Minister for Children and Families, Kon Vatskalis, today announced an extension for Territorians wishing to obtain their Working with Children Ochre Cards, reminding Territorians that it will be compulsory for all people working with children to have the cards.

Mr Vatskalis said Territorians had until July 1, 2011 to obtain the clearances.

The NT Government announced the introduction of the new Ochre Card late last year as an important child protection measure, with the card indicating that the holder has been officially cleared to work with children.

“The Working with Children Ochre Card initiative has been embraced by the community, with almost 19 500 people applying for the cards to date,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“So in order to give Safe NT the appropriate time to process the large amount of applications coming through from volunteers, organisations and employees, we have extended the commencement date to July 1,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“Staff from Safe NT are working as quickly as possible to process all applications – in the last two weeks SAFE NT has been receiving up to 800 new applications per day.

“A large number of the applications need other jurisdiction clearing, so this is also causing short term delays to the processing.

“Advice from Safe NT is that a deferral of four months would be reasonable to process existing applications while continuing to receive and process new applications.”

Mr Vatskalis said screening people who work and volunteer in child-related employment is an important step forward in the care of protection of our children, and one of the many ways the NT Government is reforming the system.

“We have also invested $130 million in addition to the child protection system, made legislative changes, and introduced a raft of measures following the Board of Inquiry recommendations last year.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Ochre Card is issued to people who apply for the Working with Children Clearance through Safe NT. The clearance is a criminal and employment check.

An advertising campaign to educate the community will continue to run in the Territory.

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