P7-04: Social Media Policy

QDPA recognises both the benefits, and challenges, of using social media platforms in the early childhood setting. This policy has been developed to provide employees, families, volunteers and students with standards of use as they engage in conversations or interactions using social media for official, professional and personal use.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.1	Service philosophy and purposes	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and Responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood and support effective decision making and operation of the service.
7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
84	Awareness of child protection law
181	Confidentiality and storage of records
183	Storage of records and other documents

RELATED POLICIES

Child Safe Environment Policy Code of Conduct Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy Dealing with Complaints Policy (Staff) Health and Safety Policy	Interactions with Children, Family and Staff Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Student, Volunteer and Visitors Policy Supervision Policy

PURPOSE
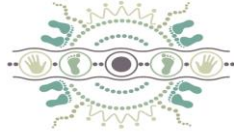
Being part of QDPA entails a position of trust and responsibility. We aim to ensure that QDPA, children, educators, and/or families are not compromised in any form on social media platforms and that all social media usage complies with our philosophy, relevant policies, and the code of conduct.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, educators, management, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, volunteers and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Social media is defined as "*forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)"* (Merriam-Webster dictionary).

We recognise that there are many advantages in using social media to network within QDPA's operations. It is important to approach usage with caution, through careful and systematic management. Whilst healthy debate may provide thought-provoking discussion, there are guidelines in place to ensure that QDPA remains open and welcoming for children, families, and staff.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations recognise the importance of safe physical and online environments to promote safety and wellbeing of all children. QDPA has the responsibility to ensure children and educators are protected from harm when they engage with digital technology including social media.

This policy applies to all forms of social media including (but not limited to):
- Social networking sites e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn
- Image sharing sites e.g., Instagram, Snapchat
- Music/dance videos e.g., Tik Tok
- Video hosting sites e.g., YouTube and Vimeo
- Community blogs e.g., Tumblr and Medium
- Discussion sites e.g., Reddit and Quora

NATIONAL MODEL CODE AND GUIDELINES
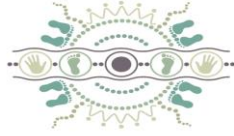
QDPA follows the current recommended practices released by ACECQA regarding the National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care and associated Guidelines. Our Service will ensure educators, staff, students and visitors adhere to the following practices at all times children are educated and cared for within QDPA:

- personal electronic devices must not be used to take images, record audio or capture videos of children being educated and cared for at the Service
- personal electronic devices, including phones and smartwatches, must not be in the possession of any person while working directly with children within the children's environment
- only electronic devices issued by QDPA are used to record and store images and videos of children
- procedures are followed regarding safe storage and restricted access of images and videos of children

SERVICE FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

QDPA and each preschool has a Facebook account to converse and share information with our families and community, which is administered by the executive officer and nominated supervisor.

The intent for these Facebook pages is to:

- keep families in touch with what's happening at each preschool, including upcoming and special events.
- provide educational information to families and employees.
- Network with the local and wider community
- Promote successes, achievements and projects of QDPA

NOTE: These accounts must not be used for personal comments or discussions.

PRIVACY

- All staff and educators must remain aware that they represent and could be identified as an employee of QDPA through any online activity
- Staff and educators must maintain appropriate privacy of families, employees, students, children and volunteers, including when they have obtained permission to publish content to the Facebook account
- Absolutely no written content will be published to Facebook without the implicit and written permission of families to whom the content relates
- QDPA will gain implicit and written family permission prior to posting photos of children through the enrolment form.
- Passwords will not be shared without authorisation from management
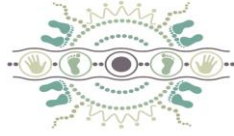
- QDPA will remain up to date with any changes to Facebook ensuring privacy setting remain up to date.

REGARDING THE SERVICE FACEBOOK PAGE, THE APPROVED PROVIDER OR NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- obtain written authorisation from a child's parents prior to posting any comment or photos of their child to the page
- ensure personal information about families, children and staff is not posted on-line
- ensure the highest level of privacy settings are established and maintained on the account
- ensure all passwords are kept confidential
- log out of Facebook when not in use
- regularly scan online content related to QDPA to ensure appropriateness.
- adhere to our *Dealing with Complaints Policy* and procedures to investigate any occurrences where a person working or volunteering at QDPA may:
    - post photos or information of QDPA or children
    - defame, harass or bully any other person who works at QDPA or is connected to the QDPA
- ensure that any staff, educator or volunteer found guilty of any Facebook/social media misconduct is aware that this may result in disciplinary procedures or termination of employment.

REGARDING ALL SOCIAL MEDIA, THE APPROVED PROVIDER, NOMINATED SUPERVISOR, EDUCATORS, STAFF MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS WILL NOT:

- access personal Facebook accounts or any other social media accounts on any workplace device
- access personal Facebook or any other social media accounts whilst educating and caring for children
- post any photos taken of the children enrolled at QDPA on their personal Facebook or any other social media account
- post any information about QDPA, colleagues, children, or families on any personal social media account
- vilify, harass or bully any other person who works at QDPA, family or community member connected to the QDPA
- post offensive or derogatory comments or information that could bring their professional standing or that of QDPA into disrepute
- use their personal camera or phones to take photos or video whilst at QDPA

PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS
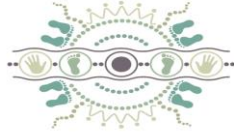
Staff members are to use their own personal discretion when adding a family of QDPA as a 'friend' on Facebook or any other social media. QDPA does not recommend that staff add families to personal social media accounts as they will still be seen as a representative of QDPA and required to uphold QDPA's Code of Conduct on all posts. It is extremely important not to post information about QDPA colleagues, children, or families on personal social media accounts, as this not only contravenes QDPA's policies and *Code of Conduct* but is considered a breach of the Commonwealth's *Privacy Act 1988* and *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*.

Families are asked to respect that staff may have a personal policy on adding families to personal social media accounts due to their professional philosophy, and that QDPA does not recommend staff to have families as friends on their private account.

If adding families to personal social media accounts, educators will adhere to relevant policies, including the Code of Conduct of QDPA.

CONSEQUENCES FOR INAPPROPRIATE CONDUCT

For inappropriate conduct to be considered unlawful, it is necessary to demonstrate a connection between the behaviour and the employment relationship that:

- is likely to cause serious damage to the relationship between the employee and QDPA
- damages or harms QDPA's interest or reputation
- is incompatible with the employee's duties in the education and care sector.

A person who has been involved in inappropriate conduct may require reprimand as per our *Code of Conduct Policy*. This may lead to disciplinary procedures or termination of their position.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

QDPA will continue to evaluate and assess our online safety practices through critical reflections, checklists, professional learning and discussions with families and staff. Our *Social Media Policy* will be updated and reviewed annually in consultation with families, staff, educators and management.

Educators and staff will complete online training through the [eSafety Commissioner](#) to ensure staff remain up to date with current research and are aware of how to report inappropriate content on social media sites.

RESOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). National Mode Code for Early Childhood Education and Care

Australian Government Office of the eSafety commission www.esafety.gov.au/early-years

eSafety Early Years Online safety for under 5s. https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-02/Early-years-booklet.pdf

eSafety Early Years Checklist https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/esafety-early-years-program-for-educators/checklist

SOURCES

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). *Guide to the National Quality Framework.*

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). National Model Code for Early Childhood Education and Care.

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2024). Taking Images or Videos of Children While Providing Early Education and Care. Guidelines for the National Model Code.

Dictionary by Merriam-Webster

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Education and Care Services National Regulations. (Amended 2023).

eSafety Commissioner: https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators/esafety-early-years-program-for-educators

Privacy Act 1988.

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.

REVIEW

Version Control	Date	Author	Description of Change
1.0	2018	QDPA	• Original document
2.0	December 2021	QDPA	• Document reviewed with change in leadership team in 2021. Additional related regulations & NQS references added. • Version control and description box added to clarify reviewed items/new inclusions • Format change to include policy statement, purpose, scope and implementation, addition of footers and page numbering and general layout changes • Detailed information and clarity provided to ensure that process are procedures were better outlined. • National Principles of Child Safe Standards added • Information regarding continuous improvement- eSafety Commissioner added • Addition of Tik Tok reference • Additional resources added for e-learning

3.0	January 2025	QDPA	- policy maintenance - no major changes to policy - National Model of Code and Guidelines added to policy - hyperlinks checked and repaired as required - updated sources - volunteers added within policy for compliance (specifically committee use of social media commentary on confidential matters)