



Children Unattended Policy

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Responsible Officer	Manager Recreation & Youth and Manager Libraries
Policy Owner	Melton Library Coordinator , Recreation Coordinator

1. Purpose

Council’s managed leisure and library venues provide public spaces for people to socialise, learn and recreate in shared environments, typically free of charge. From time to time, children are left unattended in these venues. This policy is to provide a clear position to staff and venue users to ensure a consistent approach is provided in dealing with such instances.

2. Scope

This policy applies to parent/care providers and children using Council’s direct managed Community Services Venues. In venues where the programmed operation is managed by community groups, those groups are responsible for their own policy and procedure in dealing with clients and participants.

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Community Services Venues	Leisure and Youth Centres and Community Libraries (eg. Taylors Hill Youth Centre, Melton Library, Caroline Springs Civic Centre/Library, and Caroline Springs Leisure Centre).
Unattended child	Any child 12 and under the age of 12, unaccompanied by a parent/care provider.
Parent / care provider	Includes the legal guardian of the child and a responsible person over the age of 16 years who has been delegated responsibility for the child by its parent or legal guardian.
Child	As per the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, this means a person under the age of 16 years.

4. Policy

4.1 Background

Unsupervised children can be at risk in any public place, including Council venues. The safety and wellbeing of children left unattended is a serious matter for Council. Although staff will always

respond with care and concern, they cannot supervise children, and they do not assume responsibility by acting as a substitute for childcare.

There is a risk that unsupervised children may leave the facility at any time, hurt themselves, or be approached by strangers. Council recognises that individual families may judge their children old enough to be left alone or supervise younger children. However, parent/care providers should be aware of the issues involved when the children are unsupervised. Council's Community Services Venues are busy public places open to all and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to children. Young children left alone can become distressed, bored or disruptive.

Staff do not take over parental/carer responsibilities for children who come into a Community Services Venue and cannot be accountable for children who are left unattended or who are displaying inappropriate behaviour.

A child left unattended in a Community Services Venue, may be deemed to be at risk under the Children and Young Persons Act 1989, and subsequently may be reported to the Department of Human Services. Parent/care providers who leave a child unattended in a Community Services Venue are exposing their child to potential harm, and may themselves be committing an offence under the Children and Young Persons Act 1989.

4.2 Objectives

4.2.1 Demonstrate Melton City Council's commitment to providing a safe environment for patrons of its facilities.

4.2.2 To provide a clear position to be understood and that can be communicated to parents/care providers of young children in the event that a child is left unattended in a Community Services Venues.

4.3 Parent/care provider responsibility for children 0 - 12 years of age

All children up to the age of 12, at all times, must be attended and adequately supervised by a parent/care provider.

Community Services Venues do not have the facilities to attend to children who are sick, injured or hungry. In order to provide a safe and enjoyable service for all, Council directs that parent/care providers remain present and within sight at all times, including during programs, to supervise their children.

4.4 Conditional Access by Children 13 – 16 years

Children 13 years or older may use a Community Services Venues unattended providing they observe accepted behaviours and proper conduct as stipulated in facility Conditions of Entry.

It is recognised that young children left alone in a Community Services Venues can become distressed, bored or disruptive. Venue users, including young people causing a disturbance may be removed in line with the Conditions of Entry.

4.5 Communication

The policy will be promoted to Community Services Venues users so a clear understanding of attendance of young children at our facilities is established.

Council will ensure that users are informed of the policy and have it available at all venues, and where appropriate provide all new users and service members with a "Guidelines for Users" brochure.

5. Responsibility/Accountability

5.1	All Council staff operating from a Leisure and Libraries venues has the responsibility of implementing this policy consistently across all locations.
5.2	Supervising staff on duty at the time a child is left unattended have responsibility for contacting parents/care providers and police where necessary. The incident should be recorded in a kept register as indicated in the Children Unattended Procedure.

6. References and links to legislation and other documents

Name	Location
<i>Children's and Young Persons Act 1989</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
Children Unattended Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet