

Procedure Name	<b>Unattended Children Procedure</b>
Version Number	1.0
Procedure Date	March 2019
Date to be reviewed	March 2021
Responsibility	Manager Public Participation
Related Policies and Procedures	Child Safe Policy Child Safe Procedure Operations Manual

## 1. DEFINITIONS

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Unattended or lost child	The Branch Manager or person in charge has the authority to decide if a child is unattended.  Children develop and mature at different rates and so whilst 12 years and under is determined as a child that should be supervised by a designated adult; discretion and judgment will apply when deciding if a child is vulnerable and at risk, or old enough to be alone in the library and / or sent out of the building. Factors that inform decision-making include the time of day.
Child	For the purposes of this procedure, a child is any person 12 years of age and under
Branch Manager	YPRL Branch Manager or person in charge.
VicPol	Victorian Police.

## 2. PURPOSE

Yarra Plenty Regional library Corporation (YPRL) welcomes children of all ages and their carers to our libraries and events.

YPRL has a duty of care to all library users and staff to ensure their safety, comfort and wellbeing and that no one is placed in a situation where they are at risk.

For the safety and comfort of children, a responsible parent / carer should accompany children while they are using the library services. Parents / carers are responsible for a child's welfare as well as monitoring and regulating their behaviour.

YPRL cannot take responsibility for the welfare of children left unattended in the library or at library events.

## 3. SCOPE

The Procedure applies to the public areas of any Yarra Plenty Regional Library (YPRL) branch or Mobile vehicle.

## 4. PROCEDURE

### **Library staff will seek out parents / carers when an unattended child:**

- is found distressed in the library
- is perceived to be endangering themselves or another
- is exhibiting inappropriate behaviour
- has not been met by a responsible parent / carer at closing time

### **If a parent / carer is not located within the library or at the library event:**

- they will be contacted by phone and asked to pick up the child within an agreed time
- they will be informed that if they do not arrive within the agreed time that the police will be called
- they will be given a copy of the procedure upon their arrival to pick up the child

### **If the parent / carer does not arrive to pick up the child within the agreed time, or the parent / carer cannot be contacted:**

- the police will be called and requested to attend the library – the estimated time of their arrival will be noted
- the Branch Manager will continue to try to contact the parent / carer

### **If the parent / carer does not arrive to pick up the child at closing time:**

- staff will try to contact the parent / carer.
- If the parent/carer cannot be contacted, the police will be called and requested to attend the library – the estimated time of their arrival will be noted.
- the Branch Manager and one other staff member will wait with the child on library premises or at the event until they are collected by a parent / carer or police staff will not, under any circumstances drive the child to any location

### **If there are repeated incidents of the same child being left unattended:**

- the parent / carer will be given a copy of the procedure when they collect the child and informed by the Branch Manager that the police will be called if this happens again

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

- the parent / carer will be sent a copy of this procedure and notified in writing that the police will be called every time the child is left unattended

In all cases an incident report must be completed by the Branch Manager.

## **5. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- When first speaking to a child suspected of being unattended immediately identify yourself to the child, showing the child your YPRL name tag.
- Unattended or lost children must be cared for in public areas, in full view of the public and other staff.
- Staff dealing with an unattended child should avoid physical contact with the child. If physical contact is deemed necessary in order to reassure younger or upset children (e.g. holding the child's hand), it should be done strictly on condition that this is in a public area, in full view of staff and public.
- An unattended or lost child must remain with YPRL staff until the child is passed into the care of:
  - an adult responsible for caring for the child; or
  - a VicPol officer.
- Do not pass the child into the care of a person claiming to be responsible for the care of the child:
  - unless the child has positively identified the person as the person responsible for caring for them that day; or
  - if you have any doubts that the person is in fact responsible for caring for the child.
  - until you have seen the VicPol ID