



Volunteer Code of Conduct and Agreement

WILDLIFE VICTORIA INC.

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining the Wildlife Victoria (WV) network of wildlife volunteers. Each year we help over 50,000 animals that are reported to us by concerned members of the public.

We have a large number of volunteers all over the State and it is important that everyone commits to a consistent standard so that we can continue to provide this important service to the community and to wildlife. Whilst acting as a volunteer for WV, you are covered by our personal accident insurance cover, and for third party personal injury or damage to property caused by an occurrence in connection with the business of the WV, subject to the terms and conditions of the policy.

WV is committed to ethical, fair, equitable and sustainable practices and as a volunteer you implicitly agree to these principles and to follow this code of conduct.

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to:

- Promote a consistent standard in interactions with others in the organisation, with members of the public and with vets, wildlife carers and with stakeholders such as DELWP.
- Highlight precautions and actions necessary to safeguard the health and safety of volunteers.
- Safeguard our reputation, promote our values, and
- Provide clarity on consequences of breaking the Code of Conduct

Should you have any questions on the Code of Conduct please do not hesitate to contact office@wildlifelifevictoria.org.au or phone 03 9445 0310.

A current version of the code of conduct is accessible on the website www.wildlifelifevictoria.org.au under the *WILDNET* portal.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

When acting as a Wildlife Victoria volunteer, you undertake to:

1. Act lawfully, honestly, ethically, respectfully with care and diligence
2. Safeguard your own safety and the safety of others as a top priority
3. Abide by the policies and procedures of the organization
4. Be a positive advocate for WV and be committed to the work and values of the organisation
5. Not bring the organisation into disrepute

PRIVACY

Australia has laws protecting individual's personal information.¹ Personal information is information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable. As a WV volunteer you may be in possession of personal information, such as the name, phone number and address of a member of the public who you have agreed to assist with a wildlife situation.

You must not use or disclose someone's personal information to anyone else, unless the use or disclosure is required as part of your volunteer role.

There are other limited circumstances where personal information may be used or disclosed. For example, where required by law or where the individual consents to the use or disclosure. If you are contacted by a law enforcement official or a statutory official for access to personal information you hold as part of your duties as a WV volunteer and are unsure about whether you can use or disclose the personal information to law enforcement officials or a statutory authority, please contact WV.

How to ensure you comply

- Take care to handle personal information securely and only use it for your volunteer role
- Do not post anything with another person's personal information to social media including private message groups
- Avoid taking photos or videos in which a member of the public is clearly identifiable, unless you have their consent to do so.

Example 1: Breach of privacy

- A volunteer takes a screenshot of a WV case message with a member of public's personal information and posts it to a closed chat group or social media site.
- A volunteer takes a photo of a member of the public and posts it to a public Facebook page without their consent.

Example 2: Acceptable use of personal information

- Another wildlife rescue group accepts a case from WV on the understanding that that they are passing the case on to one of their rescuers.
- A volunteer discloses personal information to a statutory authority in the process of reporting suspected illegal activity involving wildlife.

¹ The Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth) <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy-law/>

HEALTH & SAFETY

Bullying and Harassment

Bullying involves repeated, unreasonable and unwelcome behaviour that that creates a risk to health and safety.

Harassment is behavior that is humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

Sexual harassment is “an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated, where a reasonable person would anticipate that reaction in the circumstances” ([Australian Human Rights Commission](#))

Volunteers undertake that they will avoid behaviours that may be perceived by others as bullying or harassment or sexual harassment.

For rescue and transport volunteers

Volunteers working directly with wildlife need to be in good health. We recommend that volunteers maintain an up to date Tetanus vaccination. There are some diseases (*zoonoses*) that can be transmitted from animals to humans and for this reason we recommend that people with compromised immune systems and pregnant woman become non animal contact volunteers only.

WV recognizes that dealing with sick, injured and dead or dying wildlife carries physical and emotional risks and challenges.

Volunteers should consider having another person with them when attending private dwellings, particularly after dark, and keep a charged mobile phone with them at all times with emergency contacts entered.

Rescue and transport volunteers undertake that they will:

- Make decisions that prioritise human safety and animal welfare
- Only undertake tasks that are within their training and capabilities
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) suitable to the situation
- Carry a first aid kit in their vehicle including snake bandaging kit
- Call the ERO volunteer number for assistance as required (including in situations where they may feel threatened or unsafe).
- Not undertake volunteer activities while under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs
- Refrain from smoking or the use of tobacco products in the presence of all MOPs and wildlife
- Report incidents resulting in injury as well as ‘near misses’ to WV as soon as possible
- Seek assistance to deal with emotional distress (e.g. from the Operations Supervisor, from their GP or counsellor) and take a break from volunteering as needed

Rescue and transport volunteers understand that

- All WV cases must be recorded on the WILDNET portal and have a case number, and that without a case number you will not be covered by WV's volunteer insurance
- Members of the public should not be asked to handle wildlife. except in cases where the MOP is transporting wildlife directly to a vet
- Children or pets must not be taken to rescues or be in cars when transporting wildlife.

Legal obligations

Relevant acts relating to WV rescue and transport volunteers include:

- *Wildlife Act 1975*
- *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986*
- *Veterinary Practice Act 1997*

Rescue and transport volunteers agree that they will:

- Provide a new National Police Check (volunteer for an authorised organisation) to WV if their criminal history has changed since their initial Police Check.
- Enter private property only with the owner's permission or in the owner's absence with an authorised officer or their permission (police, RSPCA, DELWP)
- Not damage private property or infrastructure in the course of a rescue without the owner's permission
- Only relinquish wildlife to a veterinarian, licensed shelter or foster carer or if requested by a DELWP officer.
- Hold a current driver's license issued within the State of Victoria
- Maintain the vehicle used in rescue and transport activities in a registered and roadworthy condition

Use of firearms

Volunteers who have advised WV that they hold a gun license agree that:

- Responsibility for the licensing and use of the firearm is theirs alone
- They will comply with their obligations under the *Firearms Act 1995*
- The decision of whether or not to euthanise an animal must be taken by them (with advice from the WV Emergency Response Service (ERS), a species advisor recommended by the ERS or a veterinarian if required)
- The police must be notified on the "000" service before any firearm is discharged for the purpose of wildlife welfare
- Appropriate insurance cover for any use of this weapon is at the owner's expense and is not covered under any WV policy.

COMMUNICATION

Clear and respectful communication is essential to the smooth and effective operation of WV's functions, and for a positive volunteer experience.

Rescue and transport volunteers will need to communicate with members of the public, the emergency response operators, veterinarian clinic staff, registered wildlife shelters and foster carers and with WV staff and other volunteers.

Education volunteers may need to communicate with teachers, school children and their parents, administrative staff, members of the public and with WV staff and other volunteers. All education volunteers at WV are required to hold a current Working with Children Check (WWCC).

WV volunteers agree that in all their communication with other stakeholders they will:

- Be polite and respectful
- Listen to other's concerns and views
- Treat interactions with members of the public as opportunities for increasing their knowledge and understanding of wildlife
- Give people an estimated time of arrival where possible (for example, members of the public expecting a rescuer, vet pick-ups, drop-offs at wildlife shelters).
- Do not criticise others via social media posts and comments

SAFEGUARDING THE WILDLIFE VICTORIA MESSAGE AND REPUTATION

Professionalism

Rescue and transport volunteers agree that they will:

- Show their WV ID card
 - to the landowner or asset manager before entering any property
 - to attending authorised officers (police, RSPCA, DELWP)
- Ensure relevant details (such as location found) accompany an animal handed to a vet or licensed wildlife shelter or foster carer
- Refrain from smoking around wildlife or while wearing a WV vest and/or ID badge
- Not engage in wildlife rescue or transport activities under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs
- Act promptly on rescue/transport cases they have accepted
- Only take photos for rescue or educational purposes and not take (or allow to be taken) photos of animals which delay rescue by more than 5 minutes, uses flashes or artificial lighting or are staged in any way.

Donations

WV relies on donations to offer wildlife rescue, education and advocacy services to the community. Donations over \$2 are tax-deductible, and the donor needs an official receipt to claim a tax deduction.

Volunteers understand that if a cash donation is offered to them they should:

- Decline and not accept money for or on behalf of WV unless specifically authorised to do so
- Direct the person to either the office telephone 03 9445 0310 or the [WV website](#) to make a donation.

Media

It is important that the organisation communicates consistently and effectively via the media with the broader community.

Volunteers agree that:

- Any media requests should be referred to the Operations Supervisor at WV on 03 9445 0310 or email office@wildlifevictoria.org.au
- If the media wish to interview you as a rescuer and WV has not given you the authorisation to talk on its behalf, you should ensure the reporter understands that you are not speaking on behalf of WV and for any visual media you must not wear your WV vest and ID card.
- If a reporter wishes to interview you as a WV volunteer please discuss the proposal with WV before agreeing to the interview.
- WV reserves the right to publish and use in any capacity all pictures and materials sent to WV by any volunteer regarding wildlife

Confidentiality

During the course of volunteering for WV you should take care not to share any information about WV that is not in the public domain. For example, you may be privy to confidential documents, databases or discussions about operational matters. Any documents or information should not be disclosed to another person. Confidentiality requirements apply also to the use of social media and email.

Intellectual property

As a WV volunteer, you agree to transfer all intellectual property rights and interests (including copyright) in any materials produced during the period of engagement as a volunteer to WV upon submission. You consent to our use of such creations and agree not to bring any claim for infringement of your moral rights in respect of that use.

Termination

Volunteers agree that:

- WV reserves the right to terminate a volunteer's services for any reason but will endeavour to discuss the issues with the volunteer before any action is taken. There are certain behaviours (serious breaches of confidentiality; unlawful acts) which are not acceptable to WV, and will result in the immediate termination of the volunteer's services.
- Volunteers are entitled to end their volunteering activities at any time. In order to assist with planning, two weeks' notice is requested.
- Volunteers agree that should they cease volunteering they will promptly return all property, including ID badge, WV hi-vis vest and information in documents or in electronic form, belonging to WV

Release and indemnity

You acknowledge that you assist WV as a volunteer at your own risk.

That means you release (to the extent permitted by law) WV, its officers, employees and members from all legal claims, demands or proceedings that might result from your volunteer activities.

In addition, you agree to reimburse WV, its officers, employees and members for any injury, loss or damage arising from your volunteer role which result from:

- You not acting in good faith;
- You knew, or should have known, that you were acting outside the scope of your volunteer role or contrary to any instructions given by WV; or
- Your ability to act in a proper manner was significantly impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Ratified by Wildlife Victoria Board of Management: 24th June 2019



Wildlife Victoria Inc.
ABN 27 753 478 012
T. 03 9445 0310
PO Box 100, Abbotsford VIC 3067
info@wildlifestvictoria.org.au
www.wildlifestvictoria.org.au
www.facebook.com/wildlifestvictoria

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

By signing this form, I acknowledge that:

- I have read and understood the Code of Conduct.
- I agree to abide by the Code of Conduct, and any updates of the Code provided to me in the future.
- My participation as a volunteer for WV does not create any relationship of employment between me and WV either now or at any time in the future.
- Any breach of this Code of Conduct, or other WV policy or procedure will be dealt with through the dispute resolution process and that serious breaches may result in the termination of my volunteer assignment.
- I have not been convicted of any criminal offence / animal cruelty in or outside of Australia. I agree to notify my supervisor should I be charged any criminal offence / animal cruelty.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please send the completed form by mail to:

Wildlife Victoria, PO Box 100, Abbotsford VIC 3067

Or attach a copy and email to:

office@wildlifestvictoria.org.au