



## ANTI-GOSSIP AND BULLYING POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Wildlife Rescue Queensland values diversity within its membership. It does not condone Gossiping; bullying or unlawful discrimination and any instance of these behaviours will be treated as potential misconduct and may lead to the revoking of a membership. The following definitions apply to interactions between individual representatives of the group and whenever they are representing Wildlife Rescue Queensland externally. Interactions include electronic communications, for example emails and social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

### OBJECTIVE

Bullying and Gossiping is an activity that can drain, corrupt, distract and downshift wildlife rehabilitator's satisfaction. It has the potential to destroy an organisation or an individual person. Most people involved in gossip may not intend to do harm, but gossip can have such a negative impact as it has the potential to destroy a person's reputation and can also ruin Wildlife Rescue Queensland's credibility. As a volunteer organisation Wildlife Rescue Queensland will always seek to ensure members respect one another, appreciate each other's differences and act in a kind inclusive manner towards others. Any member of Wildlife Rescue Queensland who is proven to participate in or instigate bullying or gossiping towards another member of Wildlife Rescue Queensland will be dealt with by the management committee.

### DEFINITIONS

#### GOSSIP

Casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed to be true.

#### BULLYING

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

### PRINCIPLES, OBLIGATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is essential that all Wildlife Rescue Queensland members always conduct themselves in such a way as to prevent gossiping. It is extremely easy to get drawn into the gossip circle, and often difficult to resist. However to avoid getting involved in non-productive and destructive gossip, members should abide by the following points:-

- Do not speak or insinuate another person's name when that person is not present unless it is to compliment, praise or to ask about matters related directly to their volunteer work with Wildlife Rescue Queensland
- Refuse to participate when another person speaks about a person when they are not present in a negative way.
- Do not respond or forward an email, social media message or comment that is harmful, negative, or derogatory about another member.
- Actively call a halt to a discussion if the person or persons initiate gossip about another person when that person is not present.

- If a member of Wildlife Rescue Queensland does something unethical, incorrect or against Wildlife Rescue Queensland's policies. Always use the proper channels to bring it to the attention of the Management Committee so that they can resolve the conflict.
- Learn to mind your own business and not become involved in issues that do not directly involve you.
- Be a dedicated rehabilitator/rescuer, behave as an adult and expect the same from others.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Committee Process**

The managing committee of Wildlife Rescue Queensland should be aware of the possible ramifications of their actions when dealing with member issues. They must ensure that all members are treated with fairness, equality, and respect.

If there are any doubts or queries in relation to how to deal with a particular set of circumstances, the managing committee should seek external console.

Where an incident of gossiping or bullying has been brought to the management committee's attention, they should assess whether the member/s involved are current members of Wildlife Rescue Queensland and if so, put in place an immediate course of action based on the situation. The committee will notify the member about the concerns that have been brought to their attention.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Based on the findings, possible outcomes of the investigation may include, but will not be limited to, any combination of the following:

- Having membership to Wildlife Rescue Queensland revoked
- Official warning
- Requesting a formal apology to be made
- An undertaking that the behaviour will cease

### **Appeal Procedure**

A member should only appeal to Wildlife Rescue Queensland if they believe the committee have not followed the procedure set out in this Policy. Appeals can be made to the President within 7 days. He/she will look at the way that the incident was handled. If he/she thinks it was handled properly, they will not take any further action and will notify the member. If the president thinks the issue was not handled properly, they will organise for the incident to be relooked at again by the committee.

### **Outcomes**

The management committee of Wildlife Rescue Queensland reserve the right to terminate any person's membership to the organisation should it be deemed necessary.