



### 3. UNSUPERVISED CHILDREN AND BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES AT MATAURA LIBRARY AND SERVICE CENTRE (Lorraine Weston-Webb)

(Memo from Library Manager – 24.10.19)

During the October school holidays groups of unsupervised children visited the library daily. Some of the time they were manageable but they became disruptive very quickly. Then they intentionally broke library rules, used abusive language, disrupted other library visitors, and became confrontational both in and directly outside the library when they were asked to behave.

The Police were advised about a threat made to a staff member on Monday 30 September, and were called to an incident on Friday 11 October. A staff member later visited the Police Station in person to request support. The Police did then come but the problem continued to escalate that afternoon with the Library having to close because when the Police car left the kids came back and continued their harassment. They goaded and abused the staff person, thumped windows and broke eggs at the entrance. The Police were asked to trespass the ringleaders but to date this has not happened.

Initially we thought the bad behaviour would settle after the school holidays but another incident occurred on Tuesday 22 October (during term time) when four very disruptive young people had to be asked to leave. The Police have been provided with names and asked to trespass these people.

I have received advice and direction from Council management and Police. A set of strategies and support mechanisms have been put in place but the possibility of a situation flaring up again remains very unsettling to staff who work alone in the facility.

**Strategies:** Call Police; call security guard; ask Police to serve trespass notice/s on main offender/s; ask security guard to remain on site to deter kids returning after Police leave; lock or leave the building if personal safety is an issue.

**Support mechanisms:** Display gang insignia prohibited notices; install security cameras; staff respond promptly to antisocial behaviour; staff attend (personal safety) CERT training; make approach to Kaumatua or the local Runanga for community support.

The Library Unattended Child Policy stipulates children up to age seven must be actively supervised by an adult or responsible person 14 years or older; children eight to 13 years may visit unsupervised for up to one hour if confident; and teens 14-17 years require no supervision but have to behave appropriately. This Policy is not enforced due to the fact that a number of Matura children visit the library without their parents, many of whom may be shift workers. This relaxed approach is now under review.









