

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 regarding the provision of services to children as well as outlining the responsibilities of parents/legal guardians and staff regarding children within branch library settings.

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, RRL accepts and promotes the State Library of [NSW Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries](#) which forms the basis of this policy.

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, Barooga, Batlow, Berrigan, Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra, Corowa, Culcairn, Finley, Gundagai, Henty, Holbrook, Howlong, Jindera, Junee, Leeton, Mulwala, Temora, Tocomwal, Tumbarumba, Tumut, and the 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 15 October 2020).

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 [Communities and Justice](#) where that person reasonably suspects that abuse has occurred. Mandatory reporting requirements vary across Australia.

1.4 Legislative Context

RRL operates under the [Library Act 1939](#) and the [Library Regulation 2018](#).

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

1.5 Related Documents

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 and Revision Requirements

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with objectives in the RRL Strategic Plan.

Progress of policy reviews will be reported biannually.

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

2. POLICY CONTENT

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

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 Australian legislation on classification and the [National Classification Scheme](#)

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 15 October 2020) states that the age at which children can 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 2018](#) states that library users who cause disturbance which interferes with other users of the library may be asked to leave the premises. Other actions may include reporting the child's conduct to the guardian, school, or police.

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

In NSW, mandatory reporting is regulated by the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998 \(the Care Act\)](#). A person who is in paid work in a career in health care, welfare, education, children's services, residential services, law enforcement, disability services, religious ministry or as registered psychologists, wholly or partly delivering services to children as part of their professional work or other paid employment, is required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to [Communities and Justice](#).

Under section 24 of the [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#), any person can report harm or risk of a child or young person aged under 16.

Library staff who participate in providing education, training, or other 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.

Library staff are required under the [Children's Guardian Act 2019 \(NSW\)](#) to make a report if they become aware of a reportable allegation or reportable conviction in relation to another employee. In this context, library staff includes a volunteer engaged to provide services to children and a contractor who holds, or is required to hold, a [Working with children check](#) clearance.

Reportable allegations and reportable convictions concern "reportable conduct", including a sexual offence, sexual misconduct, ill-treatment of a child, neglect of a child, an assault against a child, an offence of failing to care for a child, an offence of concealing a child abuse offence, and behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

If the employee about which the allegation or conviction relates holds, or is required to hold, a working with children check clearance, then the allegation or conviction is reportable even if it occurred outside of the course of the person's engagement with the library.

Each local authority is required under the [Children's Guardian Act 2019 \(NSW\)](#) to have its own policies and procedures about reporting, and the investigation of reports, under the [Reportable conduct scheme](#). Libraries should have regard to their local arrangements.

Child safe principles

The [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) promotes child-safe policies and practices by encouraging organisations to become child safe. A Child Safe Organisation is one that systematically; reduces the likelihood of harm occurring against a child, increases the likelihood of identifying and reporting harm and provides adequate support to a child when

harm has occurred or is alleged to have occurred. The [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) provides eResources to support libraries in identifying risks and strategies.

2.1.5 Child related employment

The individual councils of Bland, Coolamon, Cootamundra-Gundagai, Federation, Greater Hume, Junee, Leeton, Lockhart, Snowy Valleys, and Temora are required under NSW legislation ([Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)) to undertake [Working with children checks](#) for employees who are entering into child-related employment.

Working in a library may be identified as 'child related employment'. In general, library staff who work face-to-face with children will need to check under the NSW [Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Act 2012](#). Staff who only have incidental contact with children will not.

2.2 Service Statement

RRL is dedicated to providing relevant, current and accessible information, resources and collections for our constituents as well as providing safe, welcoming and accessible facilities. Where possible, RRL customers can expect:

- Prompt, courteous, and accurate service.
- Clear and accurate information about library policies.
- Libraries to be open in accordance with advertised opening hours.
- Staff with professional expertise and knowledge.
- Access to a wide range of library and information services.
- Free and equal access to resources and services to all individuals and groups within the community, in accordance with the [Library Act 1939](#).
- Access to online library services and internet facilities.
- Confidentiality in accordance with the [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#).

2.3 Amendments

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

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 2018](#)
New South Wales Government Legislation, [Children and Young Persons \(Care and Protection\) Act 1998](#)
New South Wales Government Legislation, [Child Protection \(Working with Children\) Act 2012](#)
New South Wales Government Legislation, [Children's Guardian Act 2019 \(NSW\)](#)
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 Public Libraries](#)
Office of the Children's Guardian, [Working with Children Check](#)
NSW Communities and Justice, [ChildStory Reporter](#)

Original publication date: June 2010

Revision number	Issue Date	Executive Council Resolution	RRL Advisory Committee Meeting Date
1	June 2010	July 2009	June 2010
2	January 2014	May 2014	March 2014
3	January 2018	June 2018	March 2018
4	October 2020	June 2021	March 2021
5	July 2024	June 2024	March 2024

This document is to be reviewed annually.