



Strengthening Safeguarding Systems: Protecting Australians with a Disability & the Employers Who Serve Them

For Disability Service Providers

November 2025

www.weareoho.com

Executive Summary

Australia's disability sector faces a critical safeguarding crisis with an estimated 27% of the workforce unmonitored and unsuitable workers acting in intimate care roles everyday.

27%

of the 325,000-strong workforce remains unmonitored

1 in 434

workers approximately carry a critical safeguarding failure

~\$207 M

in annual sector exposure for credential failures & fines

This crisis exists because of a fundamental system gap between Government worker suitability data and employer systems. When worker credentials are revoked or suspended, it may take weeks or months to notify employers, if a notification arrives at all. During this window, vulnerable Australians remain at risk while unsuitable workers continue in their intimate care roles.

Automated, continuous workforce verification closes this gap, providing you near real-time visibility across credentials and immediate alerts when worker suitability changes, reducing notification delays and equipping you to act.

One large disability provider using continuous monitoring detected a suspended NDIS Worker Screening Check that had gone unnoticed, in addition to the worker holding a current Working With Children Check. The automated alert enabled immediate intervention, preventing potential harm that manual quarterly or annual checks could have missed for up to 12 months.

Every week of delay represents an estimated \$8 million in preventable costs across the care and education sector and leaves vulnerable Australians exposed to unnecessary risk. Disability service providers must assess their current verification gaps and implement continuous monitoring technology to strengthen protection for the people they serve.

Next Steps > [Get in touch with Oho here](#) | [Access the full whitepaper](#)

The Workforce Suitability Crisis for Disability Service Providers

Australia's approximately 325,000¹ disability sector workforce supports some of the nation's most vulnerable people, yet **27 per cent² of this workforce remains unmonitored** due to fragmented systems. Independent data from 224,000 worker records indicates that up to **one in every 434 workers carries a critical safeguarding failure** such as a revoked clearance³.

An Ability Roundtable Report states that in 2024, **50 per cent of the disability workforce churned** and the sector spends \$32-50m every year onboarding staff⁴.

Disability Support CEOs are focused on where they can enhance frontline delivery quality by recruiting and retaining great people, but the task is never ending and costly.

For disability service providers, this translates to **immediate and substantial risk** and costs with unsuitable workers continuing in role involving intimate care.

The Government to Employer System Gap

When a right-to-work check, like an NDIS Worker Screening Check or a Working with Children Check, is flagged as revoked or suspended, employers rely on periodic manual reviews or register notifications to be notified and act accordingly. These register messages can take the form of phone calls, emails, in-portal notifications or even letters. These processes can take days, weeks or even longer, particularly if employers are only conducting an annual review.

In some jurisdictions, workers can even change their nominated employer without notification, meaning any changes to their clearance status may go unnoticed.



¹ Jobs and Skills Australia, 2024. Aged and Disabled Carers. <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/occupation-and-industryprofiles/occupations/4231-aged-and-disabled-carers>

² Oho 2025. Oho's anonymised, aggregated data. Estimated 27% of unmonitored workers of WWWCs before they implement continuous checking solutions with Oho.

³ Oho, 2025. Anonymised, aggregated data.

⁴ National Disability Services, 2025. Workforce Census Report 2025. <https://nds.org.au/resources/all-resources/nds-workforce-census-key-findings-report>

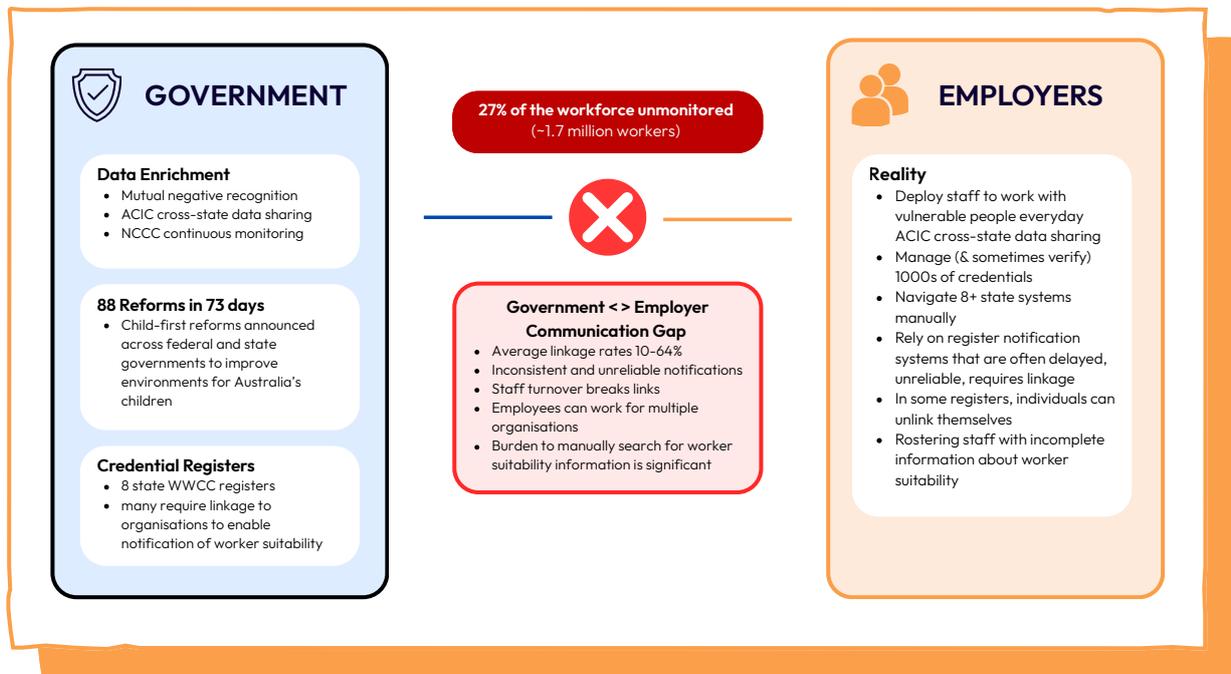


Figure: Data Visualisation of Employer and Government System Gaps in Right-to-Work Safeguarding⁵

Without stronger systems or technology in place, **employers cannot act when they need to most**. The systems employers rely on were not built for the size, growth and churning shape of this workforce.

The Cost of Inadequate Safeguarding

The Human Impact is Incalculable

Up to 88 percent of those affected by abuse may never disclose their experiences⁶. Childhood maltreatment is linked to 40 percent of mental health conditions⁷, while survivors of child sexual abuse account for 34 percent of all presentations across the mental health sector⁸.

For vulnerable adults, 4.4 percent of people aged 65 years and over experience abuse or neglect annually, representing **thousands whose trust has been violated by those meant to care for them**⁹.

The psychological aftermath is severe: complex PTSD, social isolation, relationship breakdown, and in the most tragic cases, 32 percent of child sexual abuse victims attempt suicide, with 43 percent considering it¹⁰.

⁵ Publicly available data on child safety reforms, right to work registers and Oho's anonymised, aggregated employer side data, 2025

⁶ NSW Health, 1998. Child sexual abuse: Information for mental health professionals. NSW Department of Health

⁷ NSW Health, 1998. Child sexual abuse: Information for mental health professionals. NSW Department of Health

⁸ NSW Health, 1998. Child sexual abuse: Information for mental health professionals. NSW Department of Health

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016. Personal Safety, Australia, 2016. Cat. no. 4906.0. Commonwealth of Australia.

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia>

¹⁰ Plunkett, A., O'Toole, B., Swanston, H., Oates, R. K., Shrimpton, S., & Parkinson, P., 2001. Suicide risk following child sexual abuse. *Ambulatory Pediatrics*, 1(5), 262-266.

The \$207m Economic Impact of Inadequate Safeguarding in the Disability Support Sector

The estimated annual National Cost Burden of safeguarding failures across Australia's care and education sectors is **\$2.4 billion**¹¹. These figures only include legal redress, associated insurance claims and regulator fines. They exclude healthcare, investigations, lost productivity and workforce disruption.

Disability Sector Exposure

The disability services sector, with an estimated 325,000 workers and a **credential failure rate of 0.23 per cent**¹², faces a national exposure of approximately **\$207 million** based on average maximum fines.

Estimated Workforce	325,000
Credential Failure Rate	0.23%
Average Maximum Fine	\$277,500 per breach ¹³
Total Sector Exposure	~\$207 million annually ¹⁴

Risks Affecting your Disability Organisation

- **Vulnerability factors:** intimate care requirements, communication barriers that prevent disclosure, complex support needs, and high levels of dependency, where **unsuitable workers can cause significant harm** before detection.
- **Screening gaps leave you exposed:** most organisations **only** screen workers at recruitment, leaving critical blind spots across the entire employment period
- **High turnover multiplies the challenge:** with staff turnover reaching 50 per cent in some organisations, you're constantly onboarding new workers while simultaneously managing an existing workforce. Your capacity to **maintain oversight** across both groups is likely stretched.
- **Your systems can't keep pace:** relying on annual manual checks or waiting for register notifications creates **dangerous delays**. Revocations or suspensions may not reach you for days or weeks, or even at all.
- **Financial and legal consequences are severe:** penalties for employing unsuitable workers include **significant fines** per breach. Directors face personal liability for certain failures and organisations also face reputational damage, contract loss, increased insurance premiums, and potential civil claims.
- **The real cost is human:** each safeguarding failure represents a vulnerable person whose trust has been violated by someone meant to care for them. **A cost that no fine can capture.**

¹¹ Oho, 2025. Cost of Inaction on Safeguarding Systems: See Safeguarding Australia: Strengthening Systems to Protect Children & Vulnerable People whitepaper, <https://www.weareoho.com/whitepapers/safeguarding-australia>

¹² Oho, 2025. Anonymised, aggregated data.

¹³ NDIS Commission, 2022. <https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-02/civil-penalties-policy.pdf>

¹⁴ Total Sector Exposure equals the number of workers multiplied by the credential failure rate multiplied by average maximum fine

Cost by Organisation Size

The estimated financial burden of manually staffed workforce credential verification varies by organisational size.

Organisation Size	Example Workforce Size	Annual Cost per Employee for Manual Checking	Total Administrative Cost (Est.)
Small (<50 staff)	50	\$62.66 ¹⁵	≈ \$1,880
Medium (51-500 staff)	500	\$62.66	≈ \$31,330
Large (501+ staff)	5,000	\$62.66	≈ \$313,000

These costs only account for the financial burden of manual workforce credential, and exclude additional impacts such as reputational damage, contract loss, increased insurance premiums, productivity loss, and longer-term social costs.



¹⁵ Oho, 2025. Assumption based on Oho customer feedback of 1 FTE HR admin manual checking resource of \$97,000 per year including oncosts for every 1500 staff equals \$62.66 per employee.

Your Pathway to Proactive Safeguarding: Prevention is Essential

While governments set the foundations through policy, frameworks and support systems, employers (disability providers) must **bring these principles to life every day**. Real quality & safety depends on collective action. Every employer plays a role in creating safer environments for Australians with a disability.

The pathway to proactive safeguarding requires disability service providers to **shift safeguarding from a reactive compliance task to a proactive, human-centred culture of care and action**. This means embedding safeguarding accountability from board level through to frontline practice, and empowering your organisation to deliver quality care, safely, with education, transparent reporting, continuous verification and the right technology infrastructure to prevent harm before it occurs.

Foundations & Pilots



- **Link all worker records** to the relevant registers and commence quarterly re-verification.
- Join **government pilots and partner with approved technology** providers to validate methods for secure, continuous, and automated verification processes.



Monitor & Integrate



- Move to **continuous monitoring** across all roles in scope.
- **Integrate** verification with HR and rostering systems via government approved integration partners.
- Apply **risk-based compliance** methods in line with the organisation's size and service scope. Provide regular compliance reporting to boards, funders, and regulators.



Proactive Prevention



- Treat continuous verification as a core governance and **risk prevention responsibility**.
- Maintain **live workforce visibility** and partner with accredited providers to enhance analytics, reporting, and client safety.
- Demonstrate a **proactive safeguarding posture** (not just compliance) easily through independent audits aligned with national standards.

Anonymised Case Study

Centralising Continuous Workforce Checks Reduces Abuse Risk

Organisation Profile: Large disability service provider

Organisational Context: A registered **NDIS provider delivering disability support**, employing approximately 1,500 staff. This provider has an unwavering commitment to ensuring people lead every decision about their lives, evidenced by strong implementation of a human rights led, quality and safeguarding framework, resulting in industry awards. Employing a practice mentorship approach, this organisation champions person-led planning, communication, complex health, quality practice and positive behaviour support.

Challenge: Because this employer set a high bar on quality, safeguarding and service delivery, they wanted to take a proactive approach to workforce suitability. With multiple right-to-work credentials required per worker, linking, verifying and monitoring at recruitment and ongoing work was resource intensive, error prone, and not continuous.

Solution: This disability provider implemented Oho's workforce compliance platform to automate **continuous screening and credential verification for 1,500 workers**, and connect this information directly to their people systems, driving hiring and rostering decisions every day.

Stage 1 involved implementing an immediate standalone Oho instance.

Stage 2 involves integrating to recruitment and workforce modules of an enterprise HR system

At recruitment and as often as weekly thereafter, Oho verifies **NDIS Worker Screening Checks, Working With Children Checks, Visa Entitlements, Teacher & AHPRA Registrations** across 1,500 workers with an average of 3+ credentials to check per employee.

Impact

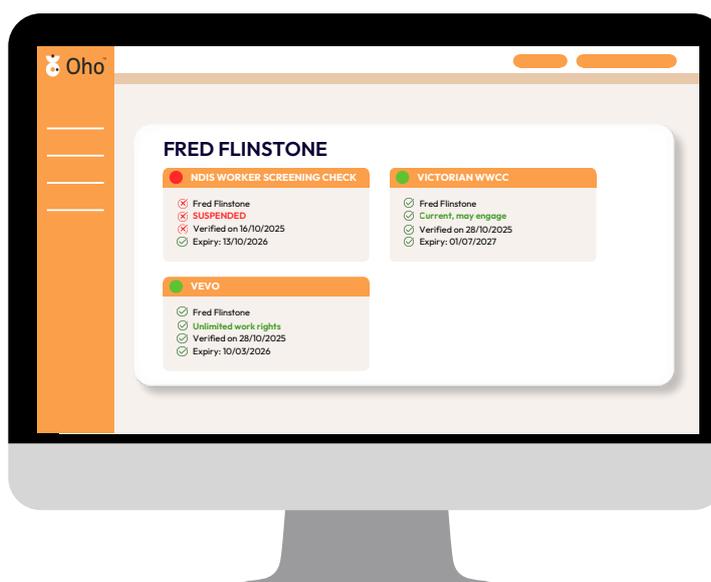
During routine weekly verification of all credentials, Oho identified a red flag (revoked or suspended) on an NDIS worker screening check, despite that same worker holding a current, valid Victorian Working with Children Check.

Oho's continuous monitoring immediately alerted their compliance team, enabling the provider to act quickly. The notification from the register was not seen by the team. They highlighted the volume of emails received from various registers they comply with as a contributing factor to this.



Takeaways:

- Workforce visibility is crucial. Immediate action prevents future incidents. A lag in government to employer communication on unsuitable workers is unnecessary.
- One unwieldy register is not a big problem. However, **most large or multi state, and multi service employers deal with on average eight government registers** to be compliant with. Integration layers or middleware between government and employer systems such as Oho are a solution to this complexity.
- Embed people receiving services in design: **establish genuine advocacy structures** where people have an active voice about the support they receive
- Investing in safeguarding is a 360-degree practice for humans and machines - implement proactive, holistic models and get your technology to take a proactive approach by continuously checking.
- Secure machines are better at repetitive tasks than humans. Manual verification can create dangerous blind spots. Automated compliance platforms such as Oho provide continuous monitoring and immediate notification to the right stakeholders, that manual processes cannot deliver at scale.
- **Weigh up the cost associated with prevention tech versus the cost of not acting:** the most important being hard to a person but also regulatory and legal risks, operational disruption, and reputational damage.



“Oho verifies the various checks required for our disability workforce and alerts us immediately if anything changes. Recently, we had a situation where **someone's NDIS check was suspended, but their Working With Children Check was still valid** ... and Oho plugged the gap to provide us with real visibility. The immediate notifications to our team mean we can **act quickly and have confidence that our workforce is safe to work.**”

The time to act is now.

The Reality

- Approximately one in every 434 workers carries a critical safeguarding failure
- 27 percent of the workforce remain unmonitored
- The disability sector faces \$207M in annual sector exposure

The Solution

- Automated, continuous workforce verification for complete visibility across your entire workforce
- Embedded safeguarding accountability from boardroom to frontline with a culture of prevention
- Application of risk-based compliance methods and a proactive human-centred approach to compliance, safeguarding and quality care

The Outcomes

- **Immediate risk reduction:** detect revoked or suspended credentials in near real-time, removing unsuitable workers from vulnerable settings before harm occurs
- **Close critical blind spots:** continuous visibility across all workers including contractors and casuals, eliminating the dangerous gaps created by manual processes
- **Strengthen compliance and accountability:** demonstrate proactive due diligence to boards and regulators, reducing legal exposure and regulator penalties up to \$277,500 per breach
- **Protection of your vulnerable people through prevention, not reaction**

The Investment for Continuous Verification

- \$20 per worker annually
- 46x financial and social return on investment

Every week matters.

Each week, Australia bears an average of \$8 million in preventable cost across the care and education sectors, and every missed credential represents a person (or multiple people) left at risk.



About Oho

Oho is a compliance automation and safeguarding platform, purpose-built to protect vulnerable Australians through automated, ongoing screening of workers and volunteers across the employee lifecycle.

Oho was born out of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse after the founders witnessed testimonies while attending the Commission an impacted friend. The founders built a product to create safer environments for Australia's vulnerable people, commencing in 2021.

Mission: **"Oho protects vulnerable people and organisations from abuse and its impacts".**

Oho Safeguarding Verification Impact (2021 - 2025)

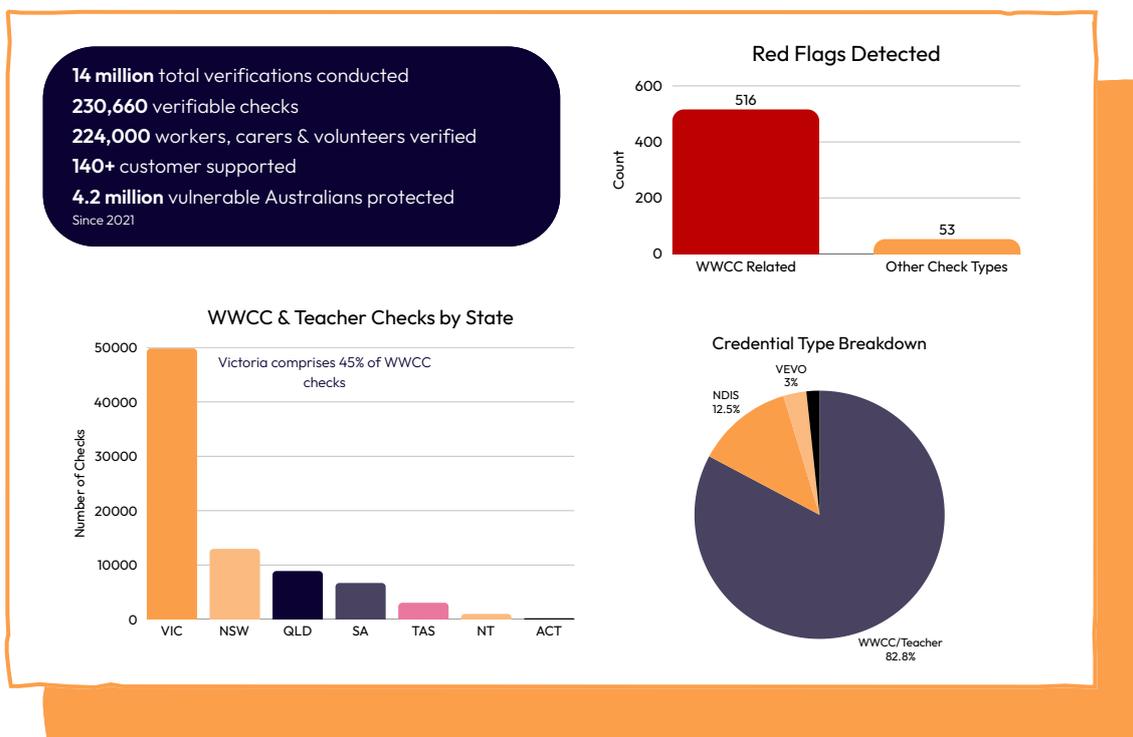


Figure: Data Visualisation of Oho anonymised data

Oho has also witnessed and supported the dedicated employers raising the bar on safeguarding and investing resources into their people, while grappling with the administrative burden and cost pressures.

This experience has reinforced a critical insight: **while no solution is perfect, Australia's current right-to-work and credential verification systems fall short of the safeguarding standards** that vulnerable populations deserve.

Let's Connect

Ready to strengthen your safeguarding systems?

Get in touch with our team here

Or read more

Access Oho's full care sector whitepaper here

Your workforce is changing everyday. Is your safeguarding keeping up?

- How long would it take your team to identify a red flag on a right-to-work check in your workforce?
- Do you have visibility of contractor credentials in real-time?
- Can you demonstrate continuous compliance to your board and leadership?
- What is the real cost of your current manual verification processes?

Let's work together to protect the people you serve.

