

HUNTER WILDLIFE RESCUE

Volunteers in the Hunter Region

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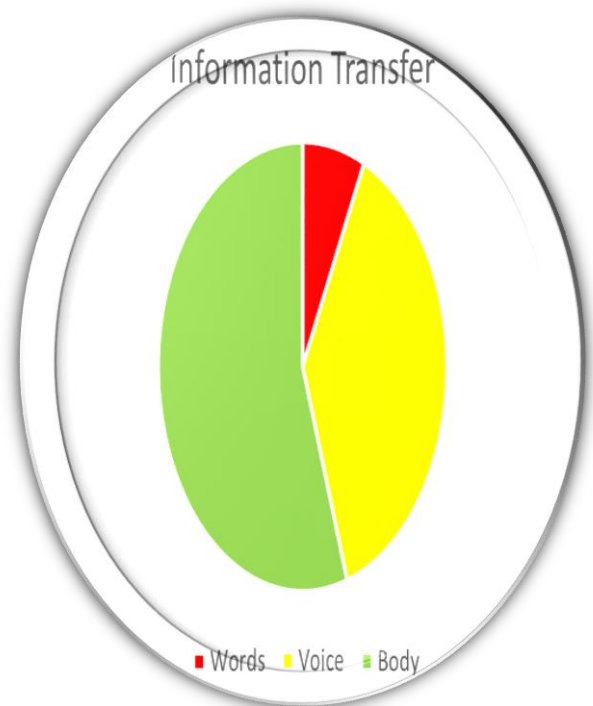
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Communications Guidelines

Hunter Wildlife Rescue



Version 1.0

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Change History

This is a controlled level 2 document. The master copy is kept by the Document Manager NATF Inc (HWR). Content change requires the approval of the Management Committee.

Version	Change	Who	Approval	Date
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0.00b	Added transfer and seeking advice	Judith Hopper		19/10/21
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1 Introduction

The purpose of this policy document is to provide guidelines, and explain expectations, on communications required between members. It is not to define what is to be communicated.

2 Background

Communication can be made via a phone call, a text (or other digital process) or face-to-face. Not all of these methods are appropriate for all information. Where multiple methods are suitable then the actual method should be determined at the beginning of the process.

Communication consists of the information given, the method given and the timeliness of the delivery. Failure in any of these aspects is failure of communication in total.

Every member is trying to balance their volunteer work with other life requirements. Most members work alone in their own workspace as opposed to regularly attending an office, etc.

Certain duties and activities are required from certain roles but, because of the above points, it is unreasonable to expect that the role incumbent should complete that duty in isolation. All Members have a responsibility to ensure that activities necessary to the functions of the group are carried out and to provide assistance, not whinging complaint, when they believe that a task has not been completed.

For example:

It is the duty of the Senior Wombat Coordinator to create management plans for all in-care wombats and deliver these management plans to the rehabilitator within 10 days of the wombat coming into care. If the SWC fails to do this then a reasonable rehabilitator should politely remind the Coordinator that the task does not appear to have been completed. Note: in this example the completed plan needs to be a written communication and usually email or paper is required. AND, where the future of a Member's much-loved animal is concerned then voice communication is required, from the Coordinator, to allow the Member to understand reasoning behind the plan and to express any concerns.

NB in the context of this document the term "Coordinator" may mean "Senior Coordinator", "Coordinator" or a "Senior Member" carrying out some of the role of a Coordinator.

3 Coordinator and Member

3.1 General Expectations

Every Member has the right to receive training, practical experience, assistance with set-up, and, advice and guidance on the rescue, care and release of their chosen species. It is usually the Coordinator's role to provide advice and instruction, organise training and opportunities for experience, arrange buddying, etc. This information should be provided to the Members in a polite and timely manner, and it is the Coordinator's responsibility to do so. It is the Members' responsibility to ensure that they are available to receive the information and to contact the Coordinator if they don't receive it.

Certain information is required on a regular basis determined by the animal in care and the people involved, e.g. weekly weights of a pinkie joey. This can be conveyed by phone, text, email, snail

mail etc. The Coordinator must discuss the appropriate communications method, the information required and the frequency at the beginning of the care time and the Coordinator and Member determine the most appropriate method for both of them.

Coordinators will, from time to time, need to issue instructions. It is the Member's responsibility to follow instructions and communicate the outcome in a timely manner. The Coordinator should not have to follow-up. Examples include timely responses to:

- a request to take an animal to the vet. The expectation is that the Member will take the animal to an appropriate vet very quickly and notify the Coordinator of the outcome.
- advice on a course of action to correct a situation. The Member needs to notify the Coordinator as to the outcome of the action, particularly if the action did not rectify the situation.

3.2 Receiving an Animal

The general process for a Member to obtain an animal for care is that the Member rescues an animal and keeps it in care (with the approval of the Coordinator), or, the Coordinator arranges the transfer of an animal to a Member. Occasionally a Member may receive a request from another organisation to take an animal into care. This section covers the communications required. The appropriateness of any given transfer is not the purpose of this document.

3.2.1 Coordinator Assigned

The Coordinator must discuss with the Member the transfer of the animal and ensure that they are able and willing to take the animal prior to the transfer. This is a discussion and, therefore, should be done by phone call, or, face-to-face.

3.2.2 Member Rescued

The Member must notify the Coordinator, immediately, that they have rescued an animal and wish to rehabilitate it. Normally this will be by phone but, with the prior agreement of both, it may be by digital means.

3.2.3 Other Organisation Request

If a request to take an animal is received by a Member from another organisation then, where the facility is wholly owned by the Member, the Member must discuss this with the Coordinator before accepting the animal. Where the facility is wholly, or partially, owned by HWR (see Facilities Management Policy) then the Member must obtain approval from the Coordinator, who may need to obtain approval from the Senior Coordinator, prior to accepting the animal.

The Member must also inform the Coordinator of the planned and actual dates of arrival. Once the animal has been transferred to the HWR licence then all normal communications between Member and Coordinator must take place.

3.3 Transferring / Releasing an Animal

Approval from the relevant Coordinator is required prior to transferring an animal to another member, another group or to the wild (release).

NB it is considered courteous when transferring an animal to send food with it (like taking a bottle of wine to a dinner party). Browse or grass for that day, a day's milk already made up, a day's worth of fruit or seed, etc.

3.4 Seeking Advice and Knowledge

All members are encouraged to increase their knowledge and improve their practice. Even a very experienced Member isn't going to know everything. Unfortunately there is as much misinformation on the internet and in people's heads as there is genuine information. Just because a source seems reliable doesn't mean they are up-to-date with modern practices, e.g. there are still vets who want to fibreglass turtle shells! It is, therefore, important to discuss any new information with the Coordinator and not apply it without this consultation. It is also advisable to consult with the Coordinator first, as they should be able to suggest reliable sources of information for further study.

4 Other Communications

4.1 Response to Questions

Many occasions require a question or request sent to all (or a major subset) of Members, frequently requesting assistance with a disaster or animal rescue. For such urgent requests all receiving Members must respond to the request, regardless of whether or not the Member can assist. This enables the sender to know who can and can't assist and enables them to focus on the disaster or rescue, not following up on the original request.

4.2 External Communications

All media communications are to be directed to the Media Officer.

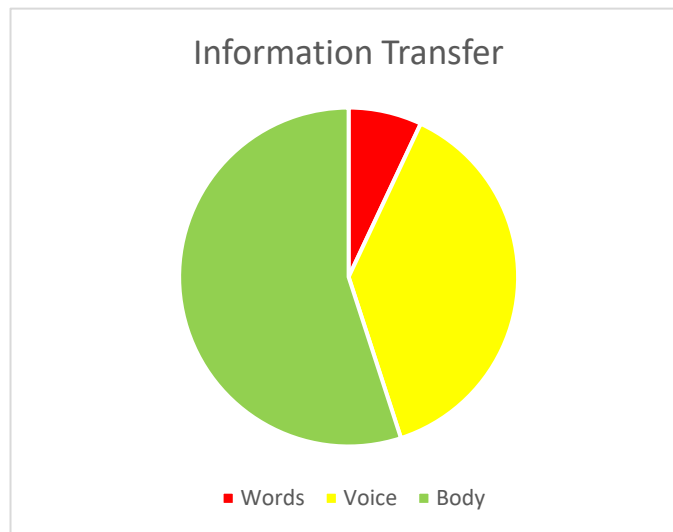
Requests for information or assistance from external organisations must be approved by the appropriate Office Bearer or Management Committee member.

5 Appropriate Styles of Communication

5.1 Overview

Technology allows for a large variety of communication methods. Not all of these are suitable to all communication content. Using correct methods facilitates understanding and reduces conflict. Please keep in mind the following:

- 1) Using the wrong method frequently leads to extreme conflict. Most of the communication between two people is NOT THE WORDS. This needs to be remembered when choosing a communication method. Further, most digital communication does not encourage a “conversation”, particularly for those who do not type well. This, again, facilitates misunderstandings and conflict. Extreme care is needed when using a communications method which does not have a visual component such as face-to-face.



- 2) People respond differently to various communication methods based on a perceived urgency and importance. NB important and urgent are not the same. A ringing phone is usually considered urgent, a written letter important. This should be considered when choosing a method of communication.
- 3) Any form of communication is an interruption to the receiver. Unsolicited interruptions should be kept to a minimum. When a lengthy interruption is required then the timing should be arranged to suit both Members.

5.2 Suggestions

Communication	Method	Comment
Anything relating to HRM, e.g. correcting a Member's methods, negative feedback.	Face to face is preferred (including video), if not possible then phone call. NEVER text or email.	Remember point one above. This type of content needs to allow for immediate interaction. It is open to massive misinterpretation when only words are available. e.g.

Communication	Method	Comment
		<p>face to face: “I hate you”, smiling, laughing face and tone of voice means banter between friends and “I hate you”, harsh tone, angry face means aggression and anger</p> <p>but</p> <p>“I hate you” in a text can mean either and be interpreted as either.</p>
<p>Urgent items, e.g.: recues, reporting sick animal, feedback on vet visit ...</p>	<p>Phone call or face to face only.</p>	<p>Not only does the communication method need to interrupt the receiver immediately but it requires the quick transfer of information and the ability to interact for clarification.</p>
<p>Regular non urgent information, e.g.: weekly weights</p>	<p>Any form although most Coordinators would prefer digital.</p>	<p>Not considered urgent so a lengthy phone call not usually considered appropriate. Digital is less disruptive to the Coordinator, minimum time for both parties and easier for the Coordinator to track.</p>