

Free Police Checks for Volunteers

The South Australian Government meets the cost of police checks for volunteers who work with 'vulnerable groups' such as children, the aged and frail, or people with a disability.

Choosing the right person for volunteer positions is vital. Making sure their skills and experience matches the role helps to ensure that everyone's expectations are met.

A good starting point is to establish clear recruitment processes and practices. Many organisations are now including police checks as part of this process.

IS YOUR ORGANISATION ELIGIBLE FOR FREE POLICE CHECKS?

Police checks are free for organisations that meet all of the following criteria:

1. Whose service delivery involves volunteers having personal contact with vulnerable groups (i.e. children, the elderly and people with a disability).
2. Whose services provide a charity or community service good.
3. That are incorporated and are non-government.
4. That are not members, affiliated clubs or an association of a larger organisation.

WHAT DOES YOUR ORGANISATION NEED TO DO TO QUALIFY?

If your organisation has met the above criteria then it will be eligible to apply to the South Australian Police (SA Police) for a special Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number (VOAN). This VOAN is used to identify organisations who have successfully met the criteria and been approved to receive free police checks.

To obtain a VOAN you must first complete an application form. These can be downloaded from the SA Police website at www.police.sa.gov.au or by contacting the Records Release Unit on 08 8204 2455. Once completed the form needs to be mailed to:

**Records Release Unit
SA Police
GPO Box 1539
ADELAIDE SA 5001**

SA Police will process the application and advise your organisation in writing if it is approved and provide your organisation's Authorisation Number.

Please note: *If your organisation is a member, affiliated club or an association of a larger organisation then you will need to use the parent body's VOAN as you will not be eligible to receive a number of your own. You will need to ensure your organisation has a nominated person to undertake VOAN associated duties and that this officer is registered with SA Police. This protects against unauthorised use of the VOAN.*

Using your VOAN to receive free volunteer police checks

To obtain a police check an individual must complete an *Application for a National Police Certificate*. These can either be downloaded from the SA Police website at www.police.sa.gov.au or collected from your local Police station.

One of the important elements to completing an application is checking the applicant's identity. This is often referred to as a '100 Point Identification Check'. These can be undertaken at a local Police Station or alternatively organisations can arrange with SA Police for one of their staff to be approved for witnessing a person's identity. There are a range of documents which can be used to validate a person's identity. These are clearly listed on the *Application for a National Police Certificate*.

The final step in this process requires your organisation to endorse the *Application for a National Police Certificate* to verify that the person applying is in fact a volunteer and works with vulnerable groups on behalf of your organisation. To endorse the application, the VOAN Authorised Officer completes the 'Volunteer Authority' section by entering the organisation's VOAN details and providing an original signature. The organisation then forwards the completed application to the Records Release Unit by mail.

SA Police require original signatures of authorised VOAN representatives at all times. National Police Certificate application forms received by the Records Release Unit with photocopied VOAN signatures or incomplete 'Voluntary Authority' sections will be returned unprocessed.



**Government
of South Australia**

Office for Volunteers

OVERVIEW OF THE POLICE CHECK PROCESS

The following flow chart provides a guide for an organisation applying for a VOAN, and for a volunteer requesting a “free” police check.

1

Carefully read the *Procedure to Obtain a Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number from SA Police*, and the *Application for a Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number RF2018*. These can be downloaded from www.police.sa.gov.au or obtained by calling 08 8204 2455.

2

Complete the *Application for a Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number RF2018* and mail to: **Audit Coordinator, Records Release Unit**, SA Police, GPO Box 1539, Adelaide, 5001.

3

If successful, a Volunteer Organisation Authorisation Number (VOAN) will be provided in writing by SA Police. The VOAN is a secure number and must remain secure within the organisation.

4

If the application is unsuccessful SA Police will request you to provide more information and to resubmit the application.

5

To request a criminal history check, the volunteer completes the *Application for a National Police Certificate (NPC) PD 267* and submits it to a Police Officer or authorised VOAN representative with original copies of identification to certify their identity. A copy of the certified ID is attached to the application form.

6

The volunteer returns the application to the organisation to be endorsed by an authorised VOAN representative, confirming that the volunteer will be interacting with vulnerable groups. The organisation's VOAN and original signature must be included in the 'Volunteer Authority' section at the bottom of the application form. The application is then submitted to the SA Police Record Release Unit by the VOAN organisation on behalf of the applicant.

7

A National Police Check is undertaken by SA Police.

8

A *National Police Certificate* is issued to the volunteer, or it can, with the volunteer's written approval (provision included on the application form), be sent directly to the organisation. If this occurs, the organisation **must** return the *National Police Certificate* to the volunteer as the certificate belongs to the volunteer. The *National Police Certificate* may also be collected by a third party on behalf of the volunteer if the volunteer has previously indicated this on the application form.

9

If a *National Police Certificate* is sent back to the organisation, the volunteer is notified by the organisation that the *National Police Certificate* is ready to be collected. The volunteer should bring the same identification with them when collecting the *National Police Certificate* so that it may be released to them. The organisation should make a summary only of the *National Police Certificate* for their records before returning it to the volunteer.

10

The volunteer retains the *National Police Certificate* which can be used for further volunteering or employment. **Copies of the National Police Certificate are not to be retained by organisations.**