



Tablelands Regional Library Service

Youth Services Policy

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1. POLICY INTENT

Children and young persons are core clients of public libraries and are the future adult users and supporters of our library services.

Tablelands Regional Council Library Service offers children and young persons a range of services that support their information, literacy, education and recreation needs.

As these services evolve, it is important to convey clear and consistent messages about the role and scope of public libraries in young persons' lives.

The purpose of this policy is to identify procedures and conditions with regard to the issues of duty of care, behaviour, discipline, supervision, parent/guardian responsibilities and safety of young persons visiting Tablelands Regional Council (TRC) libraries.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, youth and their parents/guardians and carers.

3. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document, the definitions of **young person, children and young adults** as articulated in the State Library Queensland 'Young Peoples Services Standard April 2009' will be used:

- The term **young people** comprises both children and young adults.
- The term **children** ... is understood to refer to children aged from birth to twelve years inclusive.
- The term **young adult** ... is understood to refer to young persons aged from thirteen to eighteen years inclusive.

This is in keeping with the TRC library membership for Junior members (aged 0-12 years of age) and Young Adult members (aged 13-17 years of age).

4. PROFESSIONAL VALUES

Public libraries acknowledge the democratic rights of individuals to freely pursue their own information interests. This view is articulated in the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994, which states that

“constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information”.

Similarly, the ALIA Statement on Freedom to Read states

“that freedom can be protected in a democratic society only if its citizens have access to information and ideas through books and other sources of information”.

This Statement also states

“A librarian should uphold the right of all Australians to have access to library services and materials and should not discriminate against users on the grounds of age, sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, economic condition, individual lifestyle or political or social views.”

The ALIA Statement on Public Library Services to Young People in Australia further states

“that all young people should have access to free public library services which provide materials and resources to meet their informational and recreational needs”.

Public library services to young persons are underpinned by these philosophies

5. WELCOME STATEMENT

Library staff welcome all young persons to Tablelands Library Service and are happy to assist them in the use of resources and services. Our Mission is to provide an environment that will nurture life long learning. To achieve this aim, staff strive to create an atmosphere that is comfortable and enjoyable for all customers. We are committed to serving the information and recreation needs of young persons in the Tablelands Region.

Young persons are core public library clients in their own right, and are potentially the future adult users of public libraries. Therefore it is important that the messages conveyed to young users are positive and welcoming.

6. YOUNG PERSONS RIGHTS IN THE LIBRARY

Young persons in the Library have the right to:

- Intellectual freedom
- Equal access to the full range of services and materials with exception to items classified MA15+ or R18+
- Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs

- A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs
- A library environment that complements their physical & developmental stages
- Staff trained and knowledgeable in provision of young persons services
- A welcoming, safe environment and supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user
- Library policies written to include the needs of young persons

7. ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Library collections are available to all Library users without restriction. It is not the responsibility of the Tablelands Library Service or its staff to exercise a supervisory or restrictive role in determining which library resources young persons may use or access. Parents/guardians are encouraged to set their own family rules in consultation with their child. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to monitor young person's selection and use of library resources.

Tablelands Library Service exercises no limitation on access to publications classified *Unrestricted* under the '*Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995*'. The Library has no censorship role in its choice of library resources that form the collection.

The Tablelands Regional Library Service respects users' rights to privacy but reserves the right to censor, monitor and control information and sites offered through the Internet.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for their child's use of the Internet, in line with the Library's Public Internet Use Policy. Unaccompanied children will not have access to the Internet or electronic games during school hours.

8. SUPERVISION OF YOUNG PERSONS

Parents, guardians or carers are expected to provide guidance to the selection and use of library resources for the child under their care, provide supervision and attend to the child's need when they attend activities organized by library staff.

Children who are aged 0-8 years of age must be in the company of a parent or carer at all times. Programs held for 0-8year olds are planned as an interactive opportunity and, therefore, the presence of a parent/carers is compulsory. Parents/carers must be within eyesight of the child at all times. This includes the use of all library resources and participation at storytime, baby Rhymetime and holiday programs.

Children aged 9-12 may use the library on their own, but should not be left unattended for extended periods of time. Parents/care providers are responsible for their behaviour. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child during library supervised activity sessions

Children 13 years or older may use the library unattended providing they are mature enough to abide by library policies and exhibit the acceptable behaviour required by all library users. The maturity of the child will be judged by the staff supervisor at the time.

Children of any age with mental, physical or emotional disabilities which affect behaviour or decision making skills which render supervision necessary, must be accompanied by a parent/care provider at all times.

9. UNATTENDED YOUNG CHILDREN

Our aim is to produce a safe, enjoyable experience for all children who attend the library. Staff will always provide a duty of care, but cannot supervise children whilst carrying out work responsibilities. They are unable to provide the necessary degree of supervision desirable for young children. This responsibility remains at all times with the parent/guardian.

Unattended children and youth can be at risk in any public place, including the Library. Library staff do not supervise children and youth in the Library, so there is a risk that unattended children and youth may leave the Library at any time, hurt themselves, or be approached by strangers.

Parents who leave a child/youth unattended in the Library may be exposing their child/youth to potential harm. A child left unattended in the library, or a child habitually left unattended, may be deemed to be at risk under the Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld.). Libraries are busy public places, open to all, and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to children and youth. In addition, the Library does not have the facilities to attend to children who are sick, injured or hungry.

Children and youth left alone in the Library can become distressed, bored or disruptive. Library users, including young people, who disturb other Library users may be asked to leave the Library.

10. DETERMINATION OF UNATTENDED

For the purpose of this policy, '*unattended*' and '*unsupervised*' mean not within the sight of a parent, guardian or carer

Library staff will consider children/youth to be at risk when they have been left unattended at the Library for a period of time deemed by the staff member to be excessive.

11. YOUNG PERSONS NOT COLLECTED AT CLOSING TIME

To protect library staff from any litigation staff cannot attempt to drive a child to any destination.

Staff will use the following guidelines to deal with:

- Un-accompanied minors left in the library after closing time
- Parents of lost children left in the library after closing time

Guidelines for dealing with un-accompanied minors left in the library after closing time.

This applies to children deemed by a staff member on duty at the time, to be too young to be asked to leave the library, and therefore be left on the street.

This is a decision that will have to be made on an individual basis but children under the age of 13 years old may be taken as a guide.

Once the library is closed it is no longer a 'public place' and any non-authorized person on the premises is trespassing.

If staff are aware of a parent leaving young children in the library make sure they know the library's closing time. If it is nearing closing time and young children, are still in the library, the senior staff member staff will :

- Introduce themselves to the child by name, identify as a Library staff member and explain that they will help find the child's parent / carer
- Ask the child their name then enquire how the child arrived at the library and what time the parents had arranged to collect them.
- Library staff members caring for a lost / unattended child will remain in a public area in full view of the public and other staff members.
- At no stage should a staff member attempt to drive a child home. In single branch libraries, the staff member must stay with the child until collected or until the police arrive.
- In larger branches, where possible, two staff members should stay with the child until collected or until the police arrive.
- If no one has arrived to collect the child within 10 minutes the police should be called and requested to collect the child from the library.
- Staff will wait with the children until the police arrive. Staff may then depart leaving an information note on the front door of the library for the parents.
- Given the Privacy Laws, the note will say *"To the parents of -----(first name only). Please contact the police station"*
- Staff members involved will fill in an incident report and circulate it to all of the stakeholders identified in the report

Guidelines for dealing with parents/carers of lost children/children left in the library after closing time.

- When approached by a person claiming responsibility for the child, staff will ask the person to identify the child by describing his or her clothing or

identifying features.

- Staff will not hand the child over to the care of a person claiming to be responsible for the care of the child unless the child has positively identified them as the person responsible for caring for them that day.
- Staff will not leave the child with a person if they have any doubts that the person is in fact responsible for the child.
- Staff will ask the child to identify the person and ask if this person is responsible for them today. If the answer is yes, staff will reunite the child with the carer and explain to them what happened to the child. Staff will explain where they were found, by whom and what happened after that.
- If the child does not identify the carer as the person responsible for them, staff will call the police and hand the matter over to them.
- If an adult asks about a missing child not known to library staff, staff will help the adult look for the child in the library premises and if they cannot be found suggest they contact the police.
- Staff will complete an incident report

12. SICK OR INJURED YOUNG PERSONS IN THE LIBRARY

Council ensures that the Library is safe for young persons from an occupational health and safety point of view, and the library staff take reasonable care to ensure that the library is safe for all library users..

However while staff will always provide a duty of care, libraries do not have the facilities or appropriate licences to attend to young persons who are sick, injured or hungry.

Council's Workplace, Health and Safety Policy is applicable in situations where a young person becomes sick or ill. In accordance with this policy and general duty of care, staff will always ensure that sick/injured young persons are treated with care and respect and will offer assistance to sick/injured young persons.

If a young person is injured in the Library, staff may offer the use of the first aid kit to the carer/guardian.

If the young person is unattended, library staff will offer assistance. Where possible a staff member holding a current first aid certificate will be called on to assist.

Staff should use protection (e.g. rubber gloves) to ensure that body fluids do not come into contact. Every precaution to protect own health must be strictly adhered to by all staff.

If a young person becomes sick, staff will:

- Offer comfort

- Contact parent/guardian if the young person is unattended
- Clean the area, using gloves

In the event of serious illness/injury, staff will call the ambulance and immediately advise the Coordinator Libraries and the parent, guardian or carer.

If a young person is injured in the Library an Incident Report form must be completed.

13. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE LIBRARY

Library staff are committed to ensure all customers enjoy a productive and rewarding experience.

Customers are expected to take responsibility for the behaviour of themselves and any young person they bring into the library.

Noise complaints: young persons have a right to an enjoyable and productive library experience. The differing needs of customers will be dealt with tactfully.

Rough or unsafe play: rough play can usually be diverted by suggesting an alternative activity. If children continue with disruptive behaviour, they will be given two warnings. If the behaviour continues, the young person will be asked to leave the library.

Loud/bad language or suspected misuse of library equipment: staff will give two warnings. If the behaviour continues, the offender(s), whether adult or young person, will be asked to leave the library.

Vandalism, consumption of alcohol, illicit drugs, sexual misconduct: offenders will be asked to leave the library immediately. Staff will attempt to establish the identity of the offenders, and inform the Coordinator Libraries. The police may also be informed of the incident.

It may be necessary to take further action depending on the nature and severity of the incident. (e.g. extensive damage to Council property and resources).

To avoid litigation, at no time will staff make physical contact, gently or otherwise, to attempt to remove an offender from the library. If an offender refuses to leave when asked, the police will be called immediately.

If there is an incident an incident form should be completed and sent to the relevant council Workplace Health and Safety Officer.

14. REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Coordinator Libraries to monitor the adequacy of this policy and recommend appropriate changes. This policy will be formally reviewed every three years or as required.

15. DISTRIBUTION REGISTER

Date	Issue No.	Copy No.	Issued To	Copy Type

This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.