

National Quality Standard (NQS): QA2 (Children’s health and safety), QA5 (Relationships with children), QA6 (Collaborative partnerships), QA7 (Governance and leadership).

Safe Use of Digital Technologies & Online Environments Policy — Early Childhood Education and Care (Queensland)

Effective Date: 1 September 2025

Review Date: [Next review date: 1 September 2026]

1. Policy Statement

Our service is committed to the safe, ethical, and purposeful use of digital devices in early childhood education and care. We wish to create a culture whereby children’s safety and wellbeing is embedded in all that we do. We recognise digital tools as valuable in documenting children’s learning, engaging with families, and supporting administration while prioritising children’s safety, wellbeing, and privacy. All practices will align with the **Education and Care Services National Law (Qld)**, the **Education and Care Services National Regulations (Qld)** (including revisions effective 1 September 2025), the **National Quality Framework (NQF)**, and the **ACECQA National Model Code of Conduct**.

2. Objectives

- To ensure compliance with all legislative and regulatory requirements.
- To safeguard children’s rights to safety, dignity, and privacy when digital devices are used.
- To embed the **10 National Child Safe Standards** in all digital device practices.
- To provide clear guidance for staff, families, volunteers, and visitors on the use of digital devices.
- To use digital tools in ways that support educational programs (EYLF v2.0, QKLG).

3. Scope

This policy applies to all educators, staff, students, volunteers, families, contractors, visitors, pre-service teachers and students at the service. It covers the use of service-owned and personal digital devices when on service premises or during service-related activities, including excursions.

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ABN 59 150 737 849

4. Legislative and Regulatory Context

This policy is underpinned by:

- **Education and Care Services National Law (Qld):** ss. 165 (Offence to inadequately supervise children), 166 (Offence to use inappropriate discipline), 167 (Offence to inadequately protect children from harm and hazards), 174 (Offence relating to notifications).
- **Education and Care Services National Regulations (Qld) [as revised Sept 2025]:** Regs 73–76 (Educational program), 84A–84D (Child safe practices), 99–102 (Excursions), 168 (Policies and procedures), 181–184 (Records and privacy).
- **National Quality Standard (NQS):** QA2 (Children’s health and safety), QA5 (Relationships with children), QA6 (Collaborative partnerships), QA7 (Governance and leadership).
- **Child Safe Standards (National):** Standards 1–10.
- **Other Relevant Laws:** Privacy Act 1988 (Cth), Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld), Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth), Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld), Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld).

5. Procedures

5.1 Service Owned Devices

- Children’s use of digital devices must always be directly supervised by AWK staff (s.165, s.167).
- Only service-owned devices may be used by AWK staff to take photographs/video/audio recording of children for educational documentation.
- All digital photographs/video/audio recordings access is restricted to authorized AWK staff only.
- Device use must be intentional, developmentally appropriate, and linked to the educational program (Regs 73–76).
- Images or recordings must be for educational documentation, learning stories or service-approved purposes only.
- All images of children used for service-approved purposes will be de-identified, eg on social media.
- Screen time must be limited, purposeful, and balanced with active, play-based learning.

5.2 Consent, Privacy, Storage and Security.

- Written parental/guardian consent must be obtained annually before photographing/video recording, or audio recording children (Regs 181–184).
- Consent must specify the purpose and method of sharing (e.g., portfolios, communication apps).

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- Consent requirements will be communicated to all attending families annually.
- Consent may be withdrawn at any time in writing.
- Devices are stored securely when not in use and cleared of files each term by permanently deleting them.
- Removal from backups and cloud systems.

5.2 Staff Personal Devices

- AWK Staff personal devices such as mobile phones or ipads (except smartwatches) must be stored securely in assigned lockers and not accessed in children's presence.
- AWK Staff personal devices can only be used in non-contact areas, such as staff only spaces.
- All Staff personal devices are never to be used to take photographs/video or audio footage of children.
- Relief staff are to securely store personal devices, including smartwatches in assigned lockers and not accessed in children's presence.
- Essential purposes for which use of and / or possession of a personal electronic device must be authorised in writing, approved by the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor and written in the compliance log, for purposes other than taking images or recording videos of children may include:
 1. Communication in an emergency situation involving a lost child, injury to child or staff member, or other serious incident, or in the case of a lockdown or evacuation of the service premises
 2. Personal health requirements, e.g. heart or blood sugar level monitoring disability, e.g. where a personal electronic device is an essential means of communication for an educator or other staff member
 3. Family necessity, e.g. a worker with an ill or dying family member
 4. Technology failure, e.g. when a temporary outage of service-issued electronic devices has occurred
 5. Local emergency event occurring, to receive emergency notifications through government warning systems, for example, flood evacuation text notification.

5.3 Preservice Teachers & Students

- Must complete a digital safety and privacy induction before beginning their placement.
- May only use online platforms/service-issued devices under the supervision of a qualified Educator.
- Must not use personal devices, laptops, USB's or cloud accounts whilst working with children.

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- Must not screenshot or save children's information/images on personal devices.
- Must not upload content to personal email, storage or social media.
- Must not access children's digital files.
- Preservice teachers and students cannot independently authorise uploads, posts or sharing.

5.4 Visitors, Contractors and Volunteers Devices

All Visitors, Contractors and Volunteers must complete a site induction before commencing duties whilst on site. Induction will include:

- Explanation of the service's Safe Use of Digital Technologies and Online Environments Policy.
- Clear instructions regarding prohibited use of personal devices.
- Signing of the Visitor/Contractor/Volunteer Agreement acknowledging compliance.
- Children are to be closely monitored by AWK Staff, when there are visitors, contractors and volunteers on site.

Personal electronic devices of Visitors, Contractors and Volunteers (mobile phones, tablets, smartwatches, cameras, laptops, USB's) must be:

- Switched off or on silent and
- Stored securely in the presence of children (eg, in bags)
- Taking, storing or sharing photographs, video or audio recordings of children on site using personal devices is strictly prohibited.

5.5 Family Devices – Photography, Video & Audio Recording

- Personal photography, video or audio recording of children is discouraged on site except when photographing or recording their own child only and where no other child appears in the image or video.
- Families must not share any group images or videos of children from Storypark (other than their own) on social media or other digital platforms.
- Families are asked to refrain from posting images or videos taken at the service that include other children or other families.

5.6 Safety and Child Safe Standards

- Risk assessments are required for digital device use on excursions (Regs 99–102).

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- Practices will align with the 10 Child Safe Standards, including child participation in decisions, equity, cultural safety, and regular review.

5.7 Staff Conduct

- All staff must adhere to the ACECQA National Model Code of Conduct.
- Staff are prohibited from using personal devices including smartwatches for photography or communication with children or families.
- All suspected breaches (e.g., inappropriate device use) must be reported to the Nominated Supervisor immediately (s.174).

5.8 Approved Online Environments

Children may engage in online environments supervised closely by AWK staff, only through service-approved devices and platforms such as:

- Educational learning platforms eg, Storypark when co-viewing with educators/families.
- Early Childhood appropriate platforms eg, ABC Kids Early Learning, approved interactive learning sites.
- Unapproved platforms eg, Youtube, social media, open search engines are not to be used by children.
- Educators must ensure that websites, apps, or platforms are age-appropriate and free from harmful content.
- Screens and devices are positioned so children's activity is visible to staff.
- Educators teach and reinforce simple digital safety rules such:
"We only go online with a teacher"
- Any exposure to unsafe online content, accidental disclosure of information, or unauthorised access is:
 1. Stopped immediately.
 2. Reported to the Nominated Supervisor.
 3. Documented in Privacy/Data Breach Register.
 4. Communicated to families if relevant.

6. Responsibilities

- **Approved Provider & Nominated Supervisor:** Ensure policy compliance, training, monitoring, and review.
- **Educators & Staff:** Implement policy, uphold child safety, document practice, and report concerns.
- **Families:** Provide informed consent, engage with the service's communication systems, and raise concerns promptly.

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- **Children:** Encouraged to express their views about digital device use in their learning environment.

7. Monitoring and Review

- This policy will be reviewed annually or earlier if legislative/regulatory changes occur.
- Regular audits of digital device use and storage practices will be conducted.
- Feedback from staff, families, and children will inform updates.

8. References

- Education and Care Services National Law (Qld)
- Education and Care Services National Regulations (Qld) (revised 2025)
- National Quality Framework & NQS
- National Child Safe Standards
- ACECQA National Model Code of Conduct
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)
- Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)
- Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)

Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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