

## Australia Strengthens Childcare Safety with Nationwide Working with Children Reforms

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Australia has announced reforms to its child protection system affecting childcare centers. Attorney-General Michelle Rowland unveiled changes to the Working with Children Check (WWCC) intended to prevent individuals barred from working with children in one state or territory from gaining employment in another, a policy referred to as “banned in one, banned in all.”

The reform follows incidents where individuals with prior bans were able to work in multiple childcare centers, drawing attention to gaps in the system. Cases such as that of Joshua Dale Brown, who worked across multiple facilities despite restrictions, led to the introduction of nationwide reforms.

Rowland stated that implementing the new system could take up to 12 months, with a pilot program already underway and the goal of rolling out the reformed checks nationwide by the end of the year. The initiative includes enhanced information-sharing mechanisms between states and territories, ensuring criminal histories are recorded and communicated to prevent jurisdictional gaps.

State governments are introducing complementary safeguards. Victoria and New South Wales, for example, are enforcing policies to ban personal mobile devices in childcare settings and establishing databases accessible to law enforcement to track individuals prohibited from working with children.

The reforms also address failures identified in recent inspections of childcare centres. Authorities found that 30 centres breached national safety standards within weeks of new regulatory powers being granted. The breaches included deficiencies in supervision, staff training, hygiene, and play area safety. The government issued warnings, giving providers six months to address shortcomings or face potential funding reductions.

The “banned in one, banned in all” policy, combined with inter-state information sharing, is intended to reduce gaps that previously allowed individuals with histories of misconduct to work in childcare.

The reform represents federal and state efforts to strengthen regulatory oversight in childcare settings. Officials noted that while the measures do not eliminate all risks, they standardize procedures and improve information sharing.

As these reforms take effect, the government will monitor implementation and make adjustments as needed. The coordinated approach between federal and state authorities reflects efforts to implement uniform procedures for child protection in early education settings.