

Wildlife Volunteer Code of Conduct



At Wildlife Victoria (WV), we greatly value our volunteers, and we aim to promote a volunteering culture where safety, professionalism, collaboration, and compassion are the norm. The Wildlife Victoria 'Wildlife Volunteer Code of Conduct' (this Code) outlines safe, acceptable, and professional behaviour in relation to the volunteering activities set out in Clause 1 Scope below.

WV is committed to ethical, fair, equitable and sustainable practices. As a volunteer, by signing this Code, you agree to these principles.

The purpose of this Code is to:

- promote a consistent standard of interactions between volunteers and others who work within or contract with WV (including other volunteers), other stakeholders, and members of the public
- highlight precautions and actions necessary to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of WV volunteers, employees and other workers, and the wildlife in their care
- build on and enhance WV's reputation
- provide clarity on volunteer obligations and the consequences of breaching those obligations, this Code or WV's policies or procedures.

The obligations in this Code apply to you not just while you are deployed on a particular volunteer assignment with WV, but also during the course of your volunteering relationship with us.

1. Scope

The Wildlife Volunteer Code of Conduct covers all volunteers who are engaged in the following Wildlife Victoria volunteering activities:

- transport and rescuing of wildlife
- mentoring and/or training of volunteers
- foster carers or shelters engaged by Wildlife Victoria to receive, rehabilitate and release wildlife
- any other ancillary volunteering activities directly performed for wildlife and/or other volunteers specified in this clause.

2. General Principles

As a volunteer, you undertake to:

- act lawfully, professionally, honestly, ethically, respectfully and with care and diligence
- comply with all lawful and reasonable directions given by WV
- exercise skill and care in your volunteering activities
- as a priority, not jeopardise your own safety or the safety of others
- comply with all policies and procedures of WV including but not limited to the Workplace Behaviour & Social Media Policy and Work Health & Safety Policy as amended from time to time, noting that these do not form part of your volunteering agreement with WV and do not impose any contractual obligations on WV
- not bring WV into disrepute or do anything that is or may be harmful to WV
- use your best endeavours as a volunteer to promote and enhance WV's interests and viability.

Relevant Legislation

The common pieces of legislation that relate to the wildlife sector are listed below. It is recommended that you familiarise yourself with these.

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

Below are the names of other pieces of legislation that relate to volunteering, with which you also need to be familiar:

- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Work Health & Safety Act 2011
- Brodies Law 2011
- Fair Work Amendment Act 2013 (Cth)

3. Privacy and Confidentiality

As a volunteer, you may hold private information, such as the name, phone number and address of a member of the public. You must not use or disclose someone's private information to anyone else, unless the use or disclosure is:

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

As a volunteer, you will:

- not disclose WV case information to non-WV volunteers
- **not share any information about WV that is not in the public domain with individuals, organisations or the media**
- not share confidential documents or discussions about operational matters **with individuals, organisations or the media**
- comply with WV's Privacy Policy and privacy legislation
- only use SMS and Wildnet case information for the purpose of WV case management
- not post anything containing another person's or WV's private information to social media
- avoid taking or using photos or videos in which a member of the public is clearly identifiable unless you have secured their consent to do so
- not authorise or use any other person's ID or logon details or otherwise impersonate any other person when accessing WV IT systems.

4. Health and Safety

If you are seriously injured during your volunteer duties, always call 000 for immediate response.

As a volunteer, you have health and safety duties including:

- cooperating with WV policies and procedures
- taking reasonable care of your own health and safety, and the health and safety of others
- letting WV know of any concerns you may have about safety or fitness in performing your role
- not engaging in unlawful or reckless activities (including but not limited to criminal charges arising out of driving incidents and/or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol)
- not taking any action that is beyond the scope of your volunteer role, or without appropriate authority or permission from WV (which actions are unlikely to be covered by our insurance)
- being in good health and not allergic to animals when working directly with wildlife.

Given that zoonotic diseases can be transmitted from animals to humans, we recommend people with compromised immune systems and pregnant woman refrain from animal contact

Dealing with wildlife may present physical and emotional risks and challenges. Therefore, you undertake that you will:

- only undertake tasks that are within your training and capabilities
- contact the ERS or People Services for assistance as required
- wear personal protective equipment (PPE) suitable for the situation
- report incidents resulting in injury as well as 'near misses' to WV
- make decisions consistent with the WV values, including but not limited to prioritizing safety and welfare
- seek assistance to deal with wellness issues arising from volunteering (e.g., from WV's Employee & Volunteer Assistance program, or from a GP or counsellor) and take breaks from volunteering as required
- attend and fully participate in relevant training for your role so that you can undertake your duties confidently and safely
- not ask members of the public to handle wildlife
- not take children or pets to rescues or have them in cars when rescuing or transporting wildlife.

If you have not been attached by the ERS to a WV case number and attend and are injured, you will not be covered by WV's volunteer insurance.

Use of Firearms

If you hold a current gun licence and are engaged to use a firearm as part of your volunteering remit, you:

- are responsible for the licensing and use of the firearm
- must comply with your obligations under the Firearms Act 1995
- will make decisions that consider the safety of the public in the use of your firearm.

With respect to euthanising, you will:

- assess the immediate welfare of the animal
- form a view regarding whether to euthanize an animal and either proceed or seek veterinary advice
- conduct the euthanasia in accordance with humane firearm methods of euthanasia.

5. Behaviours and Professionalism

You agree to:

- always safeguard and uphold the WV values, mission, and reputation
- always interact respectfully and appropriately with the ERS and other WV volunteers, staff, or contractors
- not subject others to unprofessional behaviours, discrimination, bullying, harassment (including sexual and racial harassment), vilification, victimization, occupational violence, or aggression (refer to WV Workplace Behaviours & Social Media Policy)
- only enter private property with the owner's permission or in the owner's absence with permission from an authorised officer (police, RSPCA authorised officer, DEECA authorised officer)
- not damage private property or infrastructure during a rescue without the owner's permission
- only relinquish wildlife to a veterinarian, licensed shelter or licensed carer or an authorised officer (police, RSPCA, DEECA)
- not accept a case if you cannot attend within a reasonable time and/or other available volunteers are closer
- advise the ERS as soon as possible if you are unable to complete a previously accepted case
- give stakeholders an estimated time of arrival where possible (for example, members of the public expecting a rescuer, vet pick-ups, drop-offs at wildlife shelters)
- not accept a vet-to-shelter transport case unless you can transport on the same day
- not delegate a case you have agreed to attend to any other person, carer, vet, or facility (including but not limited to zoo or wildlife park) without WV's prior consent
- abide by any ERS decision to allocate or not allocate a case to you or another volunteer/stakeholder
- hold a current or valid Victorian driver's licence, which is required by WV and you agree to notify WV if you are no longer entitled to drive.

6. Wildlife Welfare

You agree to:

- always have the best interests of the wildlife in your care at the forefront of all the decisions you make when accepting cases
- only accept rescue cases that you can realistically attend in the shortest period to ensure the suffering of wildlife is not prolonged
- not have domestic pets, children, play loud music or smoke/vape in your vehicle when transporting wildlife
- not keep wildlife in the boot of your vehicle
- keep all your wildlife equipment clean to avoid transfer of wildlife disease to wildlife, self or others
- if WV have arranged a carer, not divert the care of wildlife to other shelters or vets without prior consent from the ERS.

7. Donations

You understand that if a donation is offered to you for WV, you must:

- decline the donation on behalf of WV at the point of rescue and explain that volunteers cannot accept donations for or on behalf of WV unless specifically authorised to do so; and
- direct the person to the WV office telephone 03 9445 0310 or the WV website to make an online donation.

8. Internal and External Communications

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

You agree that in all your communications with internal and external stakeholders you will:

- act professionally
- be polite and respectful
- listen to other's concerns and views.

Media

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

The only approved media spokesperson for WV is the CEO or their delegate. As such, you agree to refer any media requests to WV on 03 9445 0310 or email media@wildlifevictoria.org.au.

Social Media

WV recognises that social media is regularly used as a form of professional and personal communication and therefore expects you to act responsibly when you engage in all forms of social media.

You agree to:

- use social media professionally and responsibly, including not criticizing or denigrating others via posts and comments
- report any negative commentary about WV on public forums and social media sites to engagement@wildlifevictoria.org.au
- ensure any opinions/views expressed about WV are factually correct, expressed in good faith and do not speak on behalf of WV unless authorised to do so.
- avoid anything that is discriminatory, racist, defamatory, obscene, offensive, or derogatory towards others
- not share WVs, or any other person's, intellectual property rights
- not disclose or improperly use information that is confidential to WV

- not disparage, criticize, or disrespect WV, and any stakeholder, person and/or business connected with or operating in the same sector as WV
- not download or transmit information on the use and construction of weapons, explosives and other tools of violence or terrorism
- report any perceived or real breaches to engagement@wildlifelifevictoria.org.au or the Head of People.

9. Volunteer Acknowledgement

By signing this Code, I acknowledge that:

- I have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Code, and all WV policies and procedures.
- I understand that my participation as a volunteer does not create any relationship of employment, contractor, partnership or agency between myself and WV.
- It is not permitted for WV volunteer rescuers/transporters/foster carers/shelters to solicit donations for their own benefit from the public when attached and responding to a WV Case.
- 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 me 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.
- Failure to abide by the WV Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including as outlined within the WV Workplace Behaviour & Social Media Policy.

Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

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