

ACWA Code of Ethics



Most professions require its members to meet a standard of ethical behaviour; this requirement is often formalised through a written code. In the case of community work a standard of ethical behaviour is non-negotiable since practitioners largely work with the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of people in our society. This practitioner-client relationship may be variously defined, but in this document, it is taken to mean the relationship that has resulted through the engagement of an individual, group, or community with the services of a community worker.

The Australian Community Workers Association (ACWA) Code of Ethics sets the foundation for exemplary community work practice and is the benchmark for all practitioners.

As the professional association for community workers ACWA has defined a community work practitioner as a person who holds a relevant qualification and has the values, knowledge, and skills to work independently or with others in an agency or program intended to facilitate or ensure social inclusion. The community worker is therefore expected to acknowledge and respect the worth of all individuals regardless

of their race, religion, age, gender, sexual and gender diversity, and other individual differences. Conduct opposed to the full recognition of human dignity and individual rights within the community worker's professional practice shall be considered improper and unacceptable within the community work profession and to the Australian Community Workers Association.





Principles underlying the Code of Ethics:

- + Every person, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, sexual and gender diversity, or other individual differences has a right to maximise their potential providing it does not infringe upon the rights of others.
- + Social inclusion is a human right where every individual has an active role to play in society and has the expectation of full social, educational, and economic participation. An inclusive society is characterised by the fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, and human rights and freedoms, as well as the principles of tolerance and embracing diversity.
- + Every society has an obligation to provide for and deal equitably with all its members and to make extra provision for those who are excluded or disadvantaged.
- + Every person is entitled to basic human rights and is legally protected against discrimination based on age, disability, religion, race, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation.
- + The community worker works for the common good.
- + The Australian Community Workers Association recognises Australia's First People and their right to have a Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution.





PRACTICE

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Ethical practice in accordance with this Code of Ethics is the required standard of professional conduct.

- 1.1 The community worker will continue to improve their own skills and knowledge throughout their career.
- 1.2 The community worker shall clarify for the client or client group the exact nature of the relationship, that is, their own role together with the expectations of the client.
- 1.3 The community worker shall regard all information concerning clients as confidential except where:
 - a. with the permission of the client, referrals are to be made, or other professional consultation, opinion or advice is to be sought;
 - b. failure to disclose information would breach the terms of the community worker's employment (the client should be alerted to such exceptions); or
 - c. failure to disclose information would contravene mandatory reporting requirements or other legal obligations.
- 1.4 The community worker has an obligation to treat clients with dignity and to safeguard, promote, and acknowledge their capacity for self-determination and to plan for their own needs.
- 1.5 The community worker will work in the best interests of the client and advocate on their behalf.
- 1.6 The community worker in exercising certain powers and using information, is accountable to ensure that clients:
 - are fully informed of their rights;
 - have sufficient information to make informed choices; and
 - can access information about themselves.
- 1.7 The community worker will establish and always maintain professional boundaries with clients and not form personal relationships that compromise the primary practitioner-client relationship.
- 1.8 The community worker will reflect on their own practice and seek out the advice of a professional supervisor where appropriate.

THE WORKPLACE

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The workplace is the environment in which a community worker provides services and must, therefore, exercise good judgement in complying with the requirements of the profession's code of ethics.

- 2.1 The community worker is expected to achieve the aims of their employing organisation without denying clients their rights.
- 2.2 The community worker should bring to the employer's attention instances where organisational expectations or practices contravene the profession's code of ethics - particularly regarding the rights of clients.
- 2.3 The community worker must act responsibly in the expenditure of public and organisational monies.
- 2.4 The community worker is expected to form reciprocal relationships with colleagues, including volunteer staff, where professional knowledge, insights and experiences are shared.
- 2.5 Wherever possible the community worker is expected to be generous in using their skills and knowledge to enhance the practical fieldwork education of community work students.
- 2.6 The community worker is expected to discuss any unethical behaviour that may have been observed in a colleague directly with their colleague or, if it would pose a risk either to themselves or a client, a manager or supervisor.
- 2.7 The community worker is expected to acknowledge and observe the legal rights and protections of colleagues, including, but not restricted to, confidentiality and privacy, workplace health and safety, and antidiscrimination legislation.
- 2.8 The community worker is expected to acknowledge the need for self-care and utilise the legal rights and protections afforded them in the workplace.



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PROTECTING THE PROFESSION

The good standing of the profession relies almost entirely on the skills and exemplary behaviours of its practitioners.

- 3.1 The community worker will maintain, through ongoing professional development, the standards and knowledge required for exemplary, and contemporary community work practice.
- 3.2 The community worker will address in a timely manner and through an appropriate channel any behaviour in a colleague or an employer that is either incompatible with this code or impinges on the rights of clients and their families or contravenes the law.
- 3.3 The community worker will participate in any complaint process if a public complaint is brought against them.
- 3.4 The community worker will, wherever possible, participate in any research, consultations, etc., the outcomes of which may have an impact on the profession.
- 3.5 The community worker will acknowledge, uphold, and protect the rights and legal protections of others.
- 3.6 The community worker will meet the expectations of this code and the practice guidelines.

