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## WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS GENERALLY SOUND, BUT TAKING TOO LONG

Today Auditor General Colin Murphy tabled a report in Parliament that found the process for the working with children checks is sound and the decisions being made are generally robust, but delays in the assessments by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (the Department) led to children being put at risk.

Mr Murphy said the working with children checks were a key part of creating a protective environment for children. "On its own, the working with children check won't keep every child safe, but it is important that the checks are robust and efficient," he said.

"In the cases we looked at, the right people were getting the working with children cards based on the information available to the Department, but some of the assessments were taking too long."

"This puts children at risk because people can continue to work with children while their application is processed and this can take months."

The audit also found that the Department was not doing enough to make sure that employers are meeting their responsibilities to employ only people with a card in child related jobs.

"The Department needs to do more and better targeted monitoring of employer compliance, as this is key to the effectiveness and credibility of the working with children checks scheme," Mr Murphy said.

The Department also has compliance responsibilities but it is not meeting them, because it is not ensuring that all foster carers have valid working with children checks.

Processing applications for a working with children check card is a huge task for the Department, as they receive around 100 000 applications a year, with 300 000 people in Western Australia with a working with children check card.

"I am encouraged to see that the Department has welcomed our suggestions to improve its operations, and I hope my recommendations contribute to working with children checks being as effective as possible in helping to keep children safe," Mr Murphy said.

The Auditor General's report '*Working with Children Checks*' (Report 15 – June 2014) can be downloaded from the Office of the Auditor General website at [www.audit.wa.gov.au](http://www.audit.wa.gov.au)



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