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Victoria's New Childcare Worker Registry Launches Next Month, Excludes Casual Staff

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Victoria is set to launch its Early Childhood Workforce Register in August 2025, aiming to enhance child safety by requiring early childhood services with government-funded kindergarten programs to submit staff details by 29 August. However, casual and fill-in workers, family day care educators, and staff at non-funded kindergarten services are excluded from the initial rollout. This limited scope is expected to cover only around 90 per cent of long day care and kindergarten staff and has prompted concern from industry bodies and child safety advocates.

The move follows serious charges against a childcare worker identified as Joshua Dale Brown, who has faced more than 70 offences, including child sexual abuse at multiple Melbourne centres. Brown was employed at up to 23 settings between 2017 and 2025.

Investigators described tracking his employment as extremely complex due to inconsistent record-keeping across providers. Health authorities have contacted approximately 2,600 families, with around 1,200 children advised to undergo precautionary testing for infectious diseases. Public health officials confirmed that the risk remains low.

Experts warn that excluding casual and agency workers is a significant oversight. Casual staff like Brown, who worked briefly as a cook at one centre days before his charges, can move between services without consistent vetting. Professor Gabrielle Meagher from Macquarie University has advocated for a national workforce register to prevent individuals from evading detection across state borders.

The opposition has criticised the targeted register as an incomplete solution. One spokesperson argued that delaying the inclusion of casual workers and failing to reform the Working with Children Check simultaneously leaves gaps in child safety regulation. They have proposed additional vetting via psychometric testing, though critics argue this places further pressure on an already strained sector that relies heavily on casual staffing.

Childcare providers, already facing high turnover and low wages, may bear additional economic strain due to the register's limitations. With access to flexible casual labour restricted, centres may need to hire more permanent staff, potentially increasing operating costs. Victoria's Greens have described the register as "a step forward but riddled with holes," noting many small, family-run services remain outside its coverage.

The government has committed to expanding the register in October 2025 to include all early childhood workers. However, industry advocates warn that the delay leaves vulnerable gaps in worker oversight and poses both economic and safety risks. They are calling for a more comprehensive and immediate system or ideally a national register supported by consistent Working with Children Check frameworks across Australia.