



RIVERINA REGIONAL LIBRARY CHILDREN'S POLICY

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This document is to be reviewed annually.			
RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR		Robert Knight, Executive Director RRL	

1. INTRODUCTION

The Riverina Regional Library (RRL) is committed to providing young people with opportunities to satisfy both their recreation and information needs in safe and welcoming environments. RRL branch library staff appreciate the importance of children as a core group of users and as such strive to provide resources and programs that stimulate and engage young people within their communities.

The RRL Children's Policy formalises the general principles under which RRL branch libraries operate in regard to the provision of services to children as well as outlining the responsibilities of parents/legal guardians and staff in regard to children within branch library settings.

RRL is part of the strong NSW Public Library Network that includes 376 service points across the state. The State Library of NSW plays a pivotal role through provision of consultancy and support services to public libraries, as well as administering the distribution of State Government library funding to NSW Councils. As such, the RRL accept and promote the State Library of NSW [Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries V3.0](#).

1.1 Policy Objectives

The RRL Children's Policy determines guidelines for all stakeholders, including staff and the public, in relation to the presence of children within RRL branch libraries. Guidelines include parental responsibilities, child safe and child-friendly principles and mandatory reporting of [at risk](#) children.

1.2 Scope of Policy

This policy applies at all RRL branch libraries.

1.3 Definitions

- Riverina Regional Library branch libraries include:

Adelong, Batlow, Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Corowa, Culcairn, Gundagai, Henty, Holbrook, Howlong, Junee, Mulwala, Talbingo, Temora, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Wagga Wagga and RRL Mobile Library.
- Member councils are councils that are signatories to the RRL Deed of Agreement.
- In the context of the RRL Children's Policy a **minor** is deemed a child at the age of 10 or under. Please refer to the State Library of NSW Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries (revised October 2013).
- **Mandatory Reporting** occurs where a person who in their paid work is obliged by law to report specific forms of child abuse or neglect to [NSW Family and Community Services](#) where that person reasonably suspects that abuse has occurred.
- Mandatory reporting requirements vary across Australia. In the case of NSW, a person who is in paid work in a career which delivers health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children is required to report suspected cases of harm or neglect to the Department of Community Services.

1.4 Legislative Context

RRL operates under the [Library Act 1939](#) and the [Library Regulation 2010](#).

Related legislation: [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#).

1.5 Related Documents

The [State Library of NSW](#) provides guidance to NSW public libraries in relation to best-practice guidelines for children, parents and public libraries. The RRL Children's Policy has been developed from the [Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries V3.0](#).

[eSafety](#) is a Federal Government initiative administered by the Australian Government Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner. The aim of the web based program is to provide relevant and up-to-date information to promote online safety aimed at both children and parents/guardians.

RRL Internet Usage Policy

RRL Customer Lending Policy

RRL Customer Exclusion Policy

1.6 Responsibilities

RRL staff and members of the public who visit or are members of the RRL are responsible for abiding by the intent of this policy. The RRL Children's Policy is available to the public via the [RRL website](#).

1.7 Reporting Requirements

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with item RRL2.2.4 – Shape the Future of the RRL Integrated Planning Strategy 2018-2022 with a full policy review undertaken every four years in line with Local Government procedures. Progress of policies will be reported biannually.

1.8 Approval Arrangements

Approval arrangements will be undertaken through the RRL Advisory Committee approval process.

1.9 Review procedures

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with item RRL2.2.4 – Shape the Future of the RRL Integrated Planning Strategy 2018-2022.

2. POLICY CONTENT

2.1 General Principles of the Riverina Regional Library Children's Policy

Service Statement

The RRL collections, programs and services to young people may include:

- fiction, non-fiction and recreational books
- magazines
- computer games for use within a branch library
- CDs
- DVDs

- computer and internet access
- assistance from specialist and general staff in accessing collections
- homework help
- internet training
- Storytime and Baby Bounce programs
- space for activities or study.

NB: Storytime, Baby Bounce, space for activities and study, computer games for in-house use, computer and internet access are subject to availability at each branch library.

2.1.1 Access to resources

Library materials which are not classified, or are classified “Unrestricted”, “General” or “PG” (Parental Guidance) are available to all library users. Items that have a classification of “MA 15+” are legally available to members who are aged over 15 years of age. Items that have a classification of “R” (Restricted Audience over 18 years) are restricted and available only to library users over the age of 18 years of age.

RRL advises parents/legal guardians of young children to use their own judgement in monitoring and supervising what their child is accessing or borrowing from the library and reminds parents/legal guardians that responsibility for access to items as above remains with the parent/legal guardian.

Read more about the [Classification \(Publications, Films and Computer Games\) Act 1995](#).

2.1.2 Unattended Children

NSW Legislation does not state an age at which a child can be left unattended within a public place. The State Library of NSW Children’s Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries (revised October 2013) states that the age at which children are able to be left unattended in libraries varies and is the decision of the individual library or library service as to what minimum age is set. In the case of RRL, children left unattended at a branch library are considered [at risk](#) if left unattended and are aged 10 years or younger. Parents/legal guardians of children left unattended in the library may be committing an offence under s.228 of the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#).

Unsupervised children within a library can cause disturbances to other users and are also at risk of harm to themselves or others. RRL branch libraries reserve the right to ask any user to leave the library if their behaviour is: affecting other library patrons or staff, is dangerous to themselves or others within the library, or if their behaviour is destructive to collections and other resources held within the library.

The [Library Regulation 2010](#) states that library users who cause disturbance which interferes with other users of the library may be asked to leave the premises.

2.1.3 Internet use

RRL branch libraries do not use censorship software products to limit internet content. Parents are advised that RRL branch libraries do not take any responsibility for the material viewed via the internet and caution parents/legal guardians to supervise and advise their children on appropriate use of its applications. Parents/guardians are required to provide authorisation upon uptake of a RRL membership for a minor in their care. The signed authorisation provides library staff with information regarding the parent's/guardian's wishes in relation to the use of the internet by the minor whilst in RRL branch libraries.

Please read the RRL Internet Usage Policy for further information regarding conditions of internet use.

2.1.4 Child Protection

RRL supports the child-safe and child-friendly policies and practices of the [Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People](#):

- **Child-safe** means taking steps to keep children safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse
- **Child-friendly** means children are valued, respected and included so they feel confident they will be listened to

Mandatory reporting

Under section 24 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1988*, any person can report harm or risk of a child or young person aged under 16.

Public library staff are not generally required to be mandatory reporters of suspected cases of neglect or harm of children. There is however, a legal requirement for those who are employed in selected occupations to report suspected cases of neglect or harm (in NSW) to the Department of Community Services. These occupations include those which deliver: health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children.

Library staff who participate in providing services to children are required by law to report incidents where they reasonably suspect, during the course of their work, that a child is at risk of harm.

Please read the Australian Institute of Family Studies: [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse](#) (2016) for information related to requirements of mandatory reporting in NSW.

2.1.5 Child related employment

The individual councils of Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Corowa, Greater Hume, Gundagai, Junee, Lockhart, Temora, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Urana and Wagga Wagga are required under NSW legislation (*Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*) to undertake Working with Children checks for employees who are entering into child-related employment.

Working in a library is not classified as child-related employment with the exception of some library roles in which there is direct unsupervised contact with children as may be the case for a children's librarian etc.

Amendments

Amendments to this policy in relation to operational matters may be made with the approval of the Executive Director RRL.

3. References

Commonwealth Government Legislation, [Classification \(Publications, Films and Computer Games\) Act 1995](#)

New South Wales [Advocate for Children and Young People](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Library Act 1939](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Library Regulation 2010](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)

New South Wales Government Legislation, [Local Government Act 1993](#)

State Library of NSW, [Legislation and Policies](#)

Library Council of NSW, [Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Libraries](#)

Australian Institute of Family Studies, [Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse](#)