

CODE *of* CONDUCT

Taronga Conservation Society Australia
September 2023



Green Sea Turtle — Photo by Toby Zerna

TARONGA 
CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA.

For the Wild

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

Taronga acknowledges and respects the Countries on which we have the honour of standing and working each day.

This always was and always will be Aboriginal land. As a Taronga community, we acknowledge and pay our deepest respect to Cammeraigal, Wiradjuri and all First Nations Elders, past and present.

Taronga recognises our First people's cultures, histories and ongoing relationship and obligations to the land and waterways.

As a conservation community we at Taronga are committed to truth-telling and the ongoing process of reconciliation; to respect, connect, consult and be led by the complex and vital knowledge of First Nations Peoples as we urgently work to safeguard the future of our lands, country and planet.



Tara Dever CEO of Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council welcoming Regent Honeyeaters and threatened species experts onto Mindaribba Land — Photo by Alex Pike

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Taronga has a rich history, and across a century, we have grown into a multifaceted and impactful not-for-profit Zoo-based conservation organisation.

Even with our and others' efforts and successes, our natural world is still in urgent and escalating need of our help. At no time in history has Taronga's role been more critical for wildlife.

Our people are crucial to achieving our Vision - **securing a shared future for wildlife and people**. We work in partnership with others, inside and outside Taronga, knowing remarkable results occur by collaborating and supporting each other.

Taronga's impact on wildlife continues to grow every year. As we bring in diverse skills the Taronga team continues to grow, as does the complexity of our work environment which necessitates a highly professional approach to everything we do.

Embracing our Code of Conduct and our Values ensures we have the greatest positive impact on wildlife.

The purpose of Taronga's Code of Conduct is to guide our behaviours, our decisions, and how we perform our roles.

Whether you've been with Taronga for years or just beginning with us, it is vital that you know, understand, and uphold our Code of Conduct.

As you read this document, please take a moment to reflect on how this applies to you and your role. The Code of Conduct is not intended to provide detailed guidance for every situation we face – we must rely on our judgement and strive to operate continuously with integrity.

If you are unsure about a decision, please speak with your Manager or Director for guidance.

Thank you.



Cameron Kerr

Chief Executive

1 September 2023



CEO Cameron Kerr releasing a Greater Bilby at Sturt National Park
— Photo by Brad Leue/Australian Wildlife Conservancy



CEO Cameron Kerr with Regent Honeyeater — Photo by Guy Dixon

PURPOSE

Taronga Conservation Society Australia ('Taronga') is committed to the conservation of wildlife in Australia and around the world. Our purpose is to save wildlife, inspire people and drive change. To help achieve this purpose, we are committed to all our people being the best at what they do.

In delivering our commitment to protect and save wildlife, we interact with a variety of people each day including the community, government, and our colleagues. This Code of Conduct ('the Code') sets out Taronga's expectations of how to uphold our Values through your day-to-day performance of your duties, your interactions with others and how we protect the reputation of Taronga. This Code sets out the standards of behaviour that Taronga expects from you and your colleagues.

Taronga is a public service agency. Public employment carries with it a unique additional obligation to act in the public interest.



Keeper Del Leong releasing A Northern Corroboree Frog — Photo by Harry Vincent

OBLIGATIONS

The Code sets out standards of behaviour expected of our employees, students, volunteers, contingent workers, contractors, external partners working on site and members of the Board or committees.

The Code is to be read in conjunction with:

- The Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees ('Ethical Framework') issued by the Public Service Commission; and
- Taronga policies, as in force from time to time. To the extent that any policy is in direct conflict with this Code, the terms of the applicable policy will apply.

You must exhibit standards of professional behaviour that will maintain public confidence and trust. Taronga aims to provide services at the very highest level to the community. Accordingly, the integrity, efficiency, impartiality and fairness of everyone must be beyond question.

In addition to the Code, you must comply with any relevant legislative, industrial and administrative requirements and any lawful direction made by a person with the authority to give such a direction.



Committed volunteers lending a helpful hand throughout various sections of the Zoo — Photo by Jo Nevin

TO WHOM THIS CODE APPLIES

The Code applies to all Taronga employees, volunteers, students, contingent workers, contractors and members of the Board or committees ('you'/'we').

Please read the Code carefully and ask for clarification if needed. Everyone in Taronga has a responsibility to familiarise themselves and has a responsibility to follow the Code – to do the right thing and encourage others to do the same.

This Code applies when you act in the course of, or in connection with, your employment or engagement with Taronga.

It is mandatory for all employees to make an annual declaration that you have read and understood your obligations under the Code.



Virtual Lockdown Lessons with School Education Manager Matthew Nelson — Photo by Harry Vincent

VISION, ROLE AND VALUES

At Taronga, we believe that wildlife and people can share this planet. All of us have a responsibility to protect the world's precious wildlife, not just in our lifetimes, but for future generations. The Code sets out the behaviours expected of you in achieving our Vision and Purpose. Together with Taronga's Values, the Code shapes the standards of behaviour expected of you.

Our Vision

Securing a shared future for wildlife and people.

Our Role

As leaders in conservation, we protect wildlife and empower people to secure a sustainable future for our planet.

Our Purpose

Save Wildlife, Inspire People, Drive Change .

Our Values

Our Values, **BASIC**, are what we stand for. They are fundamental to the success of our organisation.

They reflect the way we work together with each other, our guests, our partners, and the community to achieve our Vision and Purpose.

► **Be collaborative, kind and respectful**

I actively contribute to Taronga's vision
I conduct myself with kindness and respect to all
I build trust through my words and actions
I work effectively within and across teams
I embrace individual differences

► **Acept and take responsibility**

I take responsibility for my actions and results
I own my mistakes, learn and take steps to rectify them
I alert others to issues and decisions that may impact them
I value our customers and offer excellence in service

► **Safely undertake all activities**

I actively promote a positive health and safety culture
I take personal responsibility for myself and others
I report and resolve safety issues when they arise
I consult with my team and share safety learnings

► **Innovate and take initiative**

I value new ideas and embrace change
I suggest areas for improvement
I think creatively to deliver solutions

► **Communicate clearly and constructively**

I communicate positively, clearly, honestly and respectfully
I share knowledge
I seek opinions and diverse perspectives
I listen to understand

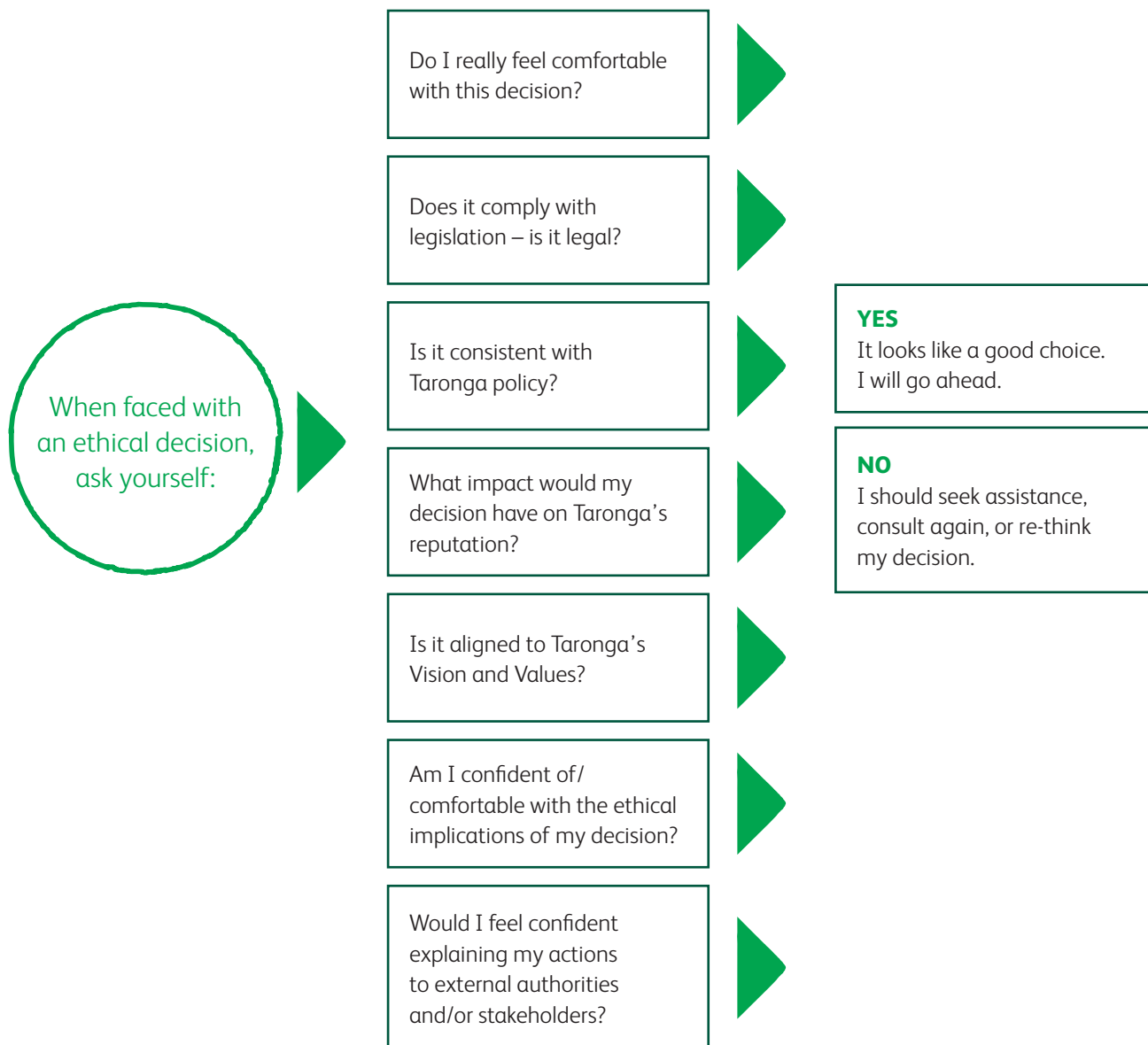
The core values for the NSW government sector – Integrity, Trust, Service, and Accountability – as outlined in the Ethical Framework, underpin Taronga's Values.

MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

Taronga is a purpose led and values driven organisation.
Our Values and policies are the guiding principles in making a choice.

Ethical dilemmas are complex, and the Code cannot address all questions or situations. The Code is one of several tools we have as wildlife conservation advocates to guide our behaviour.

There will be times when you need to exercise discretion and judgement to determine the right course of conduct. Set out below are the questions that you may want to ask yourself if you are unsure if a decision you are making complies with the Code and Values.



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You are responsible for:

- understanding the Code;
- demonstrating high levels of personal conduct consistent with the Code;
- seeking assistance when unsure about how to implement or understand your obligations under the Code;
- promoting the implementation of the Code with your colleagues; and
- immediately reporting possible breaches of the Code to your Divisional Director/Director, or to the Divisional Director – People, Culture & Safety.

Senior Executives, Managers and Supervisors responsibilities

Senior Executives, Managers and Supervisors ('Leaders') should ensure that procedures in their area of responsibility are promoted, understood and followed. Leaders have a responsibility to role model conduct that is consistent with the Code.

Leaders are responsible for:

- demonstrating ethical, fair and professional behaviour;
- ensuring the implementation of the Code in their work area including ensuring everyone understands what their duties are and how they are expected to perform and behave;
- ensuring employees complete all mandatory training on the Code and associated policies;
- ensuring workplace culture and practices operate in-line with the Code, including a culturally and inclusive workplace;
- promoting employee and team conduct that exemplifies the Code;
- acting promptly and fairly to prevent and address any suspected breaches of the Code; and
- ensuring that any real or perceived conflicts of interests are avoided or effectively managed.

Senior Executives

In addition, a Senior Executive (including an Acting Senior Executive) must declare in writing any private interests (financial, business, personal or other interests) that have the potential to influence, or could be perceived to influence, decisions made, or advice given by the Senior Executive.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive, has the responsibility of Senior Executives (as stated above), and in addition is responsible for:

- leading and promoting implementation of the Code across Taronga;
- ensuring the general conduct and management of the functions and activities of Taronga are in accordance with the core principles in the Code; and
- overseeing the implementation of the Code and making adjustments as necessary.

WAYS OF WORKING

To be part of a workplace that helps secure a shared future for wildlife and people across the fields of animal care, recovery, education, community engagement, guest experience and science.

Taronga expects you to:

Comply with the law and Taronga policies

Taronga is an NSW Government Agency, constituted under the *Zoological Parks Board Act 1973* as a statutory authority owned by the people of NSW. As a government agency, we are bound by a range of NSW laws and guidelines that govern our operations.

In the performance of your duties, you must comply with all laws and Taronga's policies, as amended from time to time.

Protect animal welfare and be environmentally sustainable

In the performance of your duties, and to support Taronga's Strategic Priority 'Environmental Leadership', you must act sustainably in all aspects of resource management. You are encouraged to understand your individual and team environmental impacts and undertake your work in a way that minimises environmental footprint. This includes:

- supporting delivery of targets set out in Taronga's Sustainability Strategy, and
- assisting leaders to progress your Division's Sustainability Actions.

Taronga is legally required to report any real or potential harm to the environment under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*. You must report pollution incidents or near misses to a leader immediately and the Pollution Incident Response Management Plan flowchart must be followed.

The welfare of animals is critical to achieving our Vision and Purpose and must form a key consideration in all decision making. You must comply with applicable policies and procedures related to animal welfare and ethics.

Further guidance:

Taronga Animal Welfare Policies and Procedures
Taronga Sustainability Strategy

Be fair and equitable

You must act in accordance with the Taronga Values, BASIC.

When using discretionary powers, you should take all relevant facts into consideration, having regard to the merits of each matter. The rules or principles of natural justice, also known as procedural fairness, should also be followed.

WAYS OF WORKING

Be respectful

We value the diversity of our workplace.

Taronga seeks to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone can participate and develop regardless of their gender, gender identity, age, ethnicity, cultural background, religious belief, sexual orientation, marital or family status, disability, socio economic background, perspective or experience.

Taronga has a zero tolerance for bullying, harassment, victimisation, discrimination, violence or lateral violence.

Respect and inclusion are fundamental to a harmonious, productive and psychologically safe workplace where everyone feels welcomed, valued and safe to speak up.

You are expected to observe the highest standards of ethics, integrity and behaviour, and Taronga is committed to the workplace being a safe environment in which everyone feels they can achieve their potential.

When engaging with stakeholders and communities, tailoring the engagement process to engage early and creating an authentic environment for listening actively and considering the opinions of others ensures the voices of stakeholders and communities are heard.

Further guidance:

Anti-Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Free Workplace Policy

Be presentable

A high standard of attire and presentation has a positive impact on Taronga's reputation and brand.

Where you are required to wear a Taronga uniform, you must:

- Ensure the uniform is clean, tidy and worn to a presentable standard. Be worn for the entirety of hours worked.
- As far as practicable, not wear the uniform outside of Zoo grounds, unless travelling directly to the Zoo and traveling home, or if you are on official business.

Workers who are not required to wear a uniform should always maintain a neat and tidy appearance. Attire must never present a safety issue.

It is okay to wear cultural and religious garments, and you can wear clothing that reflects your gender or gender identity.

Taronga values Individuality. In deciding what is a presentable standard, the over-riding principle is whether guests and members of the public would form a favourable view on the reputation of Taronga.

Further guidance:

Uniform Policy

Treat children fairly and respectfully

Taronga is committed to providing a safe environment for all children and young people. All employees and volunteers must complete a Working with Children Check in line with the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*.

You have a responsibility to act appropriately when dealing with children in the course of your work. If dealing with persons under the age of 18, you must:

- Treat them with special care (e.g., use age appropriate language).
- Report incidents or allegations of inappropriate conduct towards a child to your leader.
- As soon as practicable, report to your leader if you or a colleague are convicted of, or an allegation has been made against you or a colleague relating to, reportable conduct involving children pursuant to Part 4 of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW)*.

Further guidance:

Working with Children Check Policy
NSW Office of the Children's Guardian's website
Child Safe Organisation Policy

SAFETY AND WELLBEING

Taronga cares deeply about the physical and psychological safety and wellbeing of our people. We are committed to a high standard of health and safety for our people and those around us.

Our safety and wellbeing commitments

- Prevention of physical and psychological injuries to our people.
- Continual improvement of our systems, safety culture and performance.
- Compliance with all legal and other requirements and, where possible, exceeding best practice safety standards relevant to our business.

Taronga expects you to:

Perform your role safely

We are all responsible for working together to make sure anyone who works at or visits our Zoos are safe. You must take reasonable care for your own health and safety and not do anything that adversely affects the health and safety of others.

Employees must ensure that best practice WHS procedures are adopted in all Taronga activities and that all requirements of the *Work Health & Safety Regulations 2017* are always complied with.

To achieve this, you must:

- Prioritise your own physical and psychological safety, and the safety of those around you.
- Attend any safety compliance training required for your role
- Proactively identify and report all incidents, near misses and hazards to prevent an injury or a risk to yourself and others.
- Only undertake tasks that you are trained, competent and properly prepared for and attend all induction and training provided to you.

- Never take shortcuts at the expense of safety.
- Manage your personal physical and mental health and ask for any reasonable adjustments.
- Comply with any reasonable directions, instructions, policies and procedure given to you.

Further guidance:

Work, Health & Safety Policy and Charter
WHS Policy
Refer to your role description
Consultation and issue resolution

Avoid alcohol and drugs in the workplace

To help protect the environment, prevent bushfires and for the welfare of our animals and people, Taronga sites are smoke free zones. Employees, volunteers, students and contractors who choose to smoke must use the relevant designated smoking areas and dispose of e-cigarette and cigarette butts in the cigarette bins and ashtrays provided.

Drugs, alcohol, and other substance use in the workplace is, as with any health and safety risk, everyone's responsibility. If you are impaired by or unfit for work due to alcohol or other drug use, you will put yourself, other people in the workplace and our animals at risk of harm. You must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or use illegal substances while at work. This includes misuse of medicines prescribed by a doctor or available from a pharmacy.

Keep our premises secure

The security of Taronga's premises is vital to the protection of the animals in our care, Taronga's environment, plant and equipment and for the personal safety of our people and guests.

You must be familiar with and follow security procedures in respect to the safe and authorised access of workers, volunteers, students and visitors to Taronga's premises.

MANAGING CONFLICTS

When working at Taronga you may have access to information which may give you the opportunity to use your position to gain an improper personal advantage. As an NSW Government Agency, it is important that you where possible avoid conflicts of interest and where not possible to avoid them, identify, disclose and co-operate in managing any actual, perceived or potential conflicts of interest.

Taronga expects you to:

Disclose conflicts of interest

You are required to avoid conflicts of interest and avoid creating conflicts of interest for others.

You:

- must avoid any real or apparent conflicts of interest related to your work for Taronga; and
- disclose any real or apparent conflicts of interest relating to your work for Taronga.

Further guidance:

Conflict of Interest Policy
Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees

Disclose outside employment and extra-official activities

All employees must disclose any secondary employment beyond their employment with Taronga. Employees must obtain the approval of the Director and Chief Executive before engaging in outside employment or extra-official activities.

Further guidance:

Outside Employment Policy

Perform political activities and community participation with care and diligence

You are free to fully participate as volunteers in community organisations and charities, and in professional associations.

You must make sure that any participation in party political activities does not affect the discharge of your duties or conflict with your ability to perform your duties in a politically neutral manner. If any potential or perceived conflict of interest arises, you should disclose it to your Divisional Director/Director or the Chief Executive immediately who will determine measures to manage the conflict, including that you may need to cease the political activity or withdraw from the areas of your work relevant to the conflict.

Act responsibly with respect to gifts, benefits, travel and hospitality

You must not accept, or solicit, a gift, benefit, travel or hospitality that is intended to, or is likely to, cause you to act in a partial manner in the course of your duties.

All accepted and declined gifts and benefits of greater than \$50 in value must be registered in Taronga's Gift Register. The Gifts Register is maintained by the Taronga Executive Officer to enable the registration of receipt and disposal of gifts as Taronga property, in an open and transparent manner. Gifts or benefits of a nominal value of up to \$50 may be accepted in some circumstances and are not required to be registered.

Further guidance:

Gifts and Benefits Policy

MANAGING CONFLICTS

Direct all donations to the Taronga Foundation

Any offer of funds in cash or kind must not be accepted by any employee, student or volunteer and must be directed to the Taronga Foundation or raised immediately with your leader or Director.

Disclose criminal conduct

You must disclose to your leader if you are charged with or convicted of any criminal offence which could reasonably be seen to affect your ability to meet the requirements of the work you are engaged to perform or which has a negative impact on the reputation of Taronga.

You must also disclose to your leader if you are charged with or convicted of a serious criminal offence, whether or not it is related to your work with Taronga. A serious criminal offence means an offence committed in New South Wales that is punishable by imprisonment for six months or more, or an offence committed elsewhere that, if it had been committed in New South Wales, would be a serious criminal offence.

You must disclose to your leader if you have been charged with or convicted of offences relating to the welfare of animals. Offences relating to the welfare of animals include offences under the *Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986* or in the Regulations under this Act in relation to an animal, the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* or the Regulations under this Act in relation to an animal, and sections 79, 80, 530 or 531 of the *Crimes Act 1900*. It is a requirement that disclosure is made before commencing work or within seven (7) days of being charged with or convicted of a relevant offence.

Use Taronga resources and information appropriately

Public resources (i.e. financial and materials) should be utilised effectively, without waste and for the work of Taronga. You must ensure public resources are not used for personal benefit or for an unauthorised purpose.

Taronga's financial resources are subject to the provisions of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* and officers are bound by the Treasurer's Directions, issued under that Act.

Employees incurring expenditure on behalf of Taronga must: be authorised to incur expenditure; adhere to the Treasurer's Regulations and Taronga policies and procedures; and comply with Taronga's Delegation of Authority.

Employees and volunteers are not to obtain or use any stores items (e.g., stationery, furniture, tools) for personal use or use other than for performing authorised work or duties for Taronga.

Information Technology

All usage of Taronga's electronic communications facilities (computers, devices, network software, internet, intranet, email) should be lawful, appropriate, ethical and secure.

You must report violations of cyber security policies, cyber security incidents and suspicious activity to the Information Technology team.

Further guidance:

- Procurement Policy
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Mobile Device Use Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Information Security Policy

REPRESENTING TARONGA

Taronga employees, volunteers and students are trusted and expected to conduct themselves appropriately when representing Taronga or communicating with others. We must be thoughtful, courteous and respectful in our communications.

Taronga expects you to:

Obtain authorisation before making official public comments

In the course of your duties, you may be called on to make public comment. You must not make any comment on behalf of, or about, Taronga unless authorised to do so. All media inquiries must be referred to Taronga's Media Team.

Where comment is authorised to be given on behalf of Taronga:

- Comments made must be confined to factual information.
- Opinions on government policies or government decisions must be avoided unless required by law.
- You must only disclose information that is already in the public domain or that you have otherwise been specifically authorised to release.

Use social media responsibly

You have a role in supporting and championing Taronga's Vision in their interactions with people, including through social media sites. We all need to make sure we use social media safely, and always do the right thing online.

Whenever interacting with, or talking about, Taronga's programs, workplace, employees, guests or others connected with work on social media, you must act in accordance with the NSW Government Social Media Guidelines.

You must not post over social media any, improper, illegal or offensive material of any kind, or material that could be considered discriminatory or sexually harassing in nature that is related to Taronga or our people.

When sharing images of visual content on your social media profile, you must adhere to Taronga's Dignity and Respect Framework and Photography Guidelines which provides guidance on how to present wildlife in such a way that conveys respect for our animals.

It is important that information shared reflects Taronga's Vision, role and Values, is already publicly available and does not showcase back-of-house areas.

Further guidance:

[NSW Government Social Media Guidelines
Social Media Policy](#)

Make public comment with care and diligence

You, as a private individual, have the right to participate in public debate on political and social issues. However, there are some circumstances in which this may be inappropriate, for example, situations where the public comment appears to be an official comment on behalf of Taronga or impacts negatively on the reputation of Taronga. In such circumstances, employees should preface their remarks with a comment that they make these comments in a private capacity and that their comments do not represent the official view of Taronga. You must not use any Taronga, Department or NSW Government logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of your personal comment.

Other than in the course of duty, or when called to give evidence in court or tribunal, you should not disclose or publicly comment on matters relating to official business unless authorised to do so. You must ensure that any public comments maintain the confidentiality of Taronga, Department and NSW Government information.

Comply with the Lobbyist Code of Conduct

You must comply with the NSW Government Lobbyist Code of Conduct published on the Department of Premier & Cabinet's website and as amended from time to time. Taronga employees will only engage with professional (third-party) lobbyists if they and their client are listed on the NSW Electoral Commission's Register of Lobbyists.

Further guidance:

[The Lobbyists Register](#)

NEW HORIZONS

Post separation employment

Employees must not use Taronga information, including inside information, to obtain an improper personal benefit or potential benefit for themselves or others.

Post-employment with Taronga, you must not use, or take advantage of, confidential information that may lead to gain or profit obtained in the course of your official duties, until it has become publicly available.

All employees should be careful in their dealings with former employees of Taronga and make sure that they do not give them, or appear to give them, favourable treatment or access to privileged or confidential information.



Education Centre Taronga Western Plains Zoo — Photo by Clancy Job

SPEAK UP: REPORTING SUSPECTED BREACHES OF THIS CODE

Speaking up is crucial to Taronga's culture where people can speak up when they feel that something is not right - it is a living example of our 'Accept and take responsibility' value. Behaviour contrary to the Code can undermine productive relationships at work, hinder service delivery, and damage public trust in Taronga.

Taronga encourages you to speak up about potential breaches of this Code even if it does not directly affect you.

If you see someone else acting in a way that is contrary to the Code, you should report the incident to your leader. If the breach is by your leader, then you should report it to another Divisional Director/Director.

If you believe that the behaviour is not just unethical conduct or a breach of the Code but is corrupt conduct, a serious and substantial waste of public money, serious maladministration or government information contravention, then report your concerns in accordance with Taronga's Public Interest Disclosure Policy. In accordance with Taronga's Public Interest Disclosure Policy, a report may be made internally or to an appropriate external authority.

Our leaders will support people who speak up by listening to concerns, assessing and taking the necessary action and providing feedback on the outcomes.

Investigation

Taronga will consider all reports of suspected breaches of this Code and will take action under Taronga's Workplace Grievance Policy, Managing Misconduct Policy or Public Interest Disclosure Policy as appropriate.

When deciding what, if any, action should be taken in relation to a breach of the Code, each case will be considered on its own facts and circumstances

Further guidance:

Managing Workplace Grievances Policy
Managing Misconduct Policy
Public Interest Disclosure Policy

Breach

If Taronga finds an employee has breached the Code, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with the *Government Sector Employment Act 2013*. Management action that may be taken includes caution or reprimand, assignment to another role, a fine, reduction in grade, or termination of employment.

A breach of the Code may also constitute corrupt conduct as defined in the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 (NSW)*.

If a person who is not an employee has contravened the Code then Taronga will consider if it will terminate the engagement in the case of a contractor or cease the volunteer or student relationship.

People who report breaches of the Code may be offered protection under the:

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2022 (NSW)
Public Interest Disclosure Policy (Taronga)

Definitions

Lateral violence – Lateral violence is not just an individual's behaviour. It often occurs when a number of people work together to attack or undermine another individual or group. It can also be a sustained attack on individuals, families or groups.

Students – A person undertaking a course of study through the Taronga Training Institute, a postgraduate degree through a partnering University or working towards a PhD, who are completing their studies onsite.

Version control

Version	Date	Approved by
3.0	Sept 2023	Board
2.0	Oct 2015	CEO