

## **1.0 INTENT**

To define the conditions relating to the supervision and behaviour of children and youth in the Bundaberg Regional Library Service.

## **2.0 SCOPE**

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

## **3.0 POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this policy are:

- a) to ensure the safety and welfare of all Library patrons;
- b) to ensure the obligations set down by workplace health and safety legislation are met;
- c) to ensure Library staff are not placed in the position of acting *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent);
- d) to ensure Library staff are not exposed to unnecessary legal or other risks;
- e) to ensure that the Library operates efficiently and effectively as a workplace.

## **4.0 POLICY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Children are an integral part of any community and are welcomed by our Libraries. It is necessary that parents and guardians ensure appropriate and non-disruptive use of the Library by young people. Library staff will always demonstrate due care for young people in the Library, however they are unable to act as child carers and must not be put in the position of acting as parent or guardian. Library staff have no authority to ensure that young people remain within the Library if left unattended and cannot be responsible for any incidents that occur outside the Library.

### **4.2 Conditions**

- 1) Children and youth using the Library service must be attended and adequately supervised by a parent or guardian. This includes children attending special Library activities.
- 2) At all times, responsibility for the welfare and behaviour of children and youth using the Library service rests with their parent or guardian.
- 3) In the event children or youth are left unattended at closing time, Library staff will attempt to contact their parents or guardians before contacting the Police.

- 4) Parents and guardians must be aware that the Library is both a public place and a work area. There may be times when the Library may close unexpectedly due to power cuts, emergencies, or operational needs.
- 5) Library staff reserve the right to request proper conduct and to determine inappropriate behaviour which may offend, injure or disturb other Library users, staff, facilities, or items.

### **4.3 Inappropriate behaviour**

Inappropriate behaviour in children and youth visiting the Library includes, but is not limited to:

- Excessive noise.
- Running in the Library.
- Jumping, climbing, swinging, or standing on library furnishings/equipment/fixtures.
- Misusing Library equipment/resources.
- Inappropriate or disruptive use of the Internet and/or computers.
- Inconsiderate use of mobile phones and listening devices.

### **4.4 Unattended children and youth**

#### **4.4.1 General information**

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. 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 removed from the Library.

Parents who leave a child/youth unattended in the Library are exposing their child/youth to potential harm.

#### **4.4.2 Determination of unattended**

For the purpose of this policy:

- a. 'unattended' and 'unsupervised' mean not within the sight of a parent or guardian.

The Bundaberg Regional Library Service does not specify a minimum age at which a child/youth may be left unattended in a public place and is concerned with individual circumstances rather than age.

Library staff are to consider children/youth to be at risk when they have been left unattended at the Library for periods of time deemed by the staff member

responsible for the Library at that time, to be unacceptably long for a person of that age.

A sincere determination is all that is required under legislation.

#### **4.4.3 Children and youth not collected at closing time**

To protect Library staff from unnecessary legal risks, staff members must not be alone with a child/youth to whom they are not related when the Library is closed to the public.

Further, no staff member is permitted to escort or drive any child/youth left unattended at the Library to any destination.

#### **4.5 Non-compliance**

Where children and youth are found to be unattended or behaving contrary to this policy, Library staff will:

- a) Inform the parent or guardian of the issue and request that the parent or guardian attend to the child and/or ensure the cessation of the inappropriate behaviour. (The parent or guardian may be given a copy of this Policy if their children are not attended or are behaving inappropriately in accordance with this policy).
- b) Where repeated breaches of this Policy occur, the child/youth may be excluded from the Library service.
- c) The Queensland Police Service may be called if circumstances warrant this action (eg, if a child/youth is left unattended at closing time, or if the child/youth is creating a nuisance or is engaged in an illegal activity). Note: Except for a child/youth engaged in an illegal activity, Library staff will attempt to contact a parent/guardian in the first instance.

### **5.0 CONTROLS**

*Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 (Qld)*

### **6.0 EFFECTIVE FROM**

The Bundaberg Regional Library Service Children in the Library Governance Policy was adopted by Bundaberg Regional Council on 8th July 2008 (Item H3).

This Policy is effective from 5th August 2008.

### **7.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS**

GP-3-051 Bundaberg Regional Library Service Membership Governance Policy

GP-3-053 Bundaberg Regional Library Service Code of Conduct Governance Policy

GP-3-066 Bundaberg Regional Library Service Internet Use Governance Policy

GP-3-063 Bundaberg Regional Library Service Wireless Internet Use Governance Policy