

Orpheus Island Research Station

Information for Parents/Guardians with accompanying minors

Access Guidelines for Children at Research Stations

The Research Infrastructure Directorate (RID) is committed to the principle of equal opportunity for staff and students and promotes a work and study environment that respects family responsibilities. The RID extends this principle to visitors undertaking research, educational and/or promotional activities. It is recognised that there is a longstanding University culture of accommodating children in the workplace, and at field stations in particular. Nonetheless, the education function and effective operation of the University must be maintained as a priority and the presence of children at Research Stations must be accommodated within this scope. To achieve this, *Access Guidelines for Children* have been developed to ensure a balance between the safety of children on stations, limiting their exposure to risks, and maintaining standards for equal opportunity. These guidelines have taken into account a number of conventions and regulatory requirements, including:

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (QLD)

Fair Work Act 2009

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991

Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984

International Labour Organisation Convention No. 156: Workers with Family Responsibilities.

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, James Cook University has a duty of care to take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain a safe working environment for staff, students and visitors. Given the diverse nature of the campus community and the breadth of potential hazards present in a University setting, the presence of children in this environment raises specific issues for staff, students and the University. Consequently, there is a need for regulation and discretion to meet the 'reasonableness' criteria of those making decisions to allow children in the work and study environment.

Definitions

Child: a person under the age of 15

Carer: designated person in immediate control of the child/children's welfare.

Hazard: a source of potential harm in terms of human injury and ill health (both physical and psychological), damage to property, reputation, environment or a combination of these.

Parent: person in a parental relationship with the child including a legal guardian, and the student or staff member who is responsible for the child or children while on University property.

Research Station: a recognised James Cook University owned or operated facility that is located outside of the main university campus areas. This includes the Daintree Rainforest Observatory, Orpheus Island Research Station and Fletcherview Research Station.

Risk: the potential for unwanted, negative consequences of an event.

Staff: a person employed by the University who has ongoing, fixed-term or casual contract.

Student: any person who is enrolled in a course through the University or University Extension.

University: means James Cook University.

Statement of Principle

Children must be supervised at all times by a responsible adult while on Research Stations or in station vehicles and must not be allowed to interfere with the work or study responsibilities of other staff, students, or visitors.

Permission and Responsibility

Permission to bring children to Research Stations is at the discretion of the relevant Station Manager and the Dean of Research, who must give consideration to the level of risk associated with the child's presence in the workplace, particularly given other activities that may be occurring in the workplace at any particular time. Such permission must be sought prior to arrival at the Station. Requests are viewed with sensitivity and reasonableness, and within the framework of governing legislation.

At all times, the parent/carer must ensure the safety of the child/children they are supervising. Parents/carers are expected to be vigilant in supervising children at the Stations and must be mindful that children can be playful, curious and/or have an inclination to adventure that can lead them into situations that may be hazardous to them while otherwise being of no practical risk to adults (e.g., climbing over railings, investigating items of plant, accessing electrical fittings, exploring kitchen cupboards, playing near LPG containers, etc.).

If the Station Manager believes that the presence of the child is causing an unacceptable health and safety risk, or unreasonable disruption to others, they may request the child be taken away from the station by the parent, carer or responsible adult, at the cost of the parent or guardian.

Station Manager Considerations

It is expected that the Station Manager will apply sensitivity and reasonableness criteria to all requests to attend the Station and to remain at the Station for the intended duration. The Station Manager may take into consideration such things as:

- Age of the child and length of stay of the child and how that coincides with other scheduled Station activities.
- Content of lectures and discussions that could be considered sensitive or explicit matter that may upset a child.
- Assess and reassess the degree of interference with other staff, students or works being conducted at the Station.
- Whether a child becomes ill or injured and presents a risk to themselves or others by remaining at the station.
- Assessing continued reasonable behaviour of children and parents/carers.

Confirmation permitting children to access the Research Station must be approved two weeks in advance of date of attendance.

Restricted Areas

Areas in which children are NOT permitted include, but are not restricted to:

- Laboratories and ancillary areas
- Scientific, technical and maintenance workshops or buildings
- Communal kitchens and food-preparation areas
- Storage facilities, store rooms or plant rooms
- Areas where chemicals or dangerous goods are stored
- Construction sites/sites under refurbishment
- Lecture theatres during exams
- Boats, other than during passenger transport
- Machinery areas or areas where ground equipment is in use
- Office areas, kitchens or laundry facilities

See *Appendix 1- Restricted and Limited Access Areas at OIRS*.

Withdrawal of Permission

A parent/carer may be instructed to immediately remove the child from the Station if:

- A child is left unattended or found in a restricted area;
- The child's health or safety is at risk;
- The child is a health or safety risk to others;
- The child's behaviour is causing undue disruption to the work of staff or students.

Special Considerations for the Parent/Guardian

When children are introduced to working environments that were not designed to cater for them, special issues of safety, supervision, productivity and legal liability arise.

In accordance with due diligence, we recognize and present special risk factors for children that must be carefully considered by parents, guardians and carers that wish to bring children into the workplace at Research Stations.

It is essential that you understand that the Research Station was established with the expectation that adults with the appropriate physical and mental capabilities, skills, training and experience would be the primary persons in the workplace.

The risk management process implemented to safeguard adult employees may not adequately protect children.

- Some hazards pose a higher risk to children than to adults.
- Children require special attention and prevention efforts to be targeted specifically for them.
- When incidents happen, the consequences can be more severe for a child than for an adult.
- Children are not likely to have the skills, knowledge or judgment about workplace hazards or safe work practices.
- Children are unlikely to know whether they are being exposed to health and safety risks and may find it difficult to speak up.
- Children can be inquisitive and adventurous, leading them into dangerous situations in workplaces.

The safety of children is always an adult responsibility – primarily the parent/guardian or designated carer, but is also a shared responsibility. Under the Act, we have a responsibility to all visitors, including children. The shared responsibility of reducing the risks as far as is reasonably practicable.

The **Special Risk Assessment – Children** (*Appendix 2*), with proposed control measures, must be reviewed and understood by the parent/guardian.

The parent/guardian must submit a **risk assessment** to the manager of the station for review, demonstrating that they have fully considered any additional risks to bringing a child in to the workplace. A **Medical Disclosure Form** (*Appendix 3*) must be provided for the child and the carer. Any additional risk presented to other persons by bringing the child into the workplace must be risk assessed and disclosed by the parent prior to approval being granted. This includes notification of any known health conditions or ailment that may affect the ability of the University to provide a safe environment. This may require a **Plan to Manage Specific Health and Safety Risks** to be submitted by the parent prior to approval by the Station Manager.

The parent/carer is not permitted to undertake a concurrent role of care for the child and paid or volunteer work. Children are not covered by University insurance policy in such circumstances.

All food, adequate clothing, personal protective equipment (other than personal floatation devices for the boat transport), and any medications must be provided by the parent/guardian for both the carer and the child.

The parent/guardian should consider personal **traveler's insurance** or similar, given that neither the child nor the child's carer will be covered under JCU insurance policies in the event of any type of evacuation or requirement for medical treatment.

Parent's/guardians are required to pay normal **fees and expenses**, commensurate with other visitors to the island. The 2016 price guidelines state a rate of \$55 per person per night for external visitors and \$45 per person per night for JCU staff and students. These fees apply to both the carer and the child. Return boat transfers are \$103 per person for JCU staff/students and \$113 per person for externals.

- Children under 40kg must wear PFDs on the boat transfers and be closely supervised by parent and/or carer. PFDs are provided for transfer on the Challenger IV, available for various weight classes.

Inductions

Station Managers or Staff will identify the responsibilities of the person supervising the children, the requisite level of supervision, and appropriate areas for children and inappropriate areas or circumstances for children to be present. This will also cover behavioural expectations and standards that must be adhered to. Parents and Carers must acknowledge responsibility and an understanding of the material presented in the induction, by signing the [Induction Form for Parents/Carers](#) (Appendix 4).



