



WILDLIFE  
INFORMATION  
RESCUE AND  
EDUCATION  
SERVICE

# Social Media and Media Engagement Policy

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Document Purpose

The purpose of this Social Media and Media Engagement Policy (Policy) is to establish guidelines for the professional use of social media and media engagement on behalf of WIRES Inc. and to outline expectations for Team Members and WIRES Volunteers when referencing WIRES Inc., its activities, or animals under its care. This Policy aims to safeguard WIRES Inc.'s reputation, manage social media communication, and ensure responsible media engagement.

This Policy also aims to establish parameters and outline the expected behaviour of people who do not officially represent WIRES Inc. but could, through their social media or media engagement activity, impact the reputation, brand and services of WIRES Inc.

## 1.2 Scope

For the purposes of this Policy, "media" refers to any form of traditional and digital channels used for broadcasting, publishing, or disseminating information to the public, including but not limited to print, television, radio, podcasts, online articles, and interviews. It includes but is not limited to:

- Online blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter);
- Social and professional networking websites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn);
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, Tiktok);
- Forums, discussion boards or groups (e.g. Google groups)
- Instant messaging (e.g. WhatsApp); and
- Any other emerging electronic or digital communication applications.

This Policy applies to:

- All Team Members and WIRES Volunteers, and
- Any use of social media or media engagement where an individual is identified or could reasonably be identified as a Team Member or WIRES Volunteer.

This Policy does not apply to:

- Personal use of social media applications by Team Members or WIRES Volunteers where there is no nexus or connection to WIRES Inc. The use of social media outside business hours or away from work does not mean there is no nexus or connection to WIRES.

Conduct of Team Members and WIRES Volunteers while using social media is governed by the obligations contained in their contract of employment, contractor agreement or volunteer agreement, by other WIRES policies, and by Australian laws and regulations.

## 2. Background

WIRES Inc. maintains a robust digital presence across various social media platforms and engages with traditional media to complement communication and marketing efforts. These channels serve to raise awareness, provide assistance to wildlife in need, and offer educational content about wildlife preservation and rehabilitation.

## 3. Guiding Principles

Whenever Team Members or WIRES Volunteers are interacting on social media or engaging with media, whether in an official or personal capacity (see Section Four (4) for definitions), the following guiding principles should be adhered to:

- I will not criticise fellow volunteers, staff, supporters, clients, colleagues, WIRES Inc.
- I will respond to others' opinions respectfully and professionally
- I will comply with WIRES Code of Conduct, Conditions of WIRES Membership, NPWS Licence conditions, DPE Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Native Fauna, WIRES Policies and WIRES Species Codes and Manuals
- I will not do anything that breaches my terms of employment or WIRES Code of Conduct or Conditions of WIRES Membership
- I will not harass, bully or intimidate
- I will not defame anyone
- I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly
- I will disclose conflicts of interest where I am able
- I will not knowingly post inaccurate information
- I will link to online references and original source materials directly
- I will be polite, considerate and fair
- I will always ensure my activity does no harm
- I will not disclose any personal or confidential information obtained through volunteering or work
- I will not post or comment anything that could damage WIRES Inc.'s reputation
- I will not identify myself or use my skills as a wildlife carer via an individual social media account
- I will refrain from publicly displaying or posting any images or footage of animals under the care of WIRES NPWS authority for rescue purposes. However, sharing images for the sole purpose of identification or research with verified researchers or specialised identification groups, such as those on Facebook, ALA, iNaturalist, or similar platforms, is permissible and within the scope of responsible engagement.
- I will not promote individual staff or volunteer businesses, personal financial ventures, or individual political candidates, preferences or parties

## 4. Definitions

### 4.1 Official Use

Official use is when a Team Member is using social media or engaging with media as a representative of WIRES Inc. with permission from their appropriate manager.

Posts from an official 'WIRES Inc.' account, i.e. not a distinct individual person, must be made by an authorised Team Member who has been reviewed and approved by an employee with the appropriate delegation level.

### 4.2 Personal Use

Personal use is when Team Members and WIRES Volunteers:

- (a) are using social media or developing digital content in a personal capacity rather than officially representing WIRES Inc.; or
- (b) are using a personal website or social media account that bears an affiliation to WIRES Inc. in any capacity and
- (c) they can be traced back to the organisation through their online presence.

Under no circumstances should rescues be accepted or rescue or care advice be offered via personal accounts. These channels are not an official, endorsed or licenced wildlife rescue service. Identifying yourself or using your skills as a wildlife rescuer/carer via individual accounts is prohibited for your own safety and security and the welfare of the animals WIRES helps. Always refer requests for rescue assistance to the 24/7 WIRES rescue line 1300 094 737.

## 5. Permissions and Delegations

### 5.1 WIRES Inc.

Within the WIRES Inc. Head Office, the Marketing Team is responsible for all official use of WIRES Inc. social media, media engagement and websites as defined in 4.1.

The Chief Executive Officer and Head of Marketing have primary delegation over the website, media engagement and social media development and management at WIRES Inc. Head Office.

All media engagement, including interviews, statements, or any interaction with traditional or digital media by Team Members or Volunteers on behalf of WIRES Inc., requires prior approval from WIRES Inc. This includes but is not limited to providing interviews, statements, or any form of content creation for traditional media outlets, social media platforms, or any digital media channel. Approval must be sought and obtained from WIRES Inc. before engaging in any media-related activities."

Personal use, as defined in 4.2, is up to the individual Team Member or WIRES Volunteer; however, individual Team Members and WIRES Volunteers will be held accountable for their actions on social media and will be disciplined if required, according to the relevant policies and codes of conduct of the various WIRES Inc. entities and their individual employment, contractor or volunteer agreement.

## 5.2 Branches

The Branch Executive has delegation for all social media activity undertaken by the Branch, with a secondary delegation falling to either their officially appointed Administrators and Moderators. In the interests of animal welfare, best practice rescue service, the safety of our Team Members and WIRES Volunteers, and WIRES Inc. reputation and brand, permission will not be granted for:

- Public facing branch websites; or
- Public facing branch Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok pages or account

WIRES Inc. branches have administrative rights over their approved closed Branch Facebook groups.

Branches Executives have an obligation to ensure that:

- The WIRES Inc. official account has administrator access to the closed Branch Facebook Groups, and they comply with this Policy and ensure they keep WIRES Inc. abreast of any new branch closed groups created or social media platforms they are active in;
- The Branch appointed Administrators and Moderators for their Closed Branch Facebook Group have a responsibility to ensure that social media is maintained, that best practice is used and that Team Members and WIRES Volunteers are informed and aware of this Policy and its contents;
- The Closed Branch Facebook Group must only include current WIRES Volunteers of that Branch, and this must be regularly reviewed and
- Any comments or content posted in closed social media groups that may be defamatory are removed as soon as possible.

The Marketing Team at WIRES Inc. will help provide advice and assistance in relation to social media best practice via [marketing@wires.org.au](mailto:marketing@wires.org.au)

## 5.3 Individuals

Team Members and WIRES Volunteers do not have permission to post content on official WIRES Inc. sites. They can, however, share, repost, retweet, etc, WIRES Inc. posts, material or comment without substantial or meaningful change as part of showing their affiliation or support for the organisation.

Individuals who undertake personal activity on social media channels are expected to self-moderate and use a common sense approach, always ensuring they act according to the Policy and the law.

Advice can be sought from the Marketing Team at WIRES Inc. via [marketing@wires.org.au](mailto:marketing@wires.org.au)

WIRES Inc. will remove posts, material or comments where it is determined that the post, material or comment is unacceptable (see Section Six (6) of this Policy) and does not comply with the Guiding Principles (see Section Three (3) of this Policy).

## 6. Unacceptable Use

Unacceptable use of social media and media engagement includes (but is not limited to):

- Conducting private business using WIRES Inc. social media channels;
- Using discriminatory, defamatory, derogatory, disparaging, abusive, offensive or otherwise objectionable language;
- Activity that amounts to stalking, harassing, bullying, trolling or marginalising any employees, volunteers, individuals, groups, or others;
- Accessing or uploading pornographic, gambling or illegal content, including extreme images of graphic content (blood and gore, etc.), animal cruelty or information regarding activity relating to firearms, bombs, terrorism, etc.;
- Accessing sites that promote hatred or extreme/fundamental beliefs and values;
- Uploading information of a confidential nature, especially in regard to WIRES Inc.'s services or clients, including trade secrets or the personal or confidential information of anyone associated with WIRES Inc.;
- Hacking or attempting to infiltrate the systems of WIRES Inc. or another organisation;
- Criticising or denigrating WIRES Inc. or other organisations and their employees, volunteers or supporters;
- Activity that interferes with work commitments;
- Release of personal, sensitive or confidential information of WIRES Inc.;
- Paid endorsement of any kind, including in-kind services or gifts and
- Activity that brings WIRES Inc. or the person's professionalism or ability to act in a professional manner into disrepute. It is the duty of everyone affiliated with WIRES Inc. to alert either the Marketing Team or Branch Executive to any inappropriate content they may encounter.

## 7. Copyright, Intellectual Property and Privacy

Team Members and WIRES Volunteers must respect the intellectual property rights of others and not infringe on copyrights, trademarks or other forms of intellectual property in their use of social media or media engagement.

It is expected that:

- Attributions are included when quoting a link or publication;
- The original link is used whenever possible, and
- Quotes are indicated using quotation marks or block quotes.

When using a photograph, confirm it can be used and is not subject to copyright. If an image is used, credit the source unless permission has been granted to use the image without credit or the copyright of the image is WIRES Inc.

If an image includes a person, Team Members and WIRES Volunteers must ensure the person has provided their consent to their image being used for the particular purpose and will be on social media.

All content creation and social media use must comply with WIRES Inc.'s Privacy Policy and the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

## 8. Policy Breach

Misuse of social media, media engagement or any digital channel can have serious consequences for WIRES Inc.

All Team Members and WIRES Volunteers are responsible for ensuring adherence to this Policy.

At management level, this responsibility includes undertaking appropriate risk assessment and performance management or disciplinary action for any suspected or identified breach. Misuse of social media or media engagement leading to a breach of this Policy can have serious consequences for Team Members and WIRES Volunteers. This may include performance management or disciplinary action, including counselling, warning, training and suspension. If misuse of social media or media engagement constitutes serious misconduct, disciplinary action up to and including summary dismissal may occur.

In certain circumstances, WIRES Inc. may also:

- Report the individual's conduct to external authorities, such as the police;
- Seek to recover costs incurred as a result of a breach of this policy from the Team Member or WIRES Volunteer who committed the breach.

## 9. Wildlife Rescue and Care Advice and Assistance through Social Media

It is inappropriate and unsafe for Team Members and WIRES Volunteers to undertake any activities involving wildlife rescue assistance to members of the public through social media channels. Social media is a communication and engagement channel, not a service channel, and is not resourced or monitored 24/7.

- WIRES Inc. strongly recommends, where possible, disabling private messaging functions on social media channels, like Facebook, for example, to close this method of contact from the public to avoid Team Members or WIRES Volunteers receiving requests for rescue assistance directly.
- To ensure the public understands social media is a communication channel and not a help-seeking service, all official social media accounts, blogs, or pages should direct help seekers to WIRES Rescue Office number 1300 094 737, which is a 24/7 service and clearly communicate the following, or a substantially similar message: "I am unable to provide rescue support through this medium/blog/platform/account/etc. Wildlife rescue reporting and assistance is available 24 hours by calling 1300 094 737."



## 10. Complaints

Social media complaints or negative comments regarding WIRES Inc. may occur through social media channels. Both official and personal users of social media are discouraged from arguing or refuting complaints or negative feedback through social media channels. This behaviour can antagonise or fuel further attacks on WIRES Inc.'s services, brand and/or reputation.

In the event of a complaint or negative comment about WIRES Inc., it is important to respond to the comment as soon as possible with a generic message to inform that further advice or information is being sought on this question and request an email address where a detailed response can be sent once further advice or a response has been obtained.

If the Team Member or WIRES Volunteer thinks the comment may be defamatory, they should err on the side of caution and remove the comment as soon as possible or alert the page administrator.

Formal complaints should be directed to [marketing@wires.org.au](mailto:marketing@wires.org.au).

## 11. Deleting or Disabling Comments

Social media is fluid, busy and often self-regulating. Social media can be used to disseminate information but should be considered a form of two-way communication and a vehicle to listen to 'wider' community views.

WIRES Inc. will hide, delete or disable comments or posts and ban profiles, pages or accounts that breach any of the conditions outlined in the 'Unacceptable Use' in Section Six (6) of this Policy.

If the Team Member or WIRES Volunteer thinks the comment may be defamatory, they should err on the side of caution and take the appropriate action to have the comment removed as soon as possible.

## 12. Contact Us

If you have any questions about applying this Policy or require any guidance on acceptable use of social media, please contact WIRES Inc. Marketing Team: [marketing@wires.org.au](mailto:marketing@wires.org.au)

## 13. Related Documents

### 13.1 Related Policies

Internal:

- [WIRES Code of Conduct](#)
- [Conditions of WIRES Membership](#)
- [WIRES Privacy Policy](#)
- And [other WIRES policies](#)

External:

- NPWS Licence conditions
- DPE Code of Practice for Injured, Sick and Orphaned Native Fauna
- WIRES Species Codes and Manuals

### 13.2 Related Legislation

- [Privacy Act 1988 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Copyright Act 1968 \(Cth\)](#)

## 14. Policy Owner and Review Details

Policy owner	Leanne Taylor, Chief Executive Officer
Next review date	1 July 2025

Version	Date approved	Sections modified
V1	#[insert date]#	