



ACT Early Childhood Education and Care Sector Meeting

November 2025





The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Child safety landscape in early childhood education and care

November 2025

Child Safety Reforms

Child Safety Review under the NQF

National actions to strengthen child safety and quality

Children's Education and Care Assurance regulatory changes

ACT child safety round tables, forums and networking

Wellbeing and quality go hand in hand:
Acknowledging the impact of the news and social media cycle.

Who is safe to be with children

Enable regulators to proactively share the identity of prohibited individuals and individuals subject to enforceable undertakings with their current employer, whether that's a provider or recruitment agency.

- These changes are underway and being managed and run by regulatory authorities.
- Regulators will have expanded to gather information from recruitment agencies, planned to start in January 2026.
- CECA is doing more communication with the sector and other child-safety agencies to re-affirm that CECA investigates all Reportable Conduct matters involving ECEC services.

Who is safe to be with children

A new **Educator Register** will give regulators clear visibility of who is working in the sector and where.

A testing phase will start in December 2025, with national rollout from February 2026.

Over the long term the register will include a range of important information about educators that will improve integrity on safety and qualifications.

Once established, the Register will be a point of truth for the sector as a whole.

Who is safe to be with children

Mandatory child safety training will ensure all educators have the skills, ability and authorising environment to detect, escalate or report abuse.

- The package will be free for ECEC staff.
- All ECEC staff will be required to complete new national child safety training during work time.
- Specific training for executives, managers and Board will also be available.
- An Australian Government grants program will support workforce subsidies to help cover wage costs.
- Mandatory training will be available from early 2026. Grants will be available from 1 July 2026.

Who is safe to be with children

National Working With Vulnerable People/Children checks.

Attorneys-General are developing reforms to improve national consistency and strengthen the quality of working with children checks.

The national work in this realm has 6 priority actions

- priority action 1 – implementing mutual recognition of negative notices
- priority action 2 – meaningful consistency in automatic exclusion criteria
- priority action 3 – meaningful consistency in risk assessment frameworks
- priority action 4 – clear information sharing pathways
- priority action 5 – an operational national continuous checking capability
- priority action 6 – national mutual recognition of WWCCs

Protecting images and identity of children

Ensure the safe use of digital devices in ECEC services.

- In September 2025, all states restricted the use of personal mobile phones or other personal digital devices capable of taking images or videos while working directly with children. This has happened by providers implementing the Model Code through the new policy and procedures required from 1 September 2025.
- CECA's audit program will be the main compliance process for the Code. CECA's Authorised Officers will provide feedback on complying with the Code. CECA will be assessing the various strategies and issues arising from implementing the Code.

Protecting images and identity of children

National CCTV assessment

- A national assessment will explore the use of CCTV in ECEC in up to 300 services, with a strong focus on ethics, safety and transparency.
- The Australian Centre for Child Protection will oversee design and implementation. A different independent expert will evaluate the assessment.
- The assessment will take place in a range of service types, including those in regional, rural, and remote communities.
- The assessment will start this year. A final report will be provided to Education Ministers in 2026.

Increased transparency for families

Since September 2025, the following information is published on Starting Blocks:

- the date the local regulator last visited each service
- conditions placed on a provider or service by the regulator
- compliance breaches and enforcement actions
- a clearer link between a service and their provider.

Additionally, ACECQA will develop resources and education for families to help them better understand child safety and quality. Resources will become progressively available from September. The ACT is developing resources and channels for families too.

Additional information is expected to be published on Starting Blocks from this month.

Other reforms

Unannounced spot checks and joint regulation expansion

- The Australian Government regulator and State and Territory Regulatory Authorities are now working together on national compliance issues and common problems.
- In addition, compliance powers in the National Law, suspension or cancellation of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) will also be available to improve compliance.
- From November, Australian Government authorised officers will also be able to conduct unannounced service audits. This grows the coverage of oversight and enhances the national regulatory framework.
- CECA's annual audit program has also moved to being completely unannounced.

Other reforms

Rapid assessment of safeguarding practices

- In the light of the concerns around the practice of ‘under the roof’ ratios, ACECQA is assessing how current statutory requirements under the NQF are operationalised, including the practice of relying on ‘under the roof’ calculations.
- ACECQA is scheduled to report to Education Ministers by December 2025.

Tripling penalties

- Current penalties aren’t a strong enough deterrent and are not commensurate with other care sectors.
- Maximum penalties under the National Law and National Regulations will be tripled.
- Increased penalties will be in place early in 2026, pending the passage of legislation.

Minister's Round Table Forums on Child Safety

In response to the media coverage regarding child safety in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), Minister for Education and Early Childhood, Yvette Berry MLA, convened a series of online and in-person child safety forums with the ACT ECEC sector and the broader community.

These forums aimed to:

- Reaffirm the ACT Government's commitment to child safety
- Reinforce that educators in the ACT are highly professional, dedicated and committed to keeping children safe
- Share information on work being undertaken locally and nationally to address child safety concerns
- Provide a platform for open discussion on what is working well and what could be improved
- Strengthen trust and collaboration.

Minister's Round Table Forums on Child Safety

- The forums featured panel members from CECA, educator and representatives from across the sector and other invited guest speakers.

Sector Peaks Forum hosted by Minister Berry

- Keynote Speaker: Samantha Page, CEO of Early Childhood Australia

Two Educator Forums hosted by Minister Berry and the United Workers Union

Parent and Carer Forum hosted by Minister Berry and ACT Parents

- Special Guest Panelist: Deanne Carson, CEO and founder of Body Safety Australia
- This forum focused on providing parents and carers with practical advice on how to support their child's safety in ECEC.

What was heard

- A proactive reporting culture is essential for preventing harm
- Employers shape culture - great leadership inspires great practice
- Educator wellbeing must be prioritised
- Pay and conditions are a key barrier to retaining quality educators
- Staffing ratios are challenging
- Concerns relating to CCTV – privacy, technology, children’s rights
- Concerns relating to the quality of accelerated qualifications
- WWVP checks – timeliness is an issue, information sharing with providers is essential
- Collective action is required to address these issues – child safety is everyone’s responsibility.

ACT Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Professional Learning Network

- Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Professional Learning Network (the Network is an initiative of the ACT Government's *Set up for Success: An Early Childhood Strategy for the ACT* and delivered by ELM).
- The Network has built strong momentum across the ACT following a consultation process and Network design phase in collaboration with the ACT ECEC sector.
- The Network's Leadership team are facilitating cross-sector collaboration by bringing ACT ECEC providers, service leaders, and educators together through a series of Network events.
- Two of these Network events focus on child safeguarding.
- Amanda Tobler from ELM will have further information available during the break.

Thank you.