the blue card or exemption card has been validated;

1.3. Commence your role

- 1.3.1. Volunteers are NOT to commence in a role working with children until such time as the letter of positive notice from Blue Card Services is received by the church council;
- 1.3.2. From 31 August 2020, a paid employee may NOT commence employment until such time as the letter of positive notice (or email) from Blue Card Services is received by the church council.

1.4. Link your blue card or exemption card

- 1.4.1. If you work or volunteer in more than one congregation, you need to link your blue card or exemption card to each congregation, unless your position is a presbytery position. In the case where you hold a presbytery position, your blue card or exemption card should be linked to the presbytery;
- 1.4.2. Use the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' [form](#) to link each;
- 1.4.3. On the linking form, you should list the details of the person nominated in the organisation's contact person section;
- 1.4.4. If you already hold a blue card or exemption card which has been validated, you must also complete a form to link your card to the Church

1.5. Renew your blue card

- 1.5.1. Blue cards and exemption cards are valid for three (3) years;
- 1.5.2. From the 31 August 2020, you'll be able to continue to work in paid employment, volunteer, run your business or undertake your student placement as long as you submit your renewal application **before your current card expires**;
- 1.5.3. If you don't apply to renew your card before it expires, you will be subject to the No Card, No Start policy and will not be able to continue **working or volunteering** until a new blue card has been issued.



- 1.5.4. All new exemption cards and blue cards will have a picture of the cardholder, and exemption cards will have an expiry date listed on them. There is no cost associated with obtaining a photo from the Queensland Department of Transport, for the purposes of obtaining a blue card or exemption card. Information about obtaining a suitable photo for your blue card or exemption card is available on the Blue Card Services website.

1.6. Notify a change in police information

- 1.6.1. If you become aware of a change in your police information, it is important that you immediately complete the 'Change in police information notification form' and lodge it with your organisation's contact person. You cannot continue to work or volunteer until this form has been lodged;
- 1.6.2. You do not need to provide details of the change to the church, only that a change has occurred;
- 1.6.3. Failure to notify your presbytery of the change, is an offence and you may be subject to a penalty, and you may be stood aside by the General Secretary with or without payment of stipend or wage.

1.7. Expired card

- 1.7.1. You must stand aside from all child-related activity if your blue card or exemption card expires. The General Secretary may stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment of stipend or wage, if the ministry agent is not in possession of a current positive notice;
- 1.7.2. Employees: If your renewal application is received by Blue Card Services before expiry, you are deemed to still have a positive notice and may continue your employment conditions. If not, you no longer have a valid positive notice from the day after expiry. You must cease employment activities until you receive the letter of positive notice.

2. Ministry agents engaged in a covenantal relationship (renumerated or eligible to be renumerated by stipend)

Due to your covenantal relationship with the Church you are determined under the Regulation as conducting your own regulated business as a religious representative. This section includes those available for supply or placement.

2.1. You must hold a business blue card which is linked to the Synod

- 2.1.1. On the application form, you should list the details of the General Secretary in the organisation's contact person section. There is a pre-populated version of this [form](#) on the Synod website.

2.2. Additional forms to be completed

- 2.2.1. It is requested that you also complete a consent to discuss information form which allows Blue Card Services to liaise with the General Secretary on matters relating to suspension or cancellation of your blue card. There is also a pre-populated version of this [form](#) on the Synod website
- 2.2.2. If you work or volunteer in more than one congregation, you need to link your blue card or exemption card to each congregation, unless your position is a presbytery position. In the case where you hold a presbytery position, your blue card or exemption card should be linked



to the presbyter. Use the 'Link an applicant/card holder to this organisation' form to link to each congregation or organisation. On the linking form, you should list the details of the person nominated in the organisation's contact person section.

2.3. Submit your renewal

- 2.3.1. From the 31 August 2020, you'll be able to continue to work in paid employment, volunteer, run your business or undertake your student placement as long as you submit your renewal application before your current card expires;
- 2.3.2. If you don't apply to renew your card before it expires, you will be subject to the **No Card, No Start** policy and will not be able to continue working or volunteering until a new blue card has been issued.

2.4. Commence working

- 2.4.1. You must NOT commence your placement or supply until such time as either:
 - the letter of positive notice (or email) from Blue Card Services is received by the General Secretary's office, or
 - the email approval from Blue Card Services is received by the General Secretary's office, or
 - in the event that you have an existing blue card, the General Secretary's office receives confirmation from Blue Card Services that the linking form has been submitted.

2.5. Expired card

- 2.5.1. The General Secretary may stand aside any ministry agent, with or without payment of wage, if the ministry agent is NOT in possession of a current positive notice.
- 2.5.2. From 31 August 2020, you'll be able to continue to work in paid employment, volunteer, run your business or undertake your student placement as long as you submit your renewal application before your current card expires. If not, you no longer have a valid positive notice from the day after expiry. You should cease all ministry duties and responsibilities until you receive the letter of positive notice. You are at risk of fines/penalties from Blue Card Services if you continue ministry after the expiry date.

2.6. Notify a change in police information

- 2.6.1. If you become aware of a change in your police information, it is important that you **immediately** complete the 'Change in police information notification form' and lodge it with your organisation's contact person. You **cannot** continue to work until this form has been lodged;
- 2.6.2. You do not need to provide details of the change to the church, only that a change has occurred
- 2.6.3. Failure to notify your presbytery of the change, is an offence and you may be subject to a penalty, and you may be stood aside by the General Secretary with or without payment of stipend or wage.



Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.5.2			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
5.0	30.06.2021	Risk and Compliance Manager	30.06.2021	ED Strategic Resources and Assurance	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		30.06.2026			