

Issue area 12: Cost recovery options

The following information was provided in the discussion paper

“In addition to the administrative costs to manage National Police Criminal History Check (NPCHC) there are standard fees charged by the Department of Police and Emergency Management (DPEM) to conduct the national police check.

It is estimated that on average it will cost \$100 for a central agency to screen an individual as a suitable person to work with children or vulnerable others. In some jurisdictions, the screening unit charge individuals who require a good character check a fee to undertake the check. In many jurisdictions, volunteers are not charged a fee or the fee is substantially reduced.

If there are different costs/subsidies for people in paid employment and volunteer work, transferability of registration will be more administratively cumbersome.”

Currently there is a charge for national police checks. This is \$45 for employees and \$5 for volunteers. State Government agencies receive national police checks at a negotiated rate.

There are a range of practices as to who meets these costs. Many employers and organisations meet all screening costs for volunteers and employees. Some employers and organisations meet volunteer costs and expect employees to meet their own costs.

Some organisations currently expect volunteers to meet the costs associated with the screening.

Twenty five respondents commented on the issue of cost.

Many respondents assumed that it was Government's intention to fully recover cost. Comments indicate extensive concern for the potential impact that any increase in cost on volunteerism will have. Concern is also expressed as to the likely impact increased charges will have on the recruitment of employees and community based organisations.

One respondent commented that the benefit of the WWCVP will be shared by all Tasmanians and that it is appropriate that the costs be shared as with other public goods

Thirteen respondents recommended that volunteers incur no costs.

Comments fell into three main categories being:

That Government to meet all costs;

That current charges and subsidies be retained and Government absorb any cost increase;

That volunteers be exempt and employees be charged part or full costs;

The subsidisation of Volunteers costs may lead to administrative complications. It is likely that paid employees will seek a card as a volunteer (at a lower cost) and then use the card for salaried positions.

Some States and Territories issue separate cards for paid employment and volunteer activity. This adds additional administrative complexity.

If Government was to subsidise the cost for volunteers, and charge employees at a higher level, what steps could be taken to create a system with one card for both?

All states requiring volunteers to be checked subsidise these applications in some way so it would be assumed that Tasmania would operate similarly.

With regard to paid employees applying for a volunteer card in order to avoid paying the higher fee, it would be useful to check the WA system to see if they have experienced any significant sorting of their system. (WA combines volunteer and employees in the one card, so a card-holder can legitimately apply as a volunteer then use the card later when in paid employment. If the card-holder is still in paid employment when the card is to be renewed then they pay the relevant employee fee.)

In effect this system relies on the honesty of the applicant in declaring whether they are in paid employment or not. If the applicant can't be trusted to do this, it brings into question the appropriateness of expecting them to notify the screening unit of any changes regarding relevant convictions and charges. This is obviously a more serious issue and of concern given that the current TAS WWCVPC proposes this in absence of ongoing police monitoring.