



13 MAR, 2026

New Life Ed program tackles online risks for toddlers

Bundaberg Today, Bundaberg

Page 1 of 1

New Life Ed program tackles online risks for toddlers

Leading preventative health education charity Life Ed has launched a new digital safety skills program for under-fives, as more than 80 per cent of parents report their preschoolers are already online – and research showing most toddlers can swipe before they speak.

Life Ed Queensland chief executive officer Taryn Black says the program comes at a crucial time, with emerging threats from AI platforms, the risk of unwanted contact, and online bullying creating escalating dangers for all young people.

“Many preschoolers are accessing the online world long before they own a device,” she said.

“Digital technology is already part of their everyday learning and play, so we can’t afford to wait until primary school to start teaching these skills.

“It’s critical to build safe habits and clear boundaries from the earliest years.”

Rolling out nationally this term, Harold’s Safe Screen Time will be delivered in preschools and early learning centres across Australia.

With a focus on fun, play-based learning, hero mascot Healthy Harold guides children through stories and activities that help embed key safety messages.

The sessions teach children how to manage screen time, recognise dangers and develop essential help-seeking behaviours.

The program was developed in consultation with Early Childhood Australia and the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality

Authority (ACECQA), and directly responds to concerning findings from the eSafety Commissioner including:

- 81 per cent of parents say their 2-5 year old uses the internet.
- 89 per cent of four-year-olds would click on a potentially harmful pop-up.
- 73 per cent of four-year-olds would share their name and address online.
- 70 per cent of children in that age group would disclose their age.

The new module strengthens Life Ed’s whole-school approach to cyber safety and respectful relationships, supporting children to navigate the digital world from preschool through to Year 6.

Life Ed Queensland’s latest survey of 2600 parents (2025) found that more than 90 per cent observed at least one positive change in their child after participating in Life Ed programs.

Many parents reported safer device habits at home, with almost 35 per cent of parents noting improvements in how their child engaged with technology.

One in three said their child could now recognise and report unsafe online contact – an important milestone in early digital literacy.

“Parents are struggling to keep up with the pace of change, so programs like this are providing real relief,” Ms Black said.



Four year old Fernilia joined Healthy Harold and educator Sara Allen for Life Ed’s new digital safety skills program for under fives. (Supplied)