



Australian Government  
Office of the Australian  
Information Commissioner

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

# Children's Online Privacy Code Discussion Paper

Parents and carers

*Have your voice heard*



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We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the land we live on – Australia. They were the first people to live on and use the land and waters.

*We are the Australian Government's privacy regulator, and our goal is to protect the personal information of Australians.*



## About us

### What is the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner?

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (**OAIC**) is the independent national regulator for privacy and freedom of information. We promote and uphold your rights to access government-held information and to have your personal information protected. You can think of us as like 'privacy police'.

The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) wrote this document. When you read the word 'we', it means the OAIC.

You can ask for help to read this document. A friend, family member or support person might be able to help you.

If you speak a language other than English and need help with this document, please call the Translating and Interpreting Service on [131 450](tel:131450) and ask the operator to contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner on [1300 363 992](tel:1300363992).

# About the Code

## Share your ideas about the development of the Children's Online Privacy Code.

We want to know your ideas about what we should include in the Code and your privacy concerns about online services that children use. We will use this information to inform the development of the Code.

When we refer to 'Children' we mean people under the age of 18.



## What is the Children's Online Privacy Code?

We are currently writing the Children's Online Privacy Code. This Code will be a special set of rules made to help protect children's privacy when using the internet. It makes sure that organisations who run apps, websites and games that children might use take care of their personal information (like their name, age and what they like to do online).

The Code will specify how some online services accessed by children must comply with the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) which are pre-existing privacy rules.

The Code will be finished and in place by **10 December 2026**.

## Why do we need a Children's Online Privacy Code?

The Code is being developed to help make the internet a place that recognises the importance of children's privacy and takes steps to protect the privacy of young people.

The Code is different from the social media age restrictions that say children under 16 shouldn't be allowed to use social media.

This Code isn't about keeping children off the internet. Instead, it's about making sure websites, apps, games and social media follow rules to help keep children's personal information private and protected.

## How do I submit my responses?

Submit your answers by emailing this completed discussion paper to [copc@oaic.gov.au](mailto:copc@oaic.gov.au) or answer the questions through our online form which you can access from the [Children's online privacy code consultation](#) webpage. The due date for this discussion paper is **30 June 2025**.

We might publish your response on our website. It will be anonymous: this means that no one will know who you are or what responses you submitted. Please do not include any personally identifying information in your submission.

## What do we mean when we talk about online privacy?

Online privacy is about protecting personal information. For the purposes of this discussion paper, we are specifically talking about the protection of children's personal information, such as their name, address and interests.

It is estimated that by the time a child turns 13, around 72 million pieces of data will have already been collected about them.

Protecting children's personal information ensures that their data remains secure and is not misused, helping to prevent risks like scams, identity theft or data breaches.

This often gets confused with online safety, which focuses on protecting children from harm, such as cyberbullying, abuse and inappropriate content. While both are important, the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) is the Australian Government's independent online safety regulator, while we (OAIC) are focused on keeping your personal information protected. You can read more about eSafety's work here: [www.eSafety.gov.au](http://www.eSafety.gov.au).

### Key terms

<b>App</b>	a computer program or software that has been created for a particular purpose, like a reading skills app that you download onto a mobile device, like a phone, iPad, or laptop.
<b>Privacy settings</b>	who can contact you or see your profile.
<b>Location tracker</b>	technology that shows your location.
<b>Notifications</b>	a digital message from an app or website to the person using it.
<b>Parental controls</b>	a feature of a device, app or website that allows parents to monitor or restrict what their children see or do online, including the ability to control how their child's data is shared.
<b>Personal information</b>	information about who you are or what you do.
<b>Privacy policy</b>	explains what the app or website does with your data.
<b>Data</b>	a collection of facts or information, like your hobbies or how many people are in your family.
<b>Data sharing</b>	the process of making data available to other users, websites, apps or businesses.

# How to have a say

## Scenario-based exercise

Your thoughts and ideas as parents/carers are important. We want to know what you think the Code should include.

We have set out 6 scenarios below that highlight some of the issues we are aware of, that parents/carers have experienced and raised.

Read the scenarios and answer the questions at the end of each one.

There is also space at the end for you to raise any other feedback, ideas or concerns that you don't think relate directly to the scenarios.



## SCENARIO 1

### The school app consent dilemma

Your child brings home a permission form to use a new education app at school. The form asks for your consent to collect and share your child's personal information. This could include their first and last name, the school they attend and information about their academic performance. The privacy policy is long and difficult to understand. You figure you just need to sign it, because if you don't, your child won't be able to use the app and may be left out in lessons.

### Questions

Have you ever experienced this, or is it something you are concerned about? If so, do you think it's fair? Would you like this to be done differently?

How do you think organisations could do a good job of explaining to children and parents/carers what they do with their personal information?



### What do you think?

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## SCENARIO 2

### The confusing parental controls

Your child has a tablet with several apps, including social media and games. You want to set up parental/carer controls to limit data sharing and help protect your child's privacy, but the settings are hard to find, and there is no clear guidance on what privacy setting options are available, what they do, and how it might affect your child's use of the apps.



### Questions

What would a simple and effective parental/carer control system look like?

What sort of parental/carer control features are most important to you and which do you currently use and/or would consider using in the future?



### What do you think?

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## SCENARIO 3

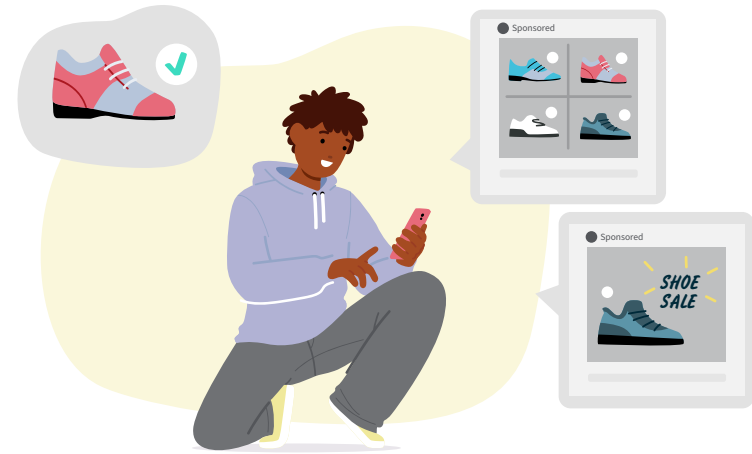
## The mystery of targeted ads

Your child watches videos on a streaming app and suddenly starts seeing ads for toys they searched for on the internet. You wonder if the app is tracking their online activity, and whether this is why your child is seeing these ads.

## Questions

Should organisations be allowed to track children's online activity and use this information to specifically target them with ads?

What rules should be in place to limit targeted advertising to children? For example, should targeted advertising have age restrictions, and if so, what ages should be restricted?



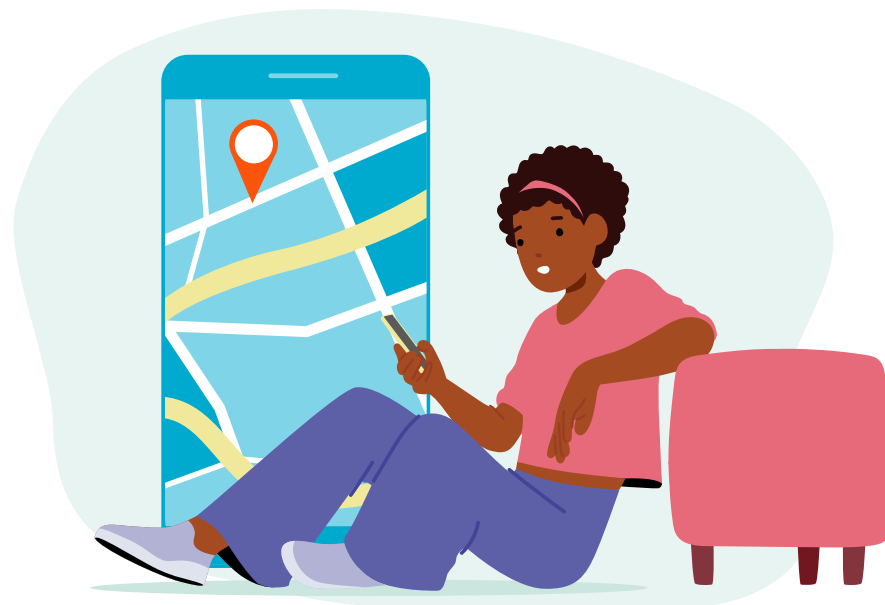
### What do you think?

## SCENARIO 4

### The location tracking dilemma

Your child downloads a new gaming platform on their tablet. Later, you discover it is tracking their location by default and showing it to individuals who are also playing the same game.

These could be people your child knows in real life, online friends, or strangers. Your child didn't realise this, and you are unsure how to turn it off.



### Questions

Should location tracking be turned off automatically when children first download an app or access a website?

How should apps or websites inform children and parents about location tracking?



### What do you think?

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## SCENARIO 5

## The never-ending data collection

Your child signed up for a social media platform when they were younger. Now, as a teenager, they want to access and update their personal information that the social media platform holds, but the platform doesn't offer an easy way to do this.

## Questions

## How can organisations help children understand what personal information is held about them?

How can organisations make it easier for children to update or change the data held about them?

Do you think children should have a right to delete their data?

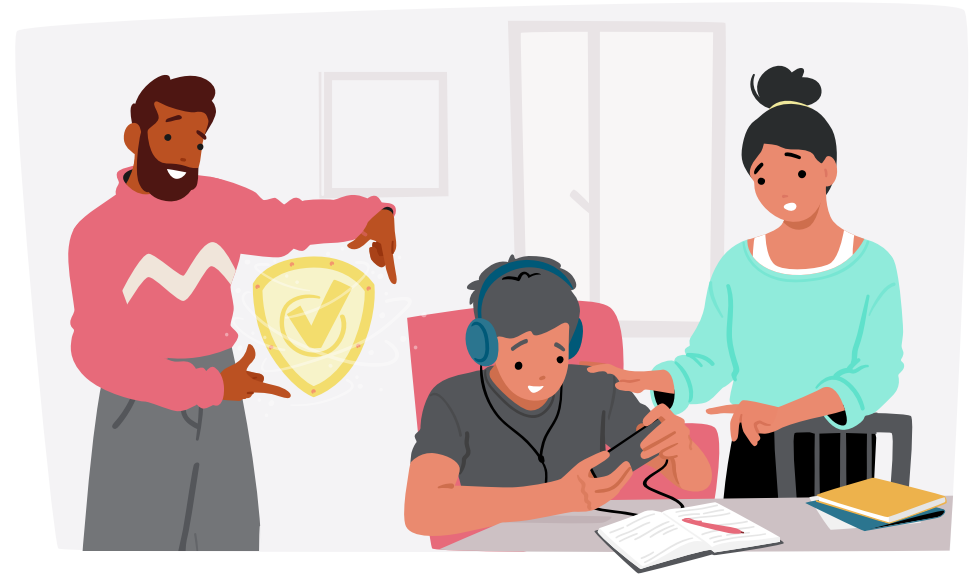


### What do you think?

## SCENARIO 6

### The tricky privacy choices?

Your child is excited to sign up for a social media platform. They cannot wait: everyone at school is on it, and it's all they talk about at lunch time. They are eagerly navigating through the setup process. Suddenly, a notification appears on the screen, asking if they are comfortable with their data being shared for advertising purposes. The options are clearly presented: a large eye-catching green 'agree' button and, a smaller, less noticeable 'disagree' button beside it. Your child quickly taps 'agree' not fully considering the implications before proceeding.



### Questions

Should platforms be allowed to design privacy setting prompts to influence children to click a certain response?

How can organisations present privacy choices in a fair and easy-to-understand way?

### What do you think?

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## Other privacy concerns

You can also include any other ideas about online privacy in the textbox below.

### Other concerns...



## Submit your answers to us

Now that you have filled out the textboxes under the scenarios above, you can submit it to the Privacy Commissioner by emailing it to [copc@oaic.gov.au](mailto:copc@oaic.gov.au).

And remember, whilst the Code will help protect the personal information of children, it's still important for them (and you) to be careful when online. Always talk to a trusted person if something doesn't feel right or if you are feeling unsure about an online experience involving yourself or a child in your care.





## How to get help

### Where can I get help/talk to someone about my concerns?

If you are a parent or carer of a child who you think may have experienced an upsetting or harmful online experience, please reach out to the [Kids Helpline Phone Counselling Service](#) on [1800 55 1800](tel:1800551800) and/or the eSafety Commissioner to make a report at [www.esafety.gov.au/report](http://www.esafety.gov.au/report).

## Word list

This list provides a more detailed explanation of the terms and words used in the discussion paper.

### Personal information

Personal information can include things like your:

- name
- address
- birthday

Personal information also includes **sensitive information**. Sensitive information is personal information that includes information or an opinion about an individual's:

- racial or ethnic origin
- political opinions or associations
- religious or philosophical beliefs
- some aspects of biometric information
- trade union membership or associations
- sexual orientation or practices
- criminal record
- health or genetic information

It is information that people can use to figure out who you are.

### Social media age restrictions

The social media age restrictions are a new law (The Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024). This new law introduces a mandatory minimum age of 16 for accounts on certain social media platforms.

### Privacy policy

A privacy policy is a document that explains how an organisation (like a website, app or game) collects, uses, stores and shares your personal information.

### Notifications

A notification is an alert (typically a pop-up or other message) generated by an application to notify the user of a new message, update, social media post, etc.

### Privacy settings

Privacy settings are customisable options that users can adjust to control how their data and online presence are perceived and shared.

## Location tracker

A location tracker, also known as a GPS tracking device, is a technology that monitors the location and movement of an object, person, or vehicle using satellite navigation or other technologies like Wi-Fi and cellular signals.

## Data

Data, in relation to online data and people, refers to any information, facts, or figures, especially those related to individuals' online activities and interactions, that can be collected, stored, and processed digitally.

## Data sharing

In the context of this discussion paper, data sharing is the process by which data is shared between organisations for the purpose of commercial profiteering; this can involve the sale of or exchange of children's data.



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