

Library

Child Safe Guidelines



To provide an environment where the safety of young people is paramount and children can flourish through learning and enjoyment, Mareeba Shire Council will adhere to the *10 Child Safe Standards* of Queensland's Child Safe Organisation system.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

All library staff, volunteers, and external providers who are involved with child-related work at a library that is more than incidental are required to hold a blue card for working with children as issued by the Queensland Government Blue Card Services.

A library will not employ a person in child-related work without a valid blue card.

Any staff member, volunteer, external provider, or candidate for employment who refuses to undertake a blue card application, or fails it, or is not accompanied by another staff member with a Working with Children Check, is unable to work directly with children at a library.

UNATTENDED CHILDREN

Parents who leave a child/young person unattended in a library may be exposing their child to potential harm. Libraries are busy public places, open to all. Library staff cannot monitor and determine which members of the public may present a possible danger to children.

Council libraries do not provide child supervision as part of its services.

Children under the age of 8 years cannot be left unattended and are the responsibility of their parent or guardian at all times.

A child of any age who appears distressed as a result of being left in a library unaccompanied by an adult for any length of time or appears unable to look after themselves independently and appears unable to

abide by all library policies and exhibit acceptable behaviour, will draw an action from library staff.

Where possible, library staff will endeavour to arrange for a parent, guardian or educator identified to be responsible for the child, to collect the child. If such arrangement cannot be made, the child will be considered at risk and the Queensland Police Service will be notified.

School students who attend learning programs at a library must be accompanied by a teacher and supervised before and after the programs.

Home school students at a library must be accompanied by a parent or supervising adult.

Children attending school holiday programs, when not accompanied by a parent or guardian, must be signed in and out of the program, and contact details of the parent or guardian must be provided as an emergency contact number.

CONCERNS ABOUT THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN

Concerns that library staff or volunteers have, or which are communicated to them, relating to the safety of a child at a library will be responded to immediately to ensure the least possible disruption to the child. A person who is suspected to be compromising a child's safety will be reported to Queensland Police Service.

ACCESS TO INTERNET FACILITIES AND COLLECTIONS

Children's access to library materials is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. This includes ensuring that the child's selection and use of materials in a library's collection accords with any restrictions the family may wish to set.

The library service DVD collection contains publications that have been classified 'Unrestricted' and films that have been classified 'G' (General), 'PG' (Parental Guidance) or 'M' (Mature) in accordance with the

Classification (*Publications, Films and Computer Games*) Act 1995 (Cth).

Unclassified library resources are made available to all library users, including young people, without restriction. A library has no censorship role in its choice of library resources that form the collection. The library encourages parents/guardians to consult with their child to develop clear rules regarding access to resources that accord with the family's personal values and beliefs.

The library provides free and open access to the internet through its public computers and wi-fi.

Parents and guardians may nominate that children under twelve (12) cannot access the public computers or gaming devices. This decision will be recorded on a child's library membership and staff will deny the child use of the technology.

Discretion regarding the online content that children can access is the responsibility of the child's parent or guardian and wi-fi access is unmonitored.

Any person who accesses material that is offensive to other library users, especially children, may be asked by staff to cease accessing the material and may be excluded from the Library.

Social media age restrictions aim to protect young Australians from pressures and risks that users can be exposed to while logged in to social media accounts.¹ The library displays posters to advise public computer users about the restrictions for social media accounts. As this is not a declared social media ban, no penalties for under-16s or their parents or guardians apply. It is the prerogative of parents and guardians to enforce the restrictions while their children are using either library provided technology or their own technology when in a library.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS AND CONTRACTORS

Complaints and allegations against employees of Mareeba Shire Council libraries service contractors and library volunteers concerning the welfare, wellbeing and safety of children will be handled in accordance

with Council's relevant complaint handling policies and procedures.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Recurring library programs are risk assessed and managed according to Council's Work Health & Safety Management System.

Non-recurring events for children will be risk assessed and managed according to Council's Work Health & Safety Management System.

QLD CHILD SAFE STANDARDS

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers of the entity are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for children to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how your organisation is safe for children.

The Universal Principle - create environments that make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel culturally safe, which broadly means welcome, safe, valued, included and respected.²

¹ See generally *Online Safety (Age-Restricted Social Media Platforms) Rules 2025* (Cth).

² See *Child Safe Organisations Act 2024* (Qld) ss 9, 11.