



NAMBUCCA VALLEY COUNCIL LIBRARY MANAGEMENT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS POLICY NO: G15

Our Vision

The Nambucca Valley is a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive and connected community that values and respects the Gumbaynggirr culture, it's environment and lifestyle, whilst creating opportunities for a safe and meaningful future for all.

1.0 Policy objective

Children and young persons 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 Valley Council, Council's Library staff and parents/carers of children and young persons who use the Library's facilities.

2.0 Related legislation

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995
1995 NSW Library Act 1939
Library Regulation 2018

3.0 Definitions

Child/Children	Clients aged 0 – 12 years
Young persons	Clients aged 13 to 17 years old
Unattended child	A child using public library facilities unsupervised by a parent or carer

4.0 Policy Content

4.1 Background

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

4.2 Principles

4.2.1 Child Safe Guidelines

Nambucca Valley Council acknowledges the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe Standards which provide a framework for creating child safe organisations and include child-safe policies and practices. We are committed to being an organisation 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 Child Safe Standards are:

- 1 Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance, and culture.
- 2 Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
- 3 Families and communities are informed and involved.
- 4 Equity is upheld, and diverse needs are taken into account.
- 5 People working with children are suitable and supported.
- 6 Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.
- 7 Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
- 8 Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
- 9 Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
- 10 Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

The Nambucca Valley Council's library services for children and young people include:

- a Fiction and non-fiction (study and recreational books).
- b Magazines
- c Non-Print resources, e.g.: CD-ROMs, DVD's, online databases, eAudio, eMagazines, eBooks, streaming services
- d Internet access.
- e Assistance from staff in accessing collections and information.
- f Public access computers, including internet access.
- g Literacy Programs e.g. Storytime
- h Visits by school classes and space for activities and study.
- i Visits to schools by library and other Council staff.

As per Nambucca Valley Council's Child Safe Standards Implementation Plan, Council will develop a Child Safe Policy which will clarify and identify professional and legal obligations of Council and our employees and volunteers including the requirement for Working With Children Checks for staff and volunteers working at designated Council operations such as the libraries.

4.3 Scope

4.3.1 Parental Responsibility Statement

4.3.1.1 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 Valley Council or its library staff to exercise a supervisory or restrictive role in determining which library resources children and young persons may use or access. Parents/carers are encouraged to set their own family rules in

consultation with their child/ren and young persons. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to monitor children and young persons selection and use of library resources including the internet.

4.3.1.2 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.

4.3.1.3 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 and/or young persons use of the internet, in accordance with the Library Management Internet Policy. Some exceptions to the parent/carer consent may be made for minors who are living independently.

4.3.2 Unattended Children

4.3.2.1 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. Library users, including young persons, who disturb other library users, may be removed from the library under the *Library Act 1939*.

4.3.2.2 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.

4.3.2.3 A child left unattended in a public library may be classed as a child or young persons at risk of harm under Section 23 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, and subsequently may be reported as such to the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice under Section 24 or Section 27 of the Act.

4.3.2.4 Nambucca Valley Libraries do not provide child supervision as part of their services. Children under the age of 10 years cannot be left unattended and are the responsibility of their parent or guardian (minimum age of 16).

4.4.5 Parents/carers 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*, Section 228.

4.4.6 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.

4.4.7 If the parents/carers ignore this policy or are unable to be contacted, the situation may be reported to the Secretary of the Department of Communities and Justice.

4.4.8 If a child is left unattended at closing time staff should call the Police.

5.0 Related Procedures or Documents

Nambucca Valley Council – Library Management Loans Policy
Nambucca Valley Council – Library Management Internet Policy
NSW State Library Child Safe Policy (2022)
State Library Children's Policy Guidelines (2018)
Child Safe Standards, Office of the Children's Guardian NSW 2022
Nambucca Valley Council Child Safe Standards Implementation Plan

6.0 History

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Contact Officer	Team Leader Library Services		
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