

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

CHILDREN IN LABORATORIES

1. PURPOSE

There have been several recent reports of children being allowed into hazardous areas such as scientific laboratories and workshops. In most cases, staff and post-graduate students allowed their children to accompany them while they were working or visiting these areas. Children are naturally inquisitive and even under direct supervision will not be aware of safety standards and precautions. They could therefore be exposed to unacceptable risks due to chemical, biological, radioactive, mechanical, electrical hazards and injuries from fire or explosion. Therefore children entering laboratories whilst their parents (both staff and post-graduate students) work or study at the University have been identified as a safety issue.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure managers and employees are aware of University requirements in relation to allowing children into scientific laboratories, workshops or commercial kitchens and to allocate responsibilities to department managers to implement the procedure.

2. DEFINITIONS

Laboratories

Any building or portion of a building used, or intended to be used, for any practical scientific work which may be hazardous, including research or the teaching of sciences. Such work may involve the use of chemicals, flammable liquids, and pathogens, other harmful substances, harmful radiation, or processes including electrical or mechanical work which could be hazardous unless carried out in a specific designated area. The laboratory area includes support areas such as instrument and preparation areas, laboratory offices and laboratory stores.

Harmful process

Processes in which energy or harmful substances are used or produced and which, upon uncontrolled release, may cause injury to persons or damage property.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 **Responsibilities**

The Dean, Head of School/College or Divisional Manager of scientific laboratories, workshops and commercial kitchens is responsible for:

- Ensuring all employees, visitors and students, who may be considering bringing children on campus and into laboratories, are aware of this procedure.
- Ensuring children accompanied or otherwise shall not be allowed entry into laboratories, workshops or commercial kitchens unless with the knowledge and permission of the Head of School or area.
- Ensuring that laboratories are specifically prepared for visitors, with children in mind when setting up an open day demonstration.
- Authorising only after due consideration of all circumstances, children to enter laboratory, workshop or commercial kitchens.

3.2 Employees are required to seek permission from the relevant area manager **prior** to bringing children into laboratories, workshops or commercial kitchens.

4. REFERENCES

La Trobe University OHS Policy
Equity and Access. Policy on Children on Campus.
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/eau/equity/6eqpols/childpl.html>

This Children in Laboratories Policy was reviewed by the Science Technology and Engineering Zone Safety Committee and the procedure was endorsed by the Executive OHS Committee June 2004

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