



NAMBUCCA SHIRE COUNCIL LIBRARY MANAGEMENT CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS POLICY POLICY NO: G15

Our Vision

Nambucca Valley ~ Living at its best

Our Mission Statement

'The Nambucca Valley will value and protect its natural environment, maintain its assets and infrastructure and develop opportunities for its people.'

1.0 Policy objective

Young people are core clients of public libraries and are the future adult users and supporters of our library services. This policy outlines the responsibilities of Nambucca Shire Council Libraries, Library staff and parents/carers of children and young adults who use the Library's facilities.

2.0 Related legislation

The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
The Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995
NSW Library Act 1939
Library Regulation 2010

3.0 Definitions

Child	Clients aged 0 – 12 years
Young adult	Clients aged 13 years up to and including 18 years
Unattended child	A child using public library facilities unsupervised by a parent or carer

4.0 Policy Content

4.1 Service Statement

Public libraries are agencies that provide the public (including young people) with access to information and recreational materials through a variety of services and resources. Libraries also support young people through the provisions of programs that foster an appreciation of literature and promote the development of information literacy skills.

The Nambucca Shire Council Library services for young people include:

- a Fiction and non-fiction (study and recreational books)
- b Magazines

- c Non- Print resources, eg: CD-ROMs, DVD's, online databases, eAudio, emagazines, ebooks
- d Internet access
- e Assistance from staff in accessing collections and information
- f Public access computers, including Internet access
- g Pre-school story time
- h Visits by school classes and space for activities and study
- i Visits to schools by library and other council staff

4.2 Parental Responsibility Statement

4.2.1 *Access to resources*

Library collections are available to all library users without restriction, except for items restricted by law. The Library exercises no limitation on access to publications classified *Unrestricted* under the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*.

It is not the responsibility of the Nambucca Shire Council or its library staff to exercise a supervisory or restrictive role in determining which library resources young people may use or access. Parents/carers are encouraged to set their own family rules in consultation with their child/ren. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to monitor young people's selection and use of library resources including the internet.

4.2.2 *Items classified MA or R*

Public libraries observe the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*. Multimedia rated '**MA 15+**' are restricted viewing to persons of 15 years and over and may only be borrowed or viewed by persons under 15 with the permission of their parent/guardian. Resources classified **R** may only be borrowed or viewed by persons over the age of 18 upon presentation of ID.

4.2.3 *Access to electronic resources*

Library staff do not monitor or control the content of materials offered through the Internet. Parents/carers are responsible for their child's use of the Internet, in accordance with the Library Internet Policy. Some exceptions to the parent/carer consent may be made for minors who are living independently.

4.3 Unattended children

4.3.1 Staff take care to ensure that the library is a safe and welcoming place for all library users. Responsibility for a child's use of the library, however, lies with the parent/carer at all times. Libraries do not have the facilities or appropriate licences to attend to children who are left unsupervised. Young children left alone in a library can become distressed, bored or disruptive. Library users, including young people, who disturb other library users, may be removed from the library under the *Library Act 1939*.

4.3.2 Unsupervised children can be at risk in any public place, including public libraries. Library staff do not supervise children in the library, so there is a risk that unattended children may leave the library at any time, hurt themselves, or be approached by strangers. Libraries are busy public places, open to all, and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to children. In addition, libraries do not have the facilities to attend to children who are sick, injured or hungry.

- 4.3.3 A child left unattended in a public library may be classed as a child or young person at risk of harm under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, s23, and subsequently may be reported as such to the Department of Family and Community Services under s24 or s27 of the Act.
- 4.3.4 There is no law that specifies a minimum age at which children may be left unattended in public. The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* is concerned with individual circumstances rather than age. For example, a 7 year old child who uses the library constructively on his/her own for an hour every day after school while waiting for a parent is unlikely to be considered a problem, and is indeed a welcome client. On the other hand, a 10 year old child who is left at the library every day of the summer holidays from opening time until closing time is at risk and presents an unreasonable burden for the public library.
- 4.3.5 Parents who leave a child unattended in a public library are exposing their child to potential harm, and may themselves be committing an offence under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, s228.
- 4.3.6 If a child is left unattended in the library for a long period of time, parents/carers will be contacted and informed of library policy.
- 4.3.7 If the parents/carers ignore this policy or are unable to be contacted, the situation may be reported to the Department of Family and Community Services if library staff determine the child is at risk of harm.
- 4.3.8 If a child is left unattended at closing time staff should call the Police.

5.0 Related Procedures or Documents

Nambucca Shire Council – Library Management Loans Policy
 Nambucca Shire Council – Library Management Internet Policy

6.0 History

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