

# SAFE USE OF TECHNOLOGIES AND ONLINE ENVIRONMENTS POLICY



## **POLICY STATEMENT**

Catholic Early EdCare is committed to ensuring the safe, ethical and responsible use of digital technologies and online environments to protect the safety, dignity and wellbeing of all children in our care.

This policy outlines our commitment to the safe, ethical, and responsible use of digital technologies in line with the National Quality Framework (NQF) changes commencing 1 September 2025, the National Model Code for Taking Images in ECEC, and other relevant legislation and Catholic safeguarding standards.

We recognise that the digital environment presents both opportunities and risks, and we proactively embed safeguards that align with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, and the Archdiocese of Brisbane's social media policy.

## **BACKGROUND**

Recent updates to the NQF have introduced new mandatory policy and procedural requirements to ensure children's safety when digital technologies are used in educational and care settings. These include:

- Safe use of digital devices, networks, platforms, and online resources.
- Clear boundaries for photographing and video recording children.
- Storage, access, and sharing protocols for children's digital content.
- Risk assessment and educator supervision for technology use.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Legislative Requirements .....	4
Key Terms .....	5
Principles .....	6
Links to Other Policies and Documents .....	7
Connection to CEEC Mindsets .....	8
Induction and Ongoing Training .....	9
Monitoring, Evaluation and Review .....	9

# LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

This policy is guided by the following legislation and regulations:

- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations, including:
  - Reg 84: Awareness of child protection law
  - Reg 84D (commencing 1 Sept 2025): Policies and procedures for the use of digital technologies and online environments
  - Reg 168: Education and care service must have policies and procedures
  - Reg 181-184: Confidentiality and storage of records
- Australian Privacy Principles (Privacy Act 1988)
- Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- National Model Code for Taking Images in ECEC (ACECQA, 2024)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

# KEY TERMS

Term	Meaning
Digital Technologies	Devices, platforms or tools (e.g., tablets, smartphones, computers, apps) used to access, collect, create or share information.
Online Environments	Any platform or digital service accessed through the internet, including websites, virtual classrooms, and cloud-based apps.
Images	Photos or videos of children in any form, whether digital or printed.
Informed Consent	Permission given by a parent/guardian who has been fully informed about the purpose and use of their child’s image.
Cyber Safety	Practices that protect children from online risks including exposure to inappropriate content, contact, or conduct.
Model Code	ACECQA’s National Model Code for Taking Images in ECEC, outlining ethical and safe image use practices.

# PRINCIPLES

- We are committed to protecting children from harm and exploitation in digital and online environments.
- We seek informed consent from families before capturing, storing, or using images or videos of children.
- We consult with children in age-appropriate ways before their image is taken or shared, even where parent consent has been obtained.
- We implement safeguards to protect children's identities when using digital content for communication or educational purposes.
- We ensure that all digital technology used in our services is age-appropriate, purposeful, and aligned with our Catholic ethos.
- We follow clear procedures when using online platforms or sharing digital information with families or the public.
- We educate children about safe technology use in age-appropriate ways that promote agency and self-awareness.
- We review digital safety risks regularly and train our staff to uphold these commitments.

# LINKS TO **OTHER POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS**

- Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy
- Providing a Child Safe Environment Policy
- Safeguarding Children Procedure
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Supervision Policy and Procedure
- Social Media Networking Policy (Archdiocese of Brisbane)
- National Model Code for Taking Images in ECEC (ACECQA, 2024)
- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy



## CONNECTION TO CEEC MINDSETS

This policy aligns with CEEC's safeguarding culture and organisational mindsets:

- **Child-Centred:** We prioritise children's rights and participation, including their privacy and consent in digital settings.
- **Compassionate:** We uphold each child's dignity and work in partnership with families when using or sharing digital content.
- **Accountable:** We implement transparent practices that uphold safety, privacy and Catholic values in all digital interactions.
- **Inclusive:** We recognise the diverse needs of children and ensure equitable access and culturally safe digital environments.

## INDUCTION AND ONGOING TRAINING

All staff will:

- Receive induction on this policy and related procedures.
- Participate in annual refresher training on digital safety, child image use and privacy obligations. In addition to induction/refresher training, staff will engage in scenario-based learning.
- Complete e-learning or live training modules as provided by CEEC or the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

## MONITORING EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will:

- Reviewed every **3 years**, or earlier in response to regulatory updates.
- Monitored by the **Operations Team** to ensure compliance. Compliance will be monitored through audits of consent forms, storage systems and staff practice
- Evaluated with feedback from educators, families, and safeguarding personnel.

