



# COUNCIL POLICY

## LIBRARY SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**Date** 13 August 2023

**Adopted** 23 November 2023

**Responsible Position** Manager Macquarie Regional Library

**Branch** Library Services

**Division** Community Culture and Places

**Version** 3

**TRIM Reference Number** ED23/213937

**Review Period** Three (3) years

**Review Date** August 2026

**Consultation** Member Councils

Document Revision History	
Description	Date
This policy describes the conditions under which young people may use Library facilities, services and resources.	July 2022
<b>Notes:</b> Policies reviewed in accordance with NSW legislation, Regulation and State Library of NSW policy guidelines. Member council consultation 2022.	

## 1. Introduction

The Macquarie Regional Library (MRL) is committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming, child-safe environment for young people to access and enjoy library spaces, resources, and services.

MRL is committed to the Child Safe Standards the Office of the Children's Guardian introduced. A child-safe organisation systematically reduces the likelihood of harm occurring against a child, increases the possibility 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.

## 2. Policy purpose

In providing services for young people, MRL acknowledges child-safe and child-friendly policies and practices. These are defined as follows:

- **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.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure library facilities are safe and welcoming spaces for young people
- Protect the rights, safety and well-being of staff, volunteers, members and customers

This policy applies to:

- Facilities controlled and operated by MRL member Councils
- Persons entering MRL facilities
- MRL organised events and programs irrespective of where they are conducted

### 3. Background and related legislation

The Manager, Macquarie Regional Library, has delegated authority from the Chief Executive Officer of Dubbo Regional Council to authorise action to be taken to comply with Council policy, resolution or any provision of the *Local Government Act, 1993* and the Regulations thereunder or any other law or rule, statutory or otherwise, affecting services and operations of MRL.

The Library Regulation 2018 (under the *Library Act 1939, No 40*) provides guidance and authority for MRL to develop and implement local standards and policies to determine an acceptable code of conduct for customers and procedures to manage non-compliance with the policy.

The Regulation allows MRL staff to exclude customers who interfere with another person's library use. This policy is publicly available on the MRL website.

The following legislation and publications are related to this policy:

- *Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)*
- *Library Act 1939, No 40 (NSW)*
- *Library Regulation 2018 (NSW)*
- *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*
- *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995. (Cth)*
- Library Council of New South Wales *Children's Policy Guidelines for NSW Public Libraries*
- Dubbo Regional Council *Customer Experience Charter*
- Dubbo Regional Council *Child Safe Standards Policy*

### 4. Related MRL policies & documents

- MRL Membership Policy
- MRL Online Information and Internet Use Policy
- MRL Customer Code of Conduct Policy
- MRL Privacy Statement

### 5. Definitions

- **Member Councils** are Dubbo Regional Council, Narromine Shire Council and Warrumbungle Shire Council.
- **Governing Body** is the relevant local authority, Dubbo Regional Council.

- MRL operates seven (7) libraries at Dubbo, Wellington, Narromine, Trangie, Coonabarabran, Coolah, and Dunedoo and three (3) service points at Baradine, Binnaway and Mendooran.
- **MMRL** refers to the Manager of Macquarie Regional Library.
- **Customer** means any person, whether or not a member, who visits a library or service point of MRL to use library resources or facilities.
- **Member** means anyone with a valid membership card who has fulfilled the membership requirements.
- **Guarantor** means a parent or guardian who has legal responsibility for a person under the age of 16.
- **Young People, Youth or children** means any person under 16.

## 6. Membership

Youth membership is available to individuals under the age of 16. A membership form must be completed and signed by a guarantor who accepts responsibility for resources borrowed, fees and charges incurred, and the young person's behaviour when using library services, including their use of library spaces, library PCs and online services.

See the MRL Membership Policy for more details.

## 7. Parental responsibility

In all circumstances, their guarantor monitors or supervises a youth member's use of library resources, services and spaces. This responsibility lies with their legal guardians for youth who are not members and use library resources, services and spaces.

## 8. Access to resources

The Library provides physical public spaces for young people to access monitored and child-safe resources.

The Library promotes and supports young people's access to information, including electronic data, through its internet facilities. Library staff are available to assist young people in using the Internet and to recommend websites on particular subjects. Appropriate resources will be selected for inclusion in the Library's collections.

The MRL's collection contains publications that have been classified "Unrestricted" and films and audio-visual items that have been classified "G" (General), "PG" (Parental Guidance), "M" (Mature) or 'MA' (Mature Accompanied) in accordance with the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995 (Cth)*. Non-MA classified material is available to all persons, including young persons, without restriction. Youth memberships are restricted to disallow borrowing of MA-classified physical items.

MRL also provides film access via streaming services, which may include films classified as 'MA' or 'R'. Members under the age of 18 are not permitted to access movies with an 'R'

rating, and members under the age of 15 may only access films rated 'MA' with the consent of their guarantor.

Guarantors are responsible for ensuring that their child's selection and use of materials from the Library's collections accords with any restrictions the family may wish to set. Macquarie Regional Library encourages parents and guardians to consult with their children to develop clear rules regarding access to resources that align with the family's values and beliefs.

The Library provides free PC and Wi-Fi access for all visitors, including young people. Their guarantor is responsible for monitoring or supervising a youth member's use of these services. This responsibility lies with their legal guardian for youth who are not members and use these services. Library PCs and Wi-Fi login screens display conditions of use for young people.

See MRL Online Information and Internet Use Policy for more details.

## **9. Unattended children**

Children under the age of 8 in the Library must be supervised by a responsible adult over 16 at all times.

Public libraries offer a range of services that support young people's information, literacy, education and recreational needs. Libraries do not provide care facilities for children as part of that service. They are not to be used by parents, guardians or carers as an alternative to children's services that provide licensed care facilities, such as care by an agency or a daycare facility. Parents, guardians or carers that attempt to do so are potentially putting their child at risk of harm, may be committing an offence under s.228 of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)* and, therefore, may be reported to the relevant government services.

If Library staff become aware that a child under the age of 8 years of age is left unsupervised in the Library, attempts will be made to contact their guarantors or a legal guardian to arrange appropriate supervision and advise them of Library policy. The police may be contacted to assist if necessary.

Unattended children up to Year 10 or under 17 years of age within a library facility or attending a library event during regular school hours, excluding designated Pupil Free days and home-schooled pupils, will be asked to identify themselves and their school and will be asked to return to school or their home. Their school and guarantor or legal guardian will be contacted.

## **10. Code of Conduct**

Young people are expected to follow the MRL Customer Code of Conduct Policy. Youth who carry out any breaches of the MRL Code of Conduct Policy will be subject to the actions and

penalties in that policy. In all circumstances, responsibility for monitoring or supervising a youth's use of library resources, services, and spaces remains with the guarantor/legal guardian.

See the MRL Customer Code of Conduct Policy for more details.

### **11. Reporting incidents**

Any person can report harm or risk of harm to a child or young person under section 24 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW). Some have a legal obligation to do so under section 27 of that Act in respect of children under 16. If library staff deliver education, training or other services to children, section 27 may apply. Where Library staff reasonably suspect that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, a report will be directed to the relevant government services as per this Act.

Staff will also comply with all reportable obligations from Member Council policies and procedures as are in force.

### **12. Working with Children Checks**

Work in public libraries may be identified as 'child-related employment'. Library staff who work face-to-face with children will have a current and valid check under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW)*. Staff who only have incidental contact with children may not.

### **13. Privacy**

Dubbo Regional Council (Macquarie Regional Library) may collect your personal information to process your application for library membership and provide you with library services. The supply of this information is voluntary; however, if you do not agree to provide the information requested, it may not be possible to process your membership application or provide you with some services otherwise available to library members.

Your information may be disclosed to third parties contracted by Council to provide information management/Information Technology services to the Library, but only for the third party providing those services and only as permitted by NSW privacy laws. Your information will not otherwise be provided to a third party unless for law enforcement purposes or if otherwise required by law.

Membership information is stored on a secure electronic database. You can request access to your personal data held by Dubbo Regional Council (Macquarie Regional Library). You may request amendment of your personal information to ensure that it is accurate, relevant, up to date and not misleading. Any inquiries regarding access or modification to your data should be directed to the Manager of Macquarie Regional Library.

#### **14. Responsibilities**

All MRL staff are responsible for implementing this policy consistently.

The Library will train all staff to provide them with the skills and understanding necessary to implement this policy.