

Submission  
No 41

**INQUIRY INTO 2025 INQUIRY INTO THE OPERATION OF  
THE APPROVED CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS UNDER  
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT 1979**

**Name:** Name suppressed  
**Date Received:** 13 November 2025

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Partially  
Confidential

# **Confidential Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the RSPCA and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979**

Submitted by: [Name withheld – Confidential]

Region: Riverina, NSW

Subject: WIRES Governance, Training Deficiencies and Procedural Unfairness

## **1. Introduction**

I am an active wildlife rescuer and carer based in the Riverina region of New South Wales. Over the past year, I have dedicated substantial personal time, energy, and financial resources to the rescue and rehabilitation of native wildlife, particularly orphaned wombats and kangaroos.

My motivation has always been the welfare of the animals in my care and their safe release back into their natural environment. I joined WIRES in good faith, believing it to be a professional, collaborative organisation committed to animal welfare and volunteer support.

However, my experience has revealed systemic issues originating primarily from WIRES Head Office — including a lack of training opportunities, procedural unfairness, and unprofessional handling of volunteers. These concerns go beyond isolated regional disputes and point to broader structural deficiencies in the organisation’s management and governance.

This aligns with the NSW Parliament’s 2023 Report No. 59, which noted that “the charitable organisations approved under the Act operate in a unique role — combining law-enforcement functions with charitable and volunteer-based activity, but with limited public accountability” (NSW Parliament, 2024, p.7).

## **2. Purpose of This Submission**

The purpose of this submission is to highlight how WIRES’ centralised management and decision-making processes are failing to:

- Provide equitable and accessible training to volunteers across NSW.
- Ensure procedural fairness in communication and decision-making.
- Uphold professional and respectful conduct toward volunteers.
- Maintain consistency, transparency, and accountability in the implementation of policy.

These failures have led to unnecessary volunteer attrition, diminished trust, and ultimately, poorer outcomes for native wildlife that rely on volunteer carers for survival.

### **3. Lack of Training Opportunities**

A key concern is the limited and inconsistently available training offered by WIRES. In my experience, essential courses are often unavailable for extended periods, leaving new volunteers unable to progress or care for particular species.

Despite significant public funding and donations, training is neither delivered in a timely manner nor made accessible to regional carers. In many cases, volunteers are discouraged from seeking external training through other recognised wildlife organisations — even when such programs are current, evidence-based, and approved by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

This restrictive approach prevents competent and motivated carers from becoming fully qualified, effectively creating barriers to participation rather than pathways for skill development. The lack of transparency about when courses will run, who approves them, and why certain external programs are excluded reflects poor governance and a disregard for volunteer capacity building.

The 2023 Report No. 59 observed that “stakeholder feedback highlighted the risk that volunteers, contractors and staff may receive inconsistent training, depending on region, funding availability and organisational priorities” (NSW Parliament, 2024, p.8), and that “there is no standardised pathway for training volunteers or carers across the approved charitable organisations; this results in duplication, gaps and varying standards across NSW” (p.22).

### **4. Procedural Unfairness and Inconsistent Communication**

WIRES Head Office frequently issues directives to volunteers with little or no consultation, context, or opportunity for response. In my case, I received abrupt, impersonal emails questioning my capability and demanding the immediate transfer of animals in my care — without any site visit, assessment, or explanation.

These communications lacked procedural fairness and demonstrated a top-down, punitive culture rather than one of support or collaboration. No phone call, mentoring conversation, or welfare check for the animals was ever offered.

This pattern of communication suggests that decision-making processes at Head Office lack transparency, documentation, and appropriate oversight. Volunteers are left anxious and disempowered, fearing suspension or removal for raising concerns or requesting clarification.

The Parliamentary Report supports this concern, recording that “many submissions to the inquiry indicated that decisions affecting volunteers and wildlife carers were made at centralised head-office levels, with little input from regional volunteers, and limited transparency around criteria” (NSW Parliament, 2024, p.24).

## 5. Unprofessional Conduct and Organisational Culture

Equally concerning is the unprofessional tone and conduct displayed by some representatives within WIRES' administrative and leadership structures. Volunteers have been spoken to in a condescending or dismissive manner, including instances where genuine questions were met with hostility or ridicule.

This behaviour creates a culture of fear and mistrust that is wholly inconsistent with WIRES' stated values of respect and compassion. It discourages new volunteers from joining and experienced carers from continuing.

There appears to be no independent mechanism within WIRES for volunteers to safely raise concerns about misconduct or bullying. Complaints are often handled internally by those already involved in the dispute, undermining confidence in the organisation's capacity for impartial governance.

The 2023 Report No. 59 similarly concluded that "bullying, harassment and cultural issues within these organisations reduce volunteer retention and affect morale, with knock-on effects for animal welfare" (NSW Parliament, 2024, p.20), and that "the absence of a dedicated independent complaints mechanism for volunteer grievances was raised as a key oversight risk" (p.32).

## 6. Systemic Governance Failures

These issues appear to stem from centralised, hierarchical decision-making at WIRES Head Office that lacks appropriate checks and balances. Key systemic concerns include:

- Absence of transparent procedures for handling volunteer grievances.
- Failure to communicate training pathways and recognition processes clearly.
- No external or independent oversight of how Head Office staff exercise authority.
- A pattern of reactive, inconsistent enforcement of policies that undermines trust and fairness.

WIRES' significant public profile and access to charitable funds demand a higher standard of accountability. Without structural reform and independent oversight, these governance failures will continue to erode public confidence and diminish the effectiveness of wildlife rescue efforts in NSW.

## 7. Recommendations

I respectfully ask the Committee to consider the following recommendations:

1. Establish independent oversight of WIRES' management, governance, and volunteer treatment, with an external complaints and appeals mechanism.
2. Mandate transparent and standardised training frameworks for all approved wildlife rescue organisations, ensuring equal access and mutual recognition of qualifications.
3. Require procedural fairness standards in all WIRES decision-making affecting volunteers and animals in care.

4. Introduce professional conduct and communication guidelines for WIRES staff and coordinators, with clear accountability measures for breaches.
5. Ensure regular public reporting on volunteer retention, training accessibility, and animal-welfare outcomes, audited by an independent authority.

These reforms would help ensure that WIRES functions as a transparent, respectful, and collaborative organisation genuinely focused on wildlife welfare and volunteer support.

## **8. Conclusion and Confidentiality**

My submission is made in the hope of encouraging accountability and reform within WIRES at a structural level. The challenges I describe are not isolated experiences but reflect a pattern of behaviour stemming from the organisation's management culture.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of wildlife rescue in NSW. When they are disrespected, unsupported, or excluded, it is the animals who suffer.

Confidentiality statement:

I request that my name and identifying details remain confidential. I have genuine concerns about retaliation or further targeting by individuals within WIRES should my identity become known.

Thank you for considering this submission. I urge the Committee to ensure that wildlife-rescue organisations receiving public trust and funding — such as WIRES — are held to the same standards of transparency, fairness, and professionalism expected of any organisation operating in the public interest.