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Townsville Childcare Centre Faces Probe for 19 Breaches

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Grow Early Education, a childcare centre in Townsville, is under investigation for 19 regulatory breaches since late 2023, including failure to report incidents and overcapacity operations, raising concerns about child safety and compliance.

Grow Early Education, a childcare centre in Townsville, Queensland, is facing renewed scrutiny from the Queensland Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (QECRA) after racking up 19 breaches of the Education and Care Services National Law since late 2023, according to an ABC investigation. The centre has been cited for failing to report serious

incidents and operating beyond its approved capacity, violations that undermine child safety and regulatory standards. The QECRA, responsible for overseeing early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, has confirmed an ongoing investigation but has not disclosed specific enforcement actions, citing confidentiality under the National Law. These breaches, detailed in regulatory documents, highlight systemic issues in the \$20 billion childcare sector, where compliance failures can erode parental trust and economic stability.

The centre's infractions include unreported incidents, such as inadequate supervision leading to safety risks, and exceeding the licensed capacity of 75 children, which strains staff resources and compromises care quality. The QECRA's 2025 enforcement data shows that non-compliance with incident reporting and capacity limits can result in fines up to \$11,500 per breach, as outlined in the National Law. "Ensuring child safety is non-negotiable, and providers must adhere to strict regulations," a QECRA spokesperson stated, as reported by ABC News on July 31, 2025. The centre's history of violations has sparked concern among parents, with some, like Townsville mother Sarah Mitchell, expressing frustration: "Parents deserve transparency about what's happening at these centres," she told ABC News. The investigation follows broader sector challenges, with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) noting in 2024 that for-profit providers often prioritize cost-cutting over compliance.

For families, the economic impact is significant. Childcare fees at Grow Early Education average \$130 per day, yet repeated breaches raise questions about value for money. The QECRA's risk-based approach, which includes unannounced inspections, aims to address such issues, but critics argue enforcement lacks teeth. With 1.2 million Australian households relying on ECEC, according to The Parenthood, the Townsville case underscores the need for robust oversight to protect children and ensure businesses operate within the law, safeguarding both safety and economic fairness.