



YOUR LIBRARY

Abandoned or Unattended Children Policy

Approval: Board

Endorsement Date: 18/04/2024

Current Version: 1.0

Review Cycle: 2 years

Review Date: Every two years and no later than 31 March in the review year.

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively and noted in document history.

Document History

Date	Change Type	Version	Review Year
18/04/24	Initial version	1.0	2026

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Scope.....	3
3. Our Child Safety Commitment	3
4. Definitions	3
5. Abandoned Children	4
6. Unattended Children.....	4
7. Children Abandoned or Unattended at Closing Time	5
8. Emergency Building Evacuation	5
9. Child Reported Lost or Missing	6
10. Contacts	6
11. Regular Review	6
12. Other Relevant Policies & Procedures	6
13. Disclaimer.....	6
Appendix 1 – Staff Procedure - Abandoned or unattended children	7
Appendix 2 – Staff Procedure - Child reported lost or missing	8



1. Purpose

Your Library Limited (YLL) endeavours to provide a safe environment for all users of its libraries.

This Policy has been developed to assist with providing a safe environment for children who are abandoned or unattended in a library.

A Responsible Person (see [Definitions](#) section) must supervise children under the age of 12 while they are using the library, and are responsible for a child's welfare as well as monitoring and regulating their behaviour.

Beyond a general duty of care, YLL, or its personnel, do not accept responsibility for children abandoned or unattended in a library. YLL shall not be liable for any injury or damage to, or caused by any act or omission of any child who is in the library.

YLL personnel do not take over parental responsibilities for children when they are brought into a library. Nor are they expected to supervise children while carrying out their work duties.

While personnel will use their best endeavours to ensure the safety of children, libraries are not licensed child-minding facilities, and therefore cannot provide direct supervision of children.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all YLL personnel including staff, volunteers, work experience members, consultants and contractors engaged by YLL.

3. Our Child Safety Commitment

YLL is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

We seek to prevent harm of any kind impacting children and young people and have zero tolerance for all forms of harassment or discrimination, child abuse, and inequality. Children and young people's rights, relationships, identity, and culture must be recognised and respected, their voices heard, and their concerns acted upon.

We aim to foster a culturally safe, child-safe, and child-friendly environment for all children and young people who we have contact with, deliver services to, or are impacted by our work.

YLL requires all personnel to uphold these commitments and has specific policies, procedures, and training in place to achieve this.

YLL personnel must ensure that they are not in a 1 on 1 situation with a child. Any interaction must be in an open, public space with clear lines of sight to others, or with another personnel member present.

4. Definitions

Abandon: cease to support or look after (someone).

Abandoned Child: a child under 12 years of age (or who appears to be under that age) will in most cases be considered abandoned if, after 15 minutes, staff cannot locate a Responsible Person who is supervising the child in our libraries. Nominally a child of Primary School age.

Child: a person who is under the age of 18 years.

Officer in Charge: is the Manager/Team Leader or Shift Leader.

Personnel: includes staff, volunteers, work experience members, consultants and contractors engaged by YLL.

Responsible Person: a Parent/Carer/Legal Guardian who is 18 years or older and who can exercise parental control over the child/children.

Significant neglect: The *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (the Act) states that a form of reportable conduct is significant neglect.

Supervision: children under the age of 12 must be supervised by a Responsible Person. Supervision requires that the person be within sight of the child at all times.



Supervisory neglect: A failure to appropriately exercise adequate supervision or control of a child or young person. Examples include:

- leaving a child alone or unsupervised for an extended period of time
- leaving a child in the care of an inappropriate person such as a young child or someone who has a history of child abuse

Unattended Child: any young person (over the age of 12 years and under 18 years) who is not supervised by a Responsible Person. Nominally a child of Secondary College age.

Vulnerable Child: any abandoned or unattended child who is distressed, or whose safety is at risk, or whose well-being would be endangered if they left the building.

5. Abandoned Children

A child under 12 years of age (or who appears to be under that age) will in most cases be considered abandoned if, after 15 minutes, staff cannot locate a Responsible Person who is supervising the child in our libraries.

As children develop and mature at different rates, some children under the age of 12 years may be capable of being independent in our libraries. This policy clearly states that a child under the age of 12 should be supervised by a Responsible Person. This removes doubt and interpretation and means our policies can be applied consistently. We recognise that we cannot always know how old a child is, and that there may be times when a child has been left unattended in our premises without our knowledge.

In Victoria, under the *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (the Act), it is an offence for a person responsible for a child to leave the child unattended for any longer than is reasonable, without making appropriate arrangements for the child's supervision and care. In Victoria there is no set age at which it is legal to leave a child unattended. It depends on the child and the situation.

See [Definitions](#) section: 'Significant neglect'.

Where personnel observe a child that appears to have been abandoned they will:

- advise the Officer in Charge
 - the Officer-in-Charge has the authority to decide if a child is abandoned
 - if the Officer in Charge determines the child is abandoned and a Responsible Person does not arrive to pick up the child within the agreed time, or cannot be contacted, Victoria Police (the Police) will be contacted immediately.
 - If the Responsible Person arrives before the Police, this policy will be explained and a written copy of the policy will be provided.
 - If the Police do take responsibility for the child, the Police Officer who responds will be given a written copy of this policy to be provided to the Responsible Person.
- See [Appendix 1 – Staff Procedure - Abandoned or unattended children](#) for further detail and guidance.

Note: 15 minutes is only a guideline. Depending on the level of risk to the child, the Officer in Charge may contact the emergency services and/or the Police sooner (e.g. a vulnerable child). YLL will contact the Police if a child is noted to be abandoned on a regular basis.

6. Unattended Children

An unattended child is any young person (over the age of 12 years and under 16 years) who is not supervised by a Responsible Person in our libraries.

See [Definitions](#) section: 'Significant neglect'.

Children over 12 years of age could be unattended in a library for a variety of reasons: studying; relaxing; curriculum day; home-schooled; truancy; etc. YLL personnel may question an unattended child to establish the reason for their attendance at the library (e.g. during school hours during a term).

If the child is not disruptive or at risk, personnel can exercise their discretion and allow the child to remain in the library.



Personnel will evaluate the child's behaviour and report to the Officer in Charge if they feel there is a problem or risk of any nature to the child, for example:

- if the safety of the child is compromised;
- if the child's behaviour is of concern;
- if the child needs supervision beyond the means of personnel.

The Officer in Charge has the authority to decide what action is to be taken. Depending on the level of risk, the Officer in Charge may contact a Responsible Person; or in the case of immediate risk, the emergency services and/or the Police.

- If the Responsible Person arrives before the Police, this policy will be explained and a written copy of the policy will be provided.
- If the Police do take responsibility for the child, the Police Officer who responds will be given a written copy of this policy to be provided to the Responsible Person.

➤ See [Appendix 1 – Staff Procedure - Abandoned or unattended children](#) for further detail and guidance.

Note: Children develop and mature at different rates. While 12 years and under is determined as an unattended child that should be supervised by a Responsible Person, discretion and judgment will apply when deciding if any child is vulnerable and at risk, or old enough to be alone in the library and/or sent out of the building.

7. Children Abandoned or Unattended at Closing Time

Library personnel are not responsible for the safety and well-being of children abandoned or unattended at closing time.

Refer to Definitions: Significant neglect. Personnel may use their discretion to call a Responsible Person or the Police on behalf of the abandoned or unattended child. In that case, personnel will wait inside the library with the child until the Responsible Person or Police arrive.

Personnel must ensure that they are not in a 1 on 1 situation with a child. Any interaction must be in an open, public space with clear lines of sight to others, or with other personnel present.

If the Responsible Person arrives before the Police, this policy will be explained and a written copy of the policy will be provided.

If the Police do take responsibility for the child, the Police Officer who responds will be given a written copy of this policy to be provided to the Responsible Person.

Except for in the case of an emergency building evacuation, under no circumstances will personnel remove the child from the library building, even at the request of the Police or the Responsible Person. Personnel have a duty of care to ensure that a child's welfare is the paramount consideration.

Note: Libraries in Shopping Centres should notify Shopping Centre Security and follow agreed procedures.

8. Emergency Building Evacuation

In the event of an emergency incident, personnel could be required to, or asked to, evacuate the library building.

Personnel will use their best efforts to have the library vacated by all library users.

If during this process personnel identify abandoned or unattended children, personnel will assist, where possible and practical, in their safe evacuation to the designated assembly point.

However, if this is not possible, or the child is not cooperating in the evacuation, personnel will endeavour, as a matter of priority, to inform the Officer in Charge, emergency services, and/or Police (if on site) of the abandoned or unattended children left in the building and their location.

Once the evacuation is complete, and at the first opportune moment, personnel will inform the Officer in Charge, emergency services, and/or Police (if on site) of any abandoned or unattended children still under the library personnel's care at the designated assembly point.



9. Child Reported Lost or Missing

If a Responsible Person reports a child missing, all personnel will be advised, exits and all areas of the library will be checked including bathrooms, offices, meeting rooms and any areas immediately outside the library.

If the child is unable to be found within 5-10 minutes, the Officer in Charge will call 000 and ask for the Police.

➤ See [Appendix 2 – Staff Procedure - Child reported lost or missing](#) for further detail and guidance.

10. Contacts

Victoria Police

If a child is in immediate danger, phone **000** and ask for the Police.

Child Protection

East Division Intake: **1300 360 391** (8.45am - 5.00pm Monday - Friday)

Child Protection Crisis Line: **13 12 78** (24 hours/7 days, toll free)

Child Safety Officers

Requests for advice and assistance can be made to our Child Safety Officers:

Chantell Harris – Phone: (03) 9800 6414

Emma Wallis – Phone: (03) 9800 6428

Email: childsaf@erl.vic.gov.au

11. Regular Review

This policy will be reviewed at the earlier of: two years; following significant incidents if they occur; and after any legislative changes.

12. Other Relevant Policies & Procedures

- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Child Safe Standards
- Child Safe Reportable Conduct Scheme Procedures

13. Disclaimer

The information provided in this Policy is intended as general information only. The Corporation strives to provide information as accurately as possible.

The Corporation makes no claims, promises, or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of this Policy, and expressly disclaims liability for errors and omissions in the contents of this Policy.



Appendix 1 – Staff Procedure - Abandoned or unattended children

- The Officer in Charge is authorised to make decisions regarding abandoned or unattended children and about the following of procedure.
- If a child is in **immediate danger**, phone **000** and ask for the Police.
- if a member of personnel is concerned for the safety and wellbeing of a child – they should report their concerns to the Officer in Charge.

Personnel will seek out a Responsible Person, for example when:

- a child is under 12 years of age and is not being supervised by a Responsible Person;
- a child's safety is believed to be compromised;
- a child is found distressed;
- a child's behaviour is of concern, and/or is endangering themselves or other people;
- a child needs supervision beyond the means of personnel;
- a child has not been met by a Responsible Person at closing time.

If a Responsible Person is not located within the library:

- Personnel will advise the Officer in Charge;
- the Officer in Charge will attempt to contact a Responsible Person by phone and ask them to pick up the child within an agreed time;
- the Responsible Person will be informed that if they do not arrive within the agreed time, the Police will be called;
- upon arrival, the Responsible Person will be given a copy of the *Abandoned and Unattended Children Policy*.

If the Responsible Person does not arrive to pick up the child within the agreed time, or cannot be contacted:

- the Officer in Charge will call the Police;
- the Officer in Charge will continue to try to contact the Responsible Person.
- If the Police do take responsibility for the child, the Police Officer who responds will be given a written copy of the *Abandoned and Unattended Children Policy* to be provided to the Responsible Person.

If there are repeated incidents of the same child being left unattended and collected by police:

- the Officer in Charge will send a Responsible Person a copy of the *Abandoned and Unattended Children Policy* and notify them in writing that the Police will be called every time the child is left unattended.

In all cases an incident report must be completed.

General Conduct and Approach from YLL Personnel

- Personnel should identify themselves to a child who they feel is unattended, and ensure they also tell another team member.
- Personnel must ensure that they are not in a 1 on 1 situation with a child. Any interaction must be in an open, public space with clear lines of sight to others, or with another personnel member present.
- Personnel should avoid physical contact with the child, and try to re-assure them if they are upset or distressed.
- Unattended children must remain with YLL personnel until the child is passed into the care of:
 - A Responsible Person; or
 - A Victoria Police team member.
- Under no circumstances should personnel transport an unattended child in their personal or a YLL vehicle.
- Personnel should be mindful that a child may experience harm from other children as well as from adults.

Contacts

Requests for advice and assistance can be made to our Child Safety Officers:

Chantell Harris – Phone: (03) 9800 6414

Emma Wallis – Phone: (03) 9800 6428

Email: childsaf@erl.vic.gov.au



Appendix 2 – Staff Procedure - Child reported lost or missing

If a Responsible Person reports a child missing, personnel will follow this procedure:

- advise the Officer in Charge;
- obtain the name, age and description of the child;
- advise the Responsible Person to watch entries / exits to help with identification;
- advise all personnel and request their assistance to check exits and check all areas thoroughly, including bathrooms, offices and meeting rooms;
- check area immediately outside the library;
- call **000** and ask for the Police if unable to locate the child within 5-10 mins;
- if the child is found, ensure all staff are informed and ensure Police are informed (if they've been contacted);
- the Officer in Charge is authorised to close or lock down an area or a library if required;
- complete an incident report.

Contacts

Requests for advice and assistance can be made to our Child Safety Officers:

Chantell Harris – Phone: (03) 9800 6414

Emma Wallis – Phone: (03) 9800 6428

Email: childsaf@erl.vic.gov.au

