



Volunteer Code of Conduct

Overview of WRQ and its Volunteers:

WRQ is a Not-for-Profit organisation and has no paid staff. WRQ consists of members both active and non-active. Some members simply like to stay up to date with what is going on with wildlife in their local area and pledge their yearly support by paying their membership fees. Some members wish to become carers and complete mandatory training to become certified wildlife carers, whilst others wish to assist in other ways. All our members are volunteers and our carers look after wildlife in their own homes and largely at their own expense. WRQ is managed by a management committee that consists of four voting members: President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. All day-to-day decisions are managed by this committee.

The work of WRQ volunteers and the data we provide on rescues and animals we have in care can contribute to the conservation of animals and can help with research. We also actively provide community education and the promotion of a respect for wildlife via talks and our social media channels. The primary goal of WRQ rehabilitation is to facilitate animal welfare both during the rehabilitation process and upon release.

Our Volunteer Code of Conduct protects Wildlife Rescue Queensland (WRQ) by giving volunteers a clear idea of the kinds of attitudes, behaviour and actions that will bring the best possible outcomes for everyone involved in the organisation. Having a Code of Conduct demonstrates that WRQ is serious about valuing the work of our volunteers. We respect our volunteers and as a volunteer of WRQ you can be assured that all members are bound to comply with the Volunteer Code of Conduct and other Policies and Procedures determined by the WRQ management committee.

There are many different Wildlife Organisations that people can choose to become part of and therefore we believe it is important that our volunteers feel very comfortable and personally aligned with the WRQ Code of Conduct before they commit to becoming a member of the group. Everyone in WRQ is a volunteer and the behaviours and actions of all members affect the groups reputation and can also greatly impact the overall morale of the group and its members.

All volunteers are required to become members of WRQ. It is also the requirement of the Department of Environment and Science (DES) that any person being issued with a permit to care for protected wildlife under the WRQ Group Permit must first be a full financial member of WRQ and the member must have completed the corresponding training with regards to the species that they wish to care for.

Wildlife rehabilitation is defined as caring for injured, sick, or orphaned native wildlife and providing access to veterinary assessment and treatment where required, then nursing care and support with the goal of restoring them to their natural condition and release to the wild. For the purposes of the Code, wildlife is defined as any animal of a vertebrate species, other than humans or fish, which is indigenous to Australia or its territorial waters.

Wildlife Carers who join the group and hold their own private wildlife permits or who are also members of other wildlife group/s and hold a permit issued from the other group are bound to also abide by the same Code of Conduct as all other WRQ members.

Breaches of the Code of Conduct:

The WRQ committee take this Code of Conduct extremely seriously and the committee will not hesitate to revoke the membership of anyone who is found to breach this code or if they are in breach of the DES Code of Practice. In the case of volunteers breaching the Code of Conduct, the volunteer will, in the first instance, be respectfully notified and advised of any concerns or breaches to this code. However, volunteers who consistently fail to comply with the requirements of this Code of Conduct, or demonstrate threatening or damaging behaviour, either in person or any other method of communication, shall have their membership suspended until the matter and action necessary has been considered by the WRQ management committee.

WRQ management committee holds the power to revoke a membership and permit if it deems necessary at any time. In extreme circumstances where a committee meeting cannot be conducted the current President of WRQ holds the authority to revoke a membership or Permit to care. WRQ are governed by the Department of Environment and Science (DES) and their **Code of Practice: Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992***

Should WRQ find any member to be breaking the DES Code of Practice the management committee is also obligated to report misconduct to the DES. WRQ will also support the DES in any investigation regarding any of its members.

Rescues:

Upon rescue or collection, animals must be assessed without delay by a wildlife veterinarian from one of the following institutions: Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital or RSPCA, unless otherwise advised and or given permission from a committee member. Wildlife welfare is always the primary objective of WRQ. Where the animal is found to be suffering from significant pain, distress, trauma, or disease that cannot be relieved, it should be promptly euthanised by either a qualified veterinarian or a recognised Trauma Carer of WRQ.

During rescues and transfers wildlife should be kept warm, covered, secure and quiet to help reduce stress. The hotline must be notified if you are doing a rescue that has not come from the hotline and full details must be given including the exact location of the rescue.

Wildlife rescuers should not encourage members of the public to call them directly for wildlife rescues in the future. Self-promotion should not be done as it can lead to members being overburdened with rescues or result in important rescue calls going unanswered.

Always consider your personal safety while performing any rescues of wildlife. Volunteers should never put themselves in dangerous situations to perform a rescue of an animal.

Releasing Wildlife:

Where possible the release site for adult wildlife should be back where they were originally rescued from or nearby if safe to do so. Orphan wildlife should be released into a suitable habitat for that species. The sooner an animal can be rehabilitated and released back to its own environment the better. The group has a Release document that discusses the release process that needs to be followed by our members.

Wherever possible WRQ recommends soft release unless it is a returning adult animal that has not been in care for an extended period of time.

Wildlife Care:

It is the goal of WRQ is to provide the best possible care to all wildlife that come into care. WRQ is governed by the Department of Environment and Science (DES) Code of Practice: Care of Sick, Injured or Orphaned Protected Animals in Queensland *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Within the code are strict specifications that all volunteer carers are required to abide by. It is the responsibility of the WRQ carer to know the DES code of practice and abide by the appropriate specifications and care requirements of relevant wildlife. WRQ will not tolerate any misconduct towards animals in any way.

Members of WRQ recognise and accept that it is not appropriate to keep all animals alive. Sick, Orphaned or Injured animals may need to be euthanised if it is in the animals best interest or to protect other wildlife from diseases they may carry. The following are reasons which animals may need to be euthanised for:

- do not have the capacity to be rehabilitated and released to have a good quality of life.
- are going to suffer unreasonable extended periods of unmanaged pain.
- carry an incurable disease that will eventually be debilitating or painful to the animal.
- carry an incurable disease that is transmissible to other animals, either in captivity or the wild.

Animals that have been rescued by a volunteer may not end up going to into care with that person. Always seek approval with the Vice President or Species Coordinator before taking an animal into your care. No animals can be allocated or passed onto other carers or groups without first seeking permission from the Vice president or Species Coordinator.

Carers should only care for the animals that they have a permit for and also the experience to deal with it. The Carer must always have the capacity to provide for the animal's captive needs ensuring suitable housing, diet, access to species specific social groups where relevant and a clear plan for their ongoing needs and eventual release. We discourage members from taking on an abundance of animals unless they have the proper facilities and the ability to provide for all of the animals needs. No animal should suffer because a carer has too many animals to give the appropriate care.

Media/Social Media:

The rescue and care of wildlife often attracts the interest and attention of many different media sources. WRQ has the responsibility to protect its integrity and public image as a community organisation. WRQ volunteers are not permitted to speak on WRQ's behalf unless authorised by a member of the management committee.

WRQ also has the responsibility to consider any social media interaction that may be deemed 'damaging' to the group's integrity. It is also recommended that WRQ members do not 'involve' themselves in any way with slander, fighting and bullying on any social media outlet that in any way correlates with the care of wildlife. WRQ understands that there are sometimes conflicting views on how to care for specific animals; however WRQ acts to the best of its knowledge and research provided. The bullying of other carers, external groups and other organisations from any member of WRQ on social media will not be tolerated and all reports will be investigated by the WRQ management committee.

WRQ also has a private Financial Members Facebook group separate to the public Facebook page. This is a private group intended as a forum between members to communicate issues, troubleshoot any animal problems and for general correspondence between our members only. It is the expectation that this page remains private and the duplication or sharing of any information from it to external people could result in a breach of the Code of Conduct and may result in a revoking of membership.

Other considerations:

- Understand that all members are different, so be kind and tolerant of others.
- Actively contribute to the organisation in a positive manner.
- Raise concerns you may have with a committee member and not other members.
- Ensure interactions with the public during rescue are done so in a positive & professional manner.
- Attend group functions, events, or training wherever possible.
- Avoid any behaviour which undermines the group or other members.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Be willing to adapt to change when new processes come into place.
- Be willing and open to receive feedback in a positive way.
- Avoid aggressive behaviour.
- Avoid gossip & behaviour that negatively affects the group or another members' reputation.

Conclusion:

WRQ relies on the ongoing support of its valued volunteers, without whom the group cannot function. This Code of Conduct is designed to protect the group's integrity, public image, and name. WRQ wants to nurture an environment of trust and honesty with its members. WRQ would like to remain respected and valued within the Wildlife community and amongst its colleagues. WRQ is always devoted to providing the best possible rescue and care to all wildlife.