



Professional Standard 6 - Ethical Conduct (Summary)

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Citation:

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1. Purpose

This Standard outlines the ethical expectations and professional conduct required of all WAFA members. It provides clear guidance to ensure integrity, transparency, and accountability in the training, management, and use of working animals.

2. Scope

This Standard applies to all WAFA members who work with, or on behalf of, WAFA in any capacity. It applies across all roles and settings where working animals are involved, including assistance, therapy, educational, facility, detection, and service roles.

3. Standard Statement

WAFA members must uphold the highest standards of ethical behaviour, professionalism, and accountability in their work with working animals, clients, colleagues, and the broader community. Ethical conduct is fundamental to maintaining public trust, supporting human rights, and safeguarding animal welfare.

4. Definitions

- **Ethical Conduct:** Behaviour guided by integrity, fairness, honesty, respect, and responsibility, in alignment with legal, professional, and community expectations.
- **Professionalism:** The demonstration of competence, reliability, courtesy, and adherence to organisational standards in all interactions and decision-making.
- **Confidential Information:** Any personal, medical, legal, financial, or sensitive data relating to clients, staff, volunteers, animals, or affiliated organisations.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board:** Responsible for governance, setting strategic direction, risk management, financial oversight, and compliance with WAFA standards.
- **Senior Leadership:** Implements board policies and manages day-to-day operations.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Support organisational objectives under leadership direction and adhere to governance policies.

6. Ethical Conduct Requirements

6.1 Respect and Fairness

All people and animals must be treated with dignity, regardless of background, identity, or role. Discrimination, bullying, or exploitation is strictly prohibited.

6.2 Confidentiality and Privacy

Confidential information must be protected in accordance with privacy legislation and ethical best practice. This applies to both human and animal records.

6.3 Accountability and Transparency

All WAFA members must be honest about qualifications, finances, training methods, and outcomes. Records must be accurate and up-to-date.

6.4 Cultural Competence and Inclusion

Organisations and individuals must demonstrate cultural safety, particularly when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

6.5 Environmental Responsibility

Members must seek to reduce environmental harm and adopt sustainable practices in their operations (e.g., waste reduction, low-impact transport, eco-friendly materials).

6.6 Use of Technology and Data Ethics

Data, including GPS tracking, performance logs, or biometric data, must only be collected and used with informed consent and in compliance with relevant data laws.

6.7 Whistleblower Protection

Organisations must have procedures that allow staff and clients to safely report unethical, unlawful, or harmful behaviour without risk of retribution. WAFA supports the right of individuals to raise concerns without retaliation.

6.8 Mental Health and Wellbeing

WAFA promotes a psychologically safe environment. Members should support the mental health of their teams, handlers, and clients and model safe workload and emotional regulation practices.

6.9 Compliance with Laws and Regulations

All members must operate in full compliance with applicable laws, including those related to animal welfare, disability rights, workplace safety, data protection, and anti-discrimination.

6.10 Professional Development and Collaboration

Members should actively seek professional growth and share knowledge within the WAFA network. Collaboration is encouraged to support continuous improvement in the sector.

7. Organisational Values (Cross-Referenced)

This Standard aligns with WAFA's core values:

- **Integrity:** Maintaining honesty and ethics in all actions.
- **Respect:** Valuing all humans and animals.
- **Collaboration:** Working together to improve the sector.
- **Innovation:** Using creative solutions for emerging issues.

- **Excellence:** Striving for high-quality outcomes.
- **Diversity & Inclusion:** Embracing all perspectives and needs.
- **Sustainability:** Promoting environmental and social responsibility.
- **Transparency:** Communicating openly and honestly.
- **Empowerment:** Supporting all members to make a difference.
- **Community Engagement:** Raising awareness and reducing discrimination.
- **Accessibility:** Removing barriers across all programs and services.
- **Wellbeing:** Prioritising work-life balance and mental health.

8. References

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*
- Animal Welfare Acts (State/Territory-specific)
- WHS/OHS legislation (State/Territory-specific)
- National Standards for Disability Services
- International Association of Human-Animal Interaction Organisations (IAHAIO) Guidelines
- Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (if applicable)

9. Review, Revision and Approvals

This policy will be reviewed annually by the steering committee to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any revisions will require approval from the steering committee.

10. Implementation

WAFa members must integrate these standards into governance frameworks, operational policies, financial management, human resources, and client service delivery to maintain high standards of accountability and organisational integrity.

11. Enforcement

WAFa enforces these standards through its accreditation and audit processes. Non-compliance will lead to remedial actions and may impact ongoing WAFa membership and certification status.

12. Contact Information

For further information or assistance related to this standard, please contact the steering committee at the following email address: admin@workinganimals.com.au

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Change Description	Approved By
V1.0	17/05/2025	V. Solomon	Initial	C.Williams