

Volunteer Code of Conduct



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining the Wildlife Victoria (WV) network of wildlife volunteers. Each year we help over 50,000 animals that are notified 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.

Wildlife Victoria (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 organization, and with members of the public
- Highlight precautions and actions necessary to safeguard the health and safety of volunteers and the wildlife in their care
- Safeguard our reputation, 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 volunteering@wildlifevictoria.org.au or phone 03 9445 0310.

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

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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

1. Act lawfully, honestly, ethically, respectfully and 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 organisation
4. Not bring the organization into disrepute

PRIVACY

Australia has laws protecting people's private information.¹ As a WV volunteer you may be in possession of private 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 private information to anyone else, unless the use or disclosure is:

- required by law; or
- made as part of your volunteer role, or
- agreed to by WV in writing

How to ensure you comply

- Once a case is closed, delete the case sms from your phone that contain people's private information
- Do not post anything with another person's private information to social media
- Avoid taking photos or videos in which a member of the public is clearly identifiable, or seek their consent to do so.

Example 1: Breach of privacy

- A volunteer takes a screenshot of a WV case sms with the MOP's personal information and posts it to a closed chat group.
- 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 private information

- A volunteer discloses private 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 behavior 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 and not allergic to animals. 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.

Rescue and transport volunteers undertake that they will:

- Only undertake tasks that are within their training and capabilities
- Call the ERS volunteer support number for assistance as required
- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) suitable to the situation
- Report incidents resulting in injury as well as ‘near misses’ to Wildlife Victoria
- Not undertake volunteer activities while under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Make decisions that prioritise human safety and animal welfare
- Seek assistance to deal with emotional distress (e.g. from the ERS coordinator, 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.
- 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 authorized organization) 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 authorized officer (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 licensed carer or an authorized officer (police, RSPCA, DELWP)
- 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 licence 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 euthanize an animal must be taken by them (with advice from the ERS or a veterinarian if required)
- The police must be notified on the "000" service before any gun is discharged for the purpose of wildlife welfare

COMMUNICATION

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

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

Education volunteers may need to communicate with teachers, with school children and their parents, and with administrative staff, with members of the public and with WV staff and other volunteers.

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).
- Avoid criticizing others via social media posts and comments

SAFEGUARDING THE WV 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 authorized officers (police, RSPCA, DELWP)
- Ensure relevant details (such as location found) accompany an animal handed on to a vet or licensed carer
- Refrain from smoking around wildlife or while wearing a WV vest and/or ID badge

To ensure wildlife cases are seen to as quickly as possible, rescue and transport volunteers agree that they will:

- not accept a case if they cannot attend within a reasonable time and other volunteers who are closer are available
- advise the ERS if circumstances mean that they are unable complete a previously accepted case
- not accept a vet to shelter transport case unless they can do this on the same day.

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 the tax deduction.

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

- Not accept money for or on behalf of WV unless specifically authorized to do so
- Direct the person to either the office telephone 03 9445 0310 or the WV website to make an online 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 WV on 03 9445 0310 or email media@wildlifevictoria.org.au.
- WV reserves the right to publish and use in any capacity any or 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 or discussions about operational matters. Any documents or information should not be disclosed to another person.



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Volunteer Agreement

By signing this form, I acknowledge that:

- I have read, understood and agree to abide by this Code of Conduct.
- I understand that my participation as a volunteer does not create any relationship of employment between myself and WV.
- To the extent permitted by law, I agree that any liability that WV or any of its officers or employees may have in relation to any loss or damage incurred or suffered by me or by any other person in the performance of or as a result of voluntary assistance provided by you to or on behalf of WV shall be limited to the amount (if any) that WV recovers from any insurer which provides an indemnity to WV in relation to such loss or damage.

Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

Please return your signed copy of this form to volunteering@wildlifelifevictoria.org.au