

WWCL Children's Procedure

The Wagga Wagga City Library (WWCL) is committed to providing young people with opportunities to satisfy both their recreation and information needs in a safe and welcoming environment. WWCL staff acknowledge the importance of children as users of the library service and strive to provide resources and programs that are stimulating and engaging.

The WWCL Children's Procedure formalises the general principles under which WWCL operates regarding the provision of services to children as well as outlining the responsibilities of parents/guardians and staff regarding children within library settings.

WWCL is part of the NSW Public Library Network. 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. The State Library of NSW Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries forms the basis of the WWCL Children's Procedure.

Purpose

The WWCL Children's Procedure determines guidelines for all stakeholders, including staff and the public, in relation to the presence of children within WWCL branch libraries.

Guidelines include parental responsibilities, child safe and child-friendly principles, and mandatory reporting of at-risk children.

Scope

Wagga Wagga City Library staff and patrons.

Procedure Provisions

General Principles of the Wagga Wagga City Library Children's Procedure Service Statement

The WWCL collections, programs and services to young people may include:

- fiction, non-fiction and recreational books
- magazines
- computer games
- CDs
- DVDs
- computer and internet access
- information services from specialist and general staff in accessing collections
- internet training
- events and performance
- space for activities or study.

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 are classified "MA 15+" are legally available to members who are aged over 15 years of age. Items that are classified "R" are restricted and available only to library users over 18 years of age.

WWCL advises parents/guardians of young children to use their own judgement in monitoring and supervising what their child is accessing or borrowing from the library. Responsibility for access to items remains with the parent/guardian.

Unattended Children

NSW Legislation does not state an age at which a child can be left unattended within a public place. Parents/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.

Library users, including children, who disturb and cause offence to other library users may be removed from the library under clause 17 of the *Library Regulation 2018* (NSW). Other actions may include reporting the child's conduct to the guardian, school, or police.

Internet Use

Parents are advised that WWCL do not take any responsibility for the material viewed via the internet and caution parents/guardians to supervise and advise their children on appropriate use of its applications.

Child Protection

WWCL 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 volunteers engaged to provide services to children and contractors who hold, or are required to hold, a current Working with Children Check.

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, failing to care for a child, 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 resources to support libraries in identifying risks and strategies.

Legislative Context

- Library Act 1939
- Library Regulation 2018.
- Related legislation: Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.

Related Documents

- [WWCC Child Safe Procedure: Recruitment, Employee Conduct and Training](#)
- [WWCC Child Safe Procedure: Identifying, Reporting and Investigating Concerns](#)
- The State Library of NSW provides guidance to NSW public libraries in relation to best practice guidelines for children, parents and public libraries. The WWCL Children's Procedure has been developed from the [NSW Children's Procedure Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries](#).
- eSafety is a Federal Government initiative administered by the [Australian Government Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner](#).

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 Procedure Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries

Office of the Children's Guardian Working with Children Check

NSW Communities and Justice ChildStory Reporter

Definitions

Term	Definition
Minor	Refer to the State Library of NSW Children's Procedure Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries (revised 15 October 2020).
Mandatory Reporting	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.
WWCL branches	Static site at Civic Centre and two Agile Vans