



Blue Mountains Library – Unattended Children in the Library

Blue Mountains Library welcomes children into the library to use its resources, attend organised programs and to borrow items. Blue Mountains Library aims at providing quality lending, outreach and reference services to all clients, particularly children of all ages.

Unsupervised children can be at risk in any public place, including public libraries. Libraries are busy public places, open to all, and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to children. Library staff cannot 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. Young children left alone in a library can become distressed, bored or disruptive. Library users, including young people, who disturb other library users may be removed from the Library under the *Library Act 1939*.

A child left unattended in a public library may be classed as a child or young person at risk of harm under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, s23 and subsequently may be reported as such to the Department of Community Services under s24 or s27 of the Act.

Parents or guardians 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*.

- All children under 12 years shall, at all times, be attended and adequately supervised by a responsible person, eg. an adult or mature adolescent over the age of 16 years.
- Primary School age children must remain within sight of the parent/guardian or responsible person unless the child is attending a library activity in which case they must remain in the library building in case of an emergency arising.
- Preschool age children must remain within sight of the parent/guardian at all times.
- Children 12 years or older may use the library unattended provided they are mature enough to follow the *Library User Guidelines* and observe proper conduct.
- People 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 or guardian at all times.