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CODE OF ETHICS



Australian Association of Social Workers

2010

Front cover illustration: *'Murr-roo-ma Mur-rook Boo-larng'* [To Make Good Together]
2010. Acrylic on canvas, 1000mm x 750mm
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Story: A traditional Aboriginal family is sitting around a burning campfire. Through the flames of the campfire, the smoke forms a spiralling upward pathway, travelling through the AASW logo and linking the family with the environments of education, housing and health. The goal for social work is to ethically engage and interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to promote, achieve and maintain their overall well being. The three core values that members of the social work profession are committed to – Respect for persons, Social justice and Professional integrity – are symbolised as being cyclical and never ending.

The AASW *Code of Ethics* was presented at the Australian Association of Social Workers' Annual General Meeting, Brisbane, 12 November 2010. Amendments to the Constitution of the AASW at the 2010 Annual General Meeting required a minor reprint of the *Code of Ethics 2010*. These amendments affected section 1.4 only of the *Code of Ethics 2010*.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREAMBLE **5**

1 CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK **7**
1.1 Definition of social work 7
1.2 Commitment and aims of social work 7
1.3 The practice of social work 9
1.4 Australian Association of Social Workers 9

2 CONTEXT OF THE CODE OF ETHICS **10**
2.1 Nature of the *Code of Ethics* 10
2.2 Purpose of the *Code* 10

3 SOCIAL WORK VALUES **12**
3.1 Respect for persons 12
3.2 Social justice 13
3.3 Professional integrity 13

4 ETHICAL PRACTICE AND DECISION MAKING **14**

5 ETHICAL PRACTICE: RESPONSIBILITIES **16**
5.1 General ethical responsibilities 17
5.1.1 Respect for human dignity and worth 17
5.1.2 Culturally competent, safe and sensitive practice 17
5.1.3 Commitment to social justice and human rights 19
5.1.4 Social work service and propriety 20
5.1.5 Commitment to practice competence 21
5.1.6 Professional boundaries and dual relationships 22
5.1.7 Conflicts of interest 23
5.2 Responsibilities to clients 25
5.2.1 Priority of clients' interest 25
5.2.2 Client self-determination 25
5.2.3 Informed consent 27
5.2.4 Information privacy/confidentiality 27
5.2.5 Records 29
5.2.6 Termination/interruption of service 31
5.3 Responsibilities to colleagues 31

5.4 Responsibilities in the workplace 32
5.4.1 Service provision 32
5.4.2 Management 33
5.5 Responsibilities in particular contexts 35
5.5.1 Education, training, supervision and evaluation 35
5.5.2 Research 36
5.5.2.1 General approach to research 36
5.5.2.2 Respect, consent, privacy and review in research 36
5.5.2.3 Publication and distribution of research findings 37
5.5.3 Self-employment 38
5.5.4 Remote service delivery 39
5.6 Responsibilities to the profession 40

GLOSSARY OF TERMS 41

REFERENCE LIST 47

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Human rights documents 49
Appendix 2: Ethics Complaints Management Process flowchart 51
Appendix 3: Relevant national guidelines on ethical research 52

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 53

PREAMBLE

- Social workers acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the First Australians, whose lands, winds and waters we all now share, and pay respect to their unique values, and their continuing and enduring cultures which deepen and enrich the life of our nation and communities.
- Social workers commit to acknowledge and understand the historical and contemporary disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the implication of this for social work practice.
- Social workers are responsible for ensuring that their practice is culturally competent, safe and sensitive.

1 CONTEXT OF SOCIAL WORK

1.1 Definition of social work

The social work profession in Australia adheres to the definition of social work jointly agreed to by the International Federation of Social Workers and International Association of Schools of Social Work in 2001:

> *The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilising theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.*

1.2 Commitment and aims of social work

The social work profession is committed to the pursuit and maintenance of human wellbeing. Social work aims to maximise the development of human potential and the fulfillment of human needs through an equal commitment to:

- working with Australia's First Peoples
- working with and supporting people to achieve the best possible levels of personal and social wellbeing
- working to address and redress inequity and injustice affecting the lives of clients, client groups and socially disadvantaged
- working to achieve human rights and social justice through social development, social and systemic change, advocacy and the ethical conduct of research.

This involves:

- subscribing to the principles and aspirations of the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights,* other international conventions derived from that Declaration, as well as other human rights documents (see Appendix 1: Human rights documents)

- working with individuals, groups and communities, through both advocacy and policy reform initiatives, in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic, environmental and political resources
- providing assistance to improve the wellbeing of clients. Clients are individuals, families and other kinship arrangements, groups, communities, organisations and societies, especially those who are neglected, marginalised, vulnerable, excluded, disadvantaged, alienated or have exceptional needs
- raising awareness of structural and systemic inequities
- promoting policies and practices that achieve a fair allocation of social resources
- acting to bring about social or systemic change to reduce social barriers, inequality and injustice.

To accomplish its aims, the social work profession pursues:

- the development and application of knowledge, theory and skills regarding human behaviour, social structures, systems or processes
- the development and distribution of resources to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

The Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd (AASW) and its members adhere to the International Federation of Social Workers' and International Association of Schools of Social Work's *Ethics in Social Work, Statement of Principles* (2004). In developing this Australian *Code of Ethics* direct reference has been made to the aforementioned Statement.

1.3 The practice of social work

Social work operates at the interface between people and their social, cultural and physical environments.

Social work practice may include:

- engaging in interpersonal practice including casework, counselling, clinical intervention; work with individuals, families, partnerships, communities and groups; advocacy; community work; and social action to address both personal difficulties and systemic issues
- undertaking research, social policy development, administration, management, consultancy, education, training, supervision and evaluation to further human wellbeing and social development.

In all contexts, social workers maintain a dual focus on both assisting human functioning and identifying the system issues that create inequity and injustice.

The social work profession also recognises that social work takes place in a context whereby social systems have a mutually interdependent relationship with the natural environment.

The social work profession recognises its responsibility to contribute to and support the local, national and international social work community.

1.4 Australian Association of Social Workers

The democratic values and principles embraced by the AASW as stated in the *Constitution of the AASW* (2008) (Constitution) include:

- compliance with the Code of Ethics
- belief in the equal worth of all human beings
- commitment to Australian plural democratic society with equality under law and equal opportunity
- respect for others, including compassion, fairness, equity and justice
- acceptance of the uniqueness of each individual
- belief in collaboration as the cornerstone of effective practice
- valuing families and communities as social structures fundamental to the functioning and well-being of individuals and society
- positive change that brings about growth and development for human beings
- individual choice and both personal and collective responsibility
- high quality social work service provision
- the right of individuals to have their privacy respected
- valuing diversity and difference
- promoting human rights.

2 CONTEXT OF THE CODE OF ETHICS

2.1 Nature of the *Code of Ethics*

This *Code of Ethics* (the *Code*) of the AASW expresses the values and responsibilities which are integral to, and characterise, the social work profession. It is intended to assist all social workers, collectively and individually, to act in ethically accountable ways in the pursuit of the profession's aims.

Under the Constitution, the AASW must maintain a *Code of Ethics* which contains a set of principles agreed to by all members. Upon becoming members and upon annual renewal of their membership, members of the AASW make a commitment to, and are required to abide by this *Code*. AASW members, both practitioners and students, are called upon to account for their practice in the event of complaint or investigation regarding unethical conduct.

The *Code* remains open to revision as required and specified in the *Constitution of the AASW*.

2.2 Purpose of the *Code*

The *Code of Ethics* is the core document which informs and guides the ethical practice of the social work profession.

The purpose of the *Code* is to:

- identify the values and ethics which underpin ethical social work practice
- provide a guide and standard for ethical social work conduct and accountable service delivery
- provide a focus for professional social work identities
- provide social workers with a foundation for ethical reflection and decision making
- guide social workers when determining their reciprocal rights with employers, colleagues and the AASW
- provide clarification of social workers' actions in the context of industrial or legal disputes
- hold members accountable for their ethical practice and act as a basis for investigation and adjudication of formal complaints about unethical conduct.

The values and practice responsibilities outlined in the *Code* will assist the social work profession, the social worker, clients, employers and other interested parties in:

- identifying the ideals and purpose of the social work profession
- recognising the professional obligations of social workers
- understanding what constitutes ethical social work behaviour.

Members must make themselves aware of the contents of this *Code* and need to be aware that the ethical responsibilities set out in Section 5 are not exhaustive. If a social worker's behaviour or action is not outlined in this *Code*, then the general intent and principles will apply. The responsibilities are benchmarks for the social work profession and any behaviour or action by AASW members that does not meet these responsibilities is considered unethical. If a member fails to comply with this *Code*, a complaint may be made under the AASW Ethics Complaints Management Process (see Appendix 2 for further information about the AASW Ethics Complaints Management Process).

3 SOCIAL WORK VALUES

In the determination and pursuit of its aims, social work is committed to three core values, which give rise to general and specific ethical responsibilities. These values are:

- **Respect for persons**
- **Social justice**
- **Professional integrity.**

3.1 Respect for persons

The social work profession holds that every human being has a unique and inherent equal worth and that each person has a right to wellbeing, self-fulfilment and self-determination, consistent with the rights and culture of others and a sustainable environment.

The social work profession:

- respects the inherent dignity, worth and autonomy of every person
- respects the human rights of individuals and groups
- provides humane service, mindful of fulfilling duty of care, and duty to avoid doing harm to others
- fosters individual wellbeing, autonomy, justice and personal/social responsibility, with due consideration for the rights of others
- recognises and respects group identity, interdependence, reciprocity and the collective needs of particular communities.

3.2 Social justice

The social work profession holds that social justice is a core obligation which societies should be called upon to uphold. Societies should strive to afford protection and provide maximum benefit for all their members.

The social work profession:

- promotes justice and social fairness, by acting to reduce barriers and to expand choice and potential for all persons, with special regard for those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, oppressed or have exceptional needs
- advocates change to social systems and structures that preserve inequalities and injustice
- opposes and works to eliminate all violations of human rights and affirms that civil and political rights must be accompanied by economic, social and cultural rights
- promotes the protection of the natural environment as inherent to social wellbeing
- promotes community participation in societal processes and decisions and in the development and implementation of social policies and services.

3.3 Professional integrity

The social work profession values honesty, transparency, reliability, empathy, reflective self-awareness, discernment, competence and commitment.

Members of the social work profession:

- apply knowledge and skills in ways that prioritise the needs of others over personal gain
- responsibly use power and authority in ways that serve humanity
- make considered and ethically accountable professional decisions
- maintain a high quality of professional conduct and behave with dignity and responsibility
- ensure ongoing professional competence by participating in and contributing to their own life-long learning, education, training and supervision, and that of other social work practitioners and students.

4 ETHICAL PRACTICE AND DECISION MAKING

The social work profession acknowledges that ethical dilemmas may arise when a social worker must make a choice between alternative courses of action, each of which is supported by moral considerations and each of which may result in an outcome that is, in some way, undesirable. Ethical decision making is the systematic, reflective process by which such dilemmas can be resolved.

Social workers are encouraged to critically reflect on ethical dilemmas and to make decisions about them while observing the values outlined in this *Code*. They are also aware of their own worldview, moral, cultural, historical, political, religious, spiritual, societal and professional values and biases and the possible influence of these on their professional judgements.

When ethical values conflict, social workers have a responsibility to decide which will take priority. It may be difficult to weigh up values which, in the circumstances, appear to be of equal importance, but it is necessary to do so in order to achieve an ethically justifiable result.

Tensions may occasionally arise between observing the *Code* and complying with legal or organisational requirements. Social workers must act in accordance with the law and with organisational directives. If the law or organisational directives conflict with perceived moral obligations, a social worker should seek guidance from competent professionals, including the AASW Ethics Consultation Service.

All ethical decision making occurs within the context of managing power relationships. Social workers also bring their own lived experiences, knowledge and standpoints to decision making processes. Social workers need an understanding of the social, political and historical context in which decisions are made, the human relationships, the management decisions and the involvement of multiple interests, all of which impact on decisions and the situational context in which they are made.

Ethical decision making can be complex. It requires time for critical reflection and should involve all those with an interest in the outcome of the decision. There are a number of ethical decision-making models that can be used in the process of systematic critical reflection, evaluation and judgement. In all models of ethical decision making it is strongly recommended that social workers consult this *Code* to clarify expectations of the social work profession in relation to appropriate conduct.

Social workers have a duty to understand that there are a number of general principles which guide sound, rigorous and reflective decision making, including:

- having as full and relevant information as possible on the matter about which a decision is being made
- identifying the key social work values or ethical responsibilities that have come into conflict
- identifying the range of decisions that could be made and the reasoning behind each in terms of ethical theories, codes of ethics, legal and natural justice principles, laws, organisational policies and social work best practice principles
- being open, accountable, transparent, collaborative and inclusive of the relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process, while observing appropriate confidentiality and duty of care requirements
- identifying the risks and benefits to each of the parties affected by the decision
- ensuring observance of relevant cultural considerations and paying attention to issues of diversity
- engaging, where appropriate, in consultation and supervision to facilitate critical reflection to examine personal and professional values, prejudices and preferences
- documenting the issues considered and the decision-making process and outcomes.

When making ethical decisions, social workers are advised to consult with colleagues, supervisors, the AASW Ethics Consultation Service and/or other competent professionals, including cultural consultants. Such consultation is essential when the situation is outside the social worker's experience or expertise.

The following section of this *Code* clearly sets out the ethical responsibilities and professional expectations of those who practise social work. This *Code* intentionally does not specify what a social worker should do in the case of an ethical dilemma. The social work profession acknowledges that practice is contextual and that many factors will influence decision-making outcomes. Social workers are encouraged to develop a clear knowledge and understanding of these ethical responsibilities so that they may form a sound foundation for ethical practice.

Social workers should be able to articulate their ethical decision making process, demonstrate clearly the factors considered and provide justifications to make themselves accountable for their decisions.

5 ETHICAL PRACTICE: RESPONSIBILITIES

This section sets out the ethical responsibilities and behaviours to which social workers commit in carrying out their practice responsibilities.

In carrying out their professional practice responsibilities, social workers are entitled to reciprocal rights, which include the right to:

- exercise professional discretion and professional judgement
- redirect or refuse service on justifiable grounds, provided clients are redirected to appropriate support
- safety in professional practice
- freedom from discrimination in the workplace
- freedom from unjust repercussions or victimisation for their ethical practice
- reasonable working conditions and continuing professional education and training
- hold membership of a union and/or obtain industrial advice
- support from the profession when acting in an ethically obligatory or permissible way
- a culturally safe and respectful workplace
- hold cultural, religious or spiritual world views and for these to be acknowledged in the workplace and professional contexts to the extent that they do not impinge on the other guidelines in this *Code*
- make a complaint on justifiable grounds.

The following practice responsibilities are divided into six main categories: General ethical responsibilities, Responsibilities to clients, Responsibilities to colleagues, Responsibilities in the workplace, Responsibilities in particular contexts and Responsibilities to the profession.

These responsibilities are based on, and apply, the values outlined in section three of this *Code*. They represent ethical duties to be carried out in the course of social work practice. They can also be used as:

- a checklist for educative and supervisory purposes
- a benchmark for the assessment of professional behaviour
- the basis for determinations regarding reported breaches of the *Code*.

5.1 General ethical responsibilities

5.1.1 Respect for human dignity and worth

a) Social workers will demonstrate respect for clients and seek to preserve and promote their dignity, individuality, rights and responsibilities.

b) Social workers will respect others' beliefs, religious or spiritual world views, values, culture, goals, needs and desires, as well as kinship and communal bonds, within a framework of social justice and human rights.

c) Social workers will value the unique cultural knowledge and skills, different knowledge systems, history, lived experience and community relationships of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and take these into account in the making of decisions.

d) Social workers will ensure that clients or their authorised representatives have access to the necessary information and resources to participate in decision-making processes.

e) Social workers will be aware of and reflect on their personal beliefs and history, values, views, prejudices and preferences and refrain from imposing these on clients.

f) Social workers will ensure they understand the communities in which they work, (in particular marginalised groups), by actively engaging, building relationships and participating in activities with members of those communities, where appropriate.

5.1.2 Culturally competent, safe and sensitive practice

a) Social workers will develop culturally sensitive practice by acknowledging the significance of culture in their practice, recognising the impact their own ethnic and cultural identities, views and biases can have on their practice and on culturally different clients and colleagues.

b) Social workers will obtain a working knowledge and understanding of clients' racial and cultural affiliations, identities, values, beliefs and customs, including consultation with cultural consultants, where appropriate.

c) Social workers will recognise and acknowledge the diversity within and among cultures, taking into account individual, family, group and community needs and differences.

d) Social workers will recognise, acknowledge and remain sensitive to and respectful of the religious and spiritual world views of individuals, groups, communities and social networks, and the operations and missions of faith and spiritually-based organisations.

e) Social workers will ascertain and take into account the manner in which confidentiality and self-determination applies within diverse cultural and practice contexts.

f) Social workers will endeavour to provide accessible services to clients in languages and/or modalities they understand, using an independent, qualified interpreter and/or translator where feasible and appropriate.

g) When engaged in education, administration, policy development and the like, social workers will promote awareness of cultural and cross-cultural issues and culturally competent practice.

h) Social workers will participate in developing and implementing culturally competent, safe and sensitive practice.

i) Where possible, social workers will seek guidance regarding service development and delivery from community members, mentors, advisors and recognised Elders from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other cultures and communities.

j) Social workers will provide a culturally safe service system in which all children, families and communities feel safe, respected and which responds holistically to the context of family and community.

k) Social workers will engage in respectful collaborative relationships with their colleagues from different ethnic, cultural, religious and other backgrounds and identities. These working relationships may at times need to extend to cultural advisors, mentors and/or recognised Elders in the development and provision of culturally safe and appropriate services.

l) Social workers will recognise and challenge racism and other forms of oppression experienced by a range of culturally and linguistically diverse groups, through the use of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice principles.

5.1.3 Commitment to social justice and human rights

a) Social workers will promote policies, practices and social conditions that uphold human rights and that seek to ensure access, equity, participation and legal protection for all.

b) Social workers will respect diversity and use anti-oppressive practice principles, seeking to prevent and eliminate negative discrimination and oppression based on grounds such as: national origin, ethnicity, culture, appearance, language, sex or gender identity, sexual orientation or preference, ability, age, place of residence, religion, spirituality, political affiliation and social, economic, health/genetic, immigration or relationship status. In circumstances where clients are denied access to resources necessary for their well-being, positive discrimination may be justifiable.

c) Social workers will aim to empower individuals, families, groups, communities and societies in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic, environmental and political resources and in attaining self-determination, self-management and social and emotional wellbeing.

d) Social workers will acknowledge the diversity within Australian society and will promote responsible policies, procedures and practices that respect and are inclusive of diversity.

e) Social workers will promote genuine, inclusive community participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of social policies and services.

f) Social workers will provide assistance to clients in an objective, transparent, equitable and just manner, facilitating their access to resources, assessment and intervention plans, rights and opportunities that contribute to their wellbeing.

g) Social workers will engage in participative, collaborative, open and empowering processes to enable clients to further their desires and interests as far as is possible, taking into account the relevant interests of others. This includes undertaking advocacy with and on behalf of clients.

h) Social workers will preserve the commitment to autonomy and social justice when engaging in social action and community development with client groups and communities.

i) Social workers will recognise individual and community rights, duties and cultural obligations and responsibilities, in particular for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

j) Social workers will meet their responsibilities to society by engaging in action to promote societal and environmental wellbeing, advocate for equitable distribution of resources and effect positive social change in the interests of social justice.

k) Social workers will reject the abuse of power for exploitation or suppression and will support anti-oppressive policies and practices that aim to empower people.

l) Social workers will contribute disciplined knowledge and skill to aid individuals, groups, communities and societies in their development and in the management of conflicts and their consequences.

m) Social workers will advocate for and promote the protection of the natural environment in recognition of its fundamental importance to the future of human society.

n) Social workers will analyse the basis and nature of social needs and social problems and will encourage innovative strategies and techniques that meet both new and existing needs.

o) Social workers will contribute professional expertise to the development and implementation of human welfare policies and programs.

5.1.4 Social work service and propriety

a) When making referrals, social workers will aim to refer clients to competent and reputable service providers.

b) Social workers will advise clients regarding their right to complain, the appropriate avenues to take and the procedures to follow in making a complaint.

c) Social workers will promote the ethical values and standards of the profession when undertaking broader types of service such as administration, policy development, education and research.

d) Social workers will seek input and feedback from clients in the development, implementation and evaluation of service provision.

e) Social workers will carry out professional duties with integrity, refraining from any behaviour which contravenes professional values and standards or which damages the profession's integrity and good standing.

f) Social workers will respect a client's right to information about the social worker's professional qualifications, experience and training, and will provide this information when requested.

g) Social workers will represent their professional qualifications, competence, experience, achievements and affiliations with honesty and accuracy.

h) Social workers are responsible for the standard of service that they provide.

i) Social workers will use finances only for the purposes for which they are granted and account for their expenditure with accuracy.

j) Social workers will use and account for organisational resources honestly and only for their intended purpose.

5.1.5 Commitment to practice competence

a) Social workers will act to maintain and expand their levels of current knowledge, theory and skill in order to provide quality service and accountable and transparent practice.

b) Social workers will undertake practice only within their areas of competence or where training/ supervision pertinent to their work role is available or accessible.

c) Throughout their professional lifetime, social workers will utilise available supervision as well as other specialist consultation such as mentoring, coaching and cultural supervision, where appropriate, or take active steps to ensure that they receive appropriate supervision, as a means of maintaining and extending practice competence.

d) Social workers will take appropriate action if ill-health, impairment or any other factor is likely to interfere with their professional judgement or performance of duty. They will seek to ensure that their clients, colleagues and employers are not disadvantaged and will take steps towards ensuring their continuing wellbeing both in their own interests and in the interests of competent service.

e) Social workers will take appropriate action, if permitted by law, if they believe that a colleague's impairment is interfering with their professional judgement or performance of duty, and that the colleague has not taken or is unable to take adequate steps to address the impairment. Where possible, in the first instance, social workers will discuss their concerns directly with the colleague concerned.

f) When engaged in social work interventions that are influenced by their spiritual or religious world views, social workers will ensure that they do so in a competent, transparent and accountable manner, in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in this *Code*.

5.1.6 Professional boundaries and dual relationships

a) Social workers will not engage in any form of sexualised conduct with a person with whom they are directly involved in a professional relationship, including current clients, clients' relatives or significant others, students, supervisees, research participants or others directly involved in a professional relationship which invites trust and confidence in the practitioner's role and/or involves an unequal distribution of power or authority in the social worker's favour.

b) Social workers will not engage in any sexualised conduct, or enter into an intimate or sexual relationship with a person with whom they were formerly directly involved in a professional relationship, including former clients, clients' relatives or significant others. In circumstances where any such relationship is considered, it is essential that the social worker undertakes professional consultation and supervision, in order to explore issues relating to power, and the potential of exploitation or harm to the former client.

c) Social workers, not their clients or former clients, are responsible for setting and maintaining clear and appropriate professional boundaries in all forms of communication, including face to face contact, written communication, telephone and online communications (including social networking, email, blogging and instant messaging).

d) Social workers will not provide clinical services to individuals with whom they have had a prior sexual relationship, as there is potential for the individual to be harmed and it is unlikely appropriate professional boundaries will be maintained.[1]

1 Adapted from National Association of Social Workers (Washington DC, USA), see Acknowledgements.

e) Social workers will avoid any form of physical contact which may violate professional boundaries, result in unintentional psychological harm or damage the professional relationship. Social workers will remain sensitive to the variety of ways in which clients and others may interpret physical contact, with particular reference to cultural and gender differences.

f) Social workers will use self-disclosure with circumspection, and only when it is reasonably believed that it will benefit the client. If unsure, social workers will seek professional consultation or supervision to review their intention to use self-disclosure.

g) Social workers' private conduct will not compromise the fulfilment of professional responsibilities.

h) Social workers will clarify whether they are acting as private individuals, or as representatives of the social work profession, an organisation, community or group when making public statements or performing public actions. When representing the profession or an organisation, social workers will correctly reflect policies, procedures and services and distinguish between personal and official views or positions.

i) Social workers will ensure that professional relationships are not exploited to gain personal, material or financial advantage.

j) Where dual or multiple relationships with clients, former clients, research participants, students, supervisees or colleagues exist, or are unavoidable, social workers will set and enforce explicit, appropriate professional boundaries to minimise the risk of conflict of interest, exploitation or harm.

5.1.7 Conflicts of interest

a) Social workers will remain aware of the potential for conflicts of interest which may affect their ability to exercise professional discretion and unbiased judgment. These interests may derive from personal, emotional, conscientious, sexual, familial, social, cultural, religious, spiritual, financial, business, political, professional or organisational factors.

b) Social workers will be mindful that conflicts of interest can also arise in relation to involuntary clients, multiple clients and confidentiality issues. At all times, clients' interests remain a priority, with due consideration for the respective interests of others.

c) Where such a situation is foreseeable or occurs, social workers will declare their interest to the relevant parties and seek to negotiate a solution. If already involved in a professional relationship when the conflict of interest arises, social workers will declare it and take appropriate action, such as consulting with a senior person and, where relevant, the client or clients. Members may also contact the AASW Ethics Consultation Service. This may result in renegotiating the professional relationship, or terminating it and referring appropriately.

d) Social workers will consider ethical issues surrounding the giving and accepting of gifts in a professional context. When deciding whether or not to give, accept and declare gifts, social workers will consider the professional relationship, any relevant organisational policies, the value of the gift, any cultural issues and the motivation for giving, receiving or declining the gift.

e) Social workers will not give or accept gifts which may impair professional judgement, effect the integrity or efficacy of the professional relationship or which are of substantial value.

f) Social workers will refuse to accept, or will refer, cases where it is not possible to manage conflicts of interest.

g) Social workers who practise in rural or small communities, or with specific cultural groups, will be aware of the increased potential for conflicts of interest, and will declare such interests to an appropriate person, and where possible, negotiate a solution. However, it may be necessary for the social worker and the client/s to acknowledge and work with such conflicts *within* the situation. If no supervisor or professional colleague is available for consultation, members could contact the AASW Ethics Consultation Service.

h) Social workers who provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (e.g. couples or family members), will clarify with all parties the nature of professional obligations to those who are receiving services. Social workers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the clients receiving services, or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles (e.g. testifying in court proceedings), will clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimise any conflict of interest.[2]

2 Adapted from National Association of Social Workers (Washington DC, USA), see Acknowledgements.

5.2 Responsibilities to clients

5.2.1 Priority of clients' interest

a) Social workers will maintain the best interests of clients as a priority, with due regard to the respective interests of others.

b) In exceptional circumstances, the priority of clients' interests may be outweighed by the interests of others, or by legal requirements and conditions. In such situations clients will be made aware that their interests, or those of others, may be jeopardised.

c) Social workers will seek to safeguard the rights, interests and safety of clients who have limited or impaired decision-making capacity when acting on their behalf, or when another person, whether legally authorised or not, is acting for the client.

d) Social workers will collaborate with other professionals and service providers in the interests of clients, maintaining their privacy, and with clients' knowledge and consent whenever possible. Social workers will recognise the right of client self-determination in this regard and, where feasible, include clients in such consultations.

5.2.2 Client self-determination

a) Social workers will promote the self-determination and autonomy of clients, actively seeking to enable them to make informed decisions on their own behalf.

b) Social workers will discuss with clients their rights and responsibilities and provide them with honest and accurate available information regarding:

- the nature of the social work service being offered
- the recording of information and who will have access to such information
- the purpose, nature, extent and known implications of the options open to them
- the foreseeable potential risks and benefits of proposed courses of action
- their right to obtain a second opinion or to refuse or cease service (where clients are voluntary clients)
- their rights of access to records and to avenues of complaint.

c) Social workers will act to reduce barriers to self-determination for those who are unable to act for themselves, because of factors such as vulnerability, disability, age, dependence, language, religion and/or culture.

d) Social workers will endeavour to minimise the use of legal or other compulsion. Any action which violates or diminishes the civil or legal rights of clients must be ethically, professionally and legally justifiable. Action of this kind will be taken only after careful evaluation of the situation and, if possible, in collaboration with clients and other professionals.

e) Social workers will identify and promote the legitimate interests of involuntary clients, taking into account any conditions that apply to their situation.

f) Social workers will recognise that in some cases their ability to promote self-determination is limited because clients may be involuntary clients or because clients' actions pose a serious threat to themselves or others.

g) Social workers will assist clients to negotiate and attain as much autonomy as possible in all cases where the clients' right to self-determination is limited by the social work role, duty of care, the law or by other service providers or parties. In particular, involuntary clients will be made aware of any limitations that apply to their right to refuse services and will be advised how, and in what circumstances, information will be shared with other parties.

h) Social workers will encourage involuntary clients to participate in decisions about the goals, alternatives and services available to them. Clients will be notified regarding decisions taken about them, except where there is evidence that this information may bring about, or exacerbate, serious harm to individuals or the public. When a decision is made to withhold information from a client, the social worker will seek specific supervision and advice about that decision and will document appropriately.

i) Social workers engaged in statutory practice will acknowledge the nature and responsibility of any legally mandated authority they carry and ensure that the principles of natural justice are applied in all cases. Social workers will advise clients about such authority and its scope and will ensure that any specific limitations are made explicit within the working relationship. Social workers will always remain aware of the potential impact of informal or coercive power on involuntary clients and facilitate access to advocacy services where appropriate.

5.2.3 Informed consent

a) Social workers will ensure, as far as possible, that clients understand the principle of informed consent and the circumstances in which it may be required.

b) Where clients have limited capacity to comprehend or grant informed consent, social workers will provide information in accordance with the clients' level of understanding and restrict their freedom of decision and action as little as possible.

c) When informed consent is required and the client cannot grant informed consent, social workers will, with the client's permission if applicable, obtain informed consent from a party empowered in accordance with relevant State legislation to provide consent on the client's behalf.

d) Social workers who are providing services to children and/or young people will identify any relevant legislative requirements in relation to informed consent.

e) Social workers who are providing services to children and/or young people will assess their ability to give informed consent to enter into a therapeutic relationship. In order for a child or young person to give informed consent they must demonstrate their understanding of the risks, benefits and alternatives to clinical services.

f) A child or young person who is able to give informed consent will be considered entitled to access social work services without informing their parents or guardians. However, where appropriate, the issue of the child or young person informing their parent or guardian will be discussed.

g) Social workers will provide children and/or young people who are able to give informed consent with the same rights of confidentiality as adult clients including the right to refuse social work services.

h) Social workers will obtain consent from the child or young person's parent or guardian if they are deemed unable to give informed consent.

5.2.4 Information privacy/ confidentiality

a) Social workers will respect the rights of clients to a relationship of trust, to privacy and confidentiality of their information and to responsible use of information obtained in the course of professional service. This includes:

- taking care not to intrude unnecessarily on clients' privacy when seeking information
- obtaining informed consent from clients or their authorised representatives to use this information, even if the information is legally required

- determining *to whom* clients wish such information to be given or not to be given, in what detail and in what circumstances
- determining *from whom* information about clients may be requested
- treating information obtained from relatives or others about clients in the same confidential manner as clients' information.

b) Social workers will inform clients, or their authorised representatives, at the commencement of a professional relationship of:
   - the limits of confidentiality in any given situation, by explaining agency or legal requirements regarding the recording, computerising or sharing of information
   - the purposes for which information is obtained
   - to whom the information may be made available
   - how the information may be used
   - the right to view or review their records.

c) Social workers must inform clients before commencing interviews if the information obtained will be used for assessment or any other purpose and will be provided to third parties for legal or other reasons.

d) Social workers will use confidential information only for the purpose for which it was acquired; or, with the written consent of the client, for a directly related purpose; or with lawful excuse (e.g. court subpoena or statutory requirement).

e) Social workers will only reveal confidential information in the circumstances outlined above or in any one or more of the following situations, provided it is permitted by law:
   - if seeking advice from or conferring with other professionals or colleagues, or if in a supervisory or training capacity, then in all cases the social worker must maintain the client's confidentiality and privacy and obtain prior written informed consent from the client to release the information; in which case all third parties must agree to protect the client's confidentiality and privacy
   - if by revealing information to relevant third parties an actual, identifiable risk of harm to a specific person or persons can be prevented.

f) Before taking action to disclose clients' confidences without consent, the level of perceived risk will be carefully assessed, preferably in consultation with other professionals, including referring professionals and with reference to relevant policy and law. Clients will be notified when disclosure without consent is intended or has occurred, unless this is contraindicated by issues of potential harm or by legal provisions.

g) Social workers will obtain informed consent of clients or their authorised representatives before clients' activities are mechanically or electronically recorded or observed by a third party.

h) Social workers will clarify the nature of confidentiality with participants in situations where two or more people are involved. They will seek a commitment from members of groups to respect the privacy of shared information, and will clarify that social workers can not guarantee that all participants will honour this agreement.[3]

i) Social workers will ensure clients' anonymity and remove identifying details when permitted to use confidential information for purposes such as case presentation, consultation, teaching, research or education.

3 Adapted from National Association of Social Workers (Washington DC, USA), see Acknowledgements.

j) Social workers will protect the confidentiality of deceased clients consistent with the relevant provisions of this *Code*.[4]

5.2.5 Records

a) Social workers will record information impartially and accurately, taking care to:

- report only essential and relevant details
- refrain from using emotive or derogatory language
- acknowledge the basis of subjective opinions
- protect clients' privacy and that of others involved in the situation.

Where records are shared across professions or agencies, information will be recorded only to the degree that it addresses clients' needs and meets the essential requirements of those to be notified. When conveying confidential information, verbally, through the post and electronically, particular attention will be given to protection of privacy.

4 Adapted from National Association of Social Workers (Washington DC, USA), see Acknowledgements.

b) Before using clients' records for any purpose that is not specifically authorised, social workers will obtain the informed consent of clients or their representatives and will remove or omit identifying information, if possible. Where it is not possible to remove or disguise clients' identities, their knowledge and consent are necessary. In some circumstances, access to client records may be officially authorised or required by statute. Before releasing information, the authority of the person requesting access and the nature of that access will be checked to ensure that only relevant material is released. Where consent of clients has not been obtained, attempts will be made to notify them that such access has been granted.

c) Social workers will ensure all prepared reports, whether for legal purposes or any other purpose, include separation of fact and opinion, that no relevant facts are deliberately omitted and that the conclusions reached are based on fact and research evidence. Reports will provide a professional opinion and are not to be a submission to emphasise one particular interest over another.

d) Social workers will ensure that clients have reasonable access to official social work records concerning them. However, if there are compelling professional, ethical or legal reasons for refusing access, social workers will advise clients of their right to request a review of the decision through organisational or legal channels.

e) Social workers will take due care to protect the confidences of others when providing clients access to records.

f) Social workers will advise clients of available complaints procedures if they are not satisfied with their records or treatment.

g) Social workers will protect clients' records, store them securely and, where applicable, retain them for any required statutory period.

h) When disposing of confidential records, paper files will be shredded or burned and electronic records will be cleared, in accordance with any relevant organisation or legal guidelines.

5.2.6 Termination/interruption of service

a) Social workers will renegotiate or terminate professional relationships and services when these relationships and services no longer serve the interests or needs of clients. Whether the decision to renegotiate or terminate is that of clients or social workers, the reason for the decision will be considered and discussed. Social workers will also discuss with clients their needs, options and preferences before continuing or discontinuing services or offering to seek transfer or referral.

b) Social workers will respect the right of voluntary clients to discontinue service, engage another practitioner or seek a second opinion. Social workers will discuss the issues involved with clients, and if termination is an option, offer assistance with the process.

c) When obliged to interrupt or terminate a professional relationship for personal or professional reasons, social workers will seek to advise clients regarding the discontinuation of service and if possible, ensure their referral to another professional person.

d) Social workers will notify relevant family members or carers of clients that have limited or no capacity, if the current services are to be discontinued. Social workers will provide referrals or advice regarding ongoing services.

5.3 Responsibilities to colleagues

a) Social workers will take into consideration and respect the diverse life experiences, different values and cultural expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and those from backgrounds other than their own.

b) Social workers will relate to both social work colleagues and colleagues from other disciplines with respect, integrity and courtesy, seeking to understand differences in viewpoints and practice.

c) Social workers will utilise the expertise of other team members and disciplines for the benefit of their clients when working in teams.

d) Social workers will cooperate and collaborate with other disciplines to promote and expand ideas, knowledge, theory and skills, experience and opportunities that improve professional expertise and service provision.

e) Social workers will ensure, before accepting as clients those who have been receiving services from colleagues or outside agencies, that the clients' written consent to communicate appropriately with those colleagues or agencies is obtained, if this is considered necessary.

f) Social workers will consider carefully the potential for professional conflicts of interest where close personal relationships, social, business or sexual relationships with colleagues are contemplated or existing.

g) Social workers will remain open to respectful constructive comment on their practice or behaviour.

h) Any criticism of colleagues' practice or behaviour must be defensible and should be dealt with in a professional manner. Social workers will not make trivial and vexatious complaints about colleagues.

i) Social workers will proactively and respectfully seek to resolve conflict with colleagues.

j) Social workers will address suspected or confirmed professional misconduct, incompetence, unethical behaviour or negligence by a colleague through the appropriate organisational, professional or legal channels. Social workers will familiarise themselves with the complaints processes of their workplace and with the AASW procedures for complaints against members.

k) Social workers will recognise and acknowledge the religious, spiritual and secular world views of colleagues, within a framework of social justice and human rights.

5.4 Responsibilities in the workplace

5.4.1 Service provision

a) Social workers will acknowledge and strive to carry out the stated aims and objectives of their employing organisation, agency or service contractor, consistent with the requirements of this *Code*.

b) Social workers will work towards the best possible standards of service provision and will be accountable for their practice.

c) Social workers will appropriately challenge, and/or report, and/or work to improve, policies, procedures, practices and service provisions which:

- are not in the best interests of clients
- are inequitable or unsafe
- are in any way oppressive, disempowering or culturally inappropriate
- are not in the best interests of social workers or other colleagues
- demonstrate unfair discrimination
- demonstrate known or suspected incidents of improper or corrupt conduct. Social workers are advised to ascertain what, if any, whistleblower protection options are provided in their state or territory.

d) Social workers will endeavour to effect change through consultation, using appropriate organisational channels, when policies or procedures of employing bodies contravene professional standards.

e) Social workers will take all reasonable steps to ensure that employers are aware of this *Code* and will advocate for conditions and policies that reflect its ethical position.

f) Social workers will uphold the ethical values and responsibilities of this *Code*, even though employers' policies or official orders may not be compatible with its provisions. Attempts to resolve conflicts between ethical values and organisational policies and practices will remain consistent with the values and responsibilities outlined in this *Code*.

g) Social workers engaging in action to improve services or working conditions will be guided by the ethics of the profession.

h) Social workers who refuse to engage in work that offends against deeply held personal/moral/spiritual/cultural convictions must have justifiable grounds for refusing service. Conscientious objection must be based on reasoning that is consistent with the profession's aims, and the values outlined in this *Code* and that includes a clear understanding of the social worker's role and duty.

i) Social workers will not use the 'conscientious objection' provision to avoid examining personal values, stereotypes or biases; avoid fulfilling work obligations; to discriminate against people or groups; or to deny service.

j) Social workers who foresee a possible conflict between such convictions and work duties will inform their current or prospective employers. In the event of such conflicts, they should notify colleagues or employers. This may mean redirecting clients to other practitioners or services to ensure that clients find appropriate support.

5.4.2 Management

In addition to the general provisions of the *Code*, social workers in management will undertake specific ethical responsibilities.

a) Social workers will encourage employers to implement policies and procedures which enable and support social workers to practise ethically, as defined by this *Code*, and to not put at risk their ability to uphold such ethical standards.

b) Social workers will encourage non-discriminatory policies and practices and advocate for resources to meet clients' needs.

c) Social workers will not engage in, nor accept other staff engaging in, any form of discrimination, abuse, bullying or harassment.

d) Social workers will promote effective teamwork and communication and an efficient and accountable social work service.

e) Social workers will seek to obtain/maintain adequate staff levels and acceptable working conditions for staff.

f) Social workers will arrange for professional supervision for social work staff, including cultural supervision, where appropriate.

g) Social workers will provide and/or advocate for staff to have a physical working environment which supports effective practice, including appropriate arrangements for confidential interviewing and storage of confidential records.

h) Social workers will ensure that staff under their direction receive ongoing training and professional education and advocate for adequate resources to meet staff development needs.

i) Social workers will ensure that staff are fit to practise, hold appropriate qualifications, provide references (including evidence that they are not a risk to service users) and that they understand their roles and responsibilities, including their ethical duties.

j) Social workers will provide or arrange debriefing, crisis and/or ongoing support for staff, especially when they experience difficult or traumatic circumstances.

k) Social workers will evaluate the performance of staff and supervisees fairly and responsibly, ensuring that timely feedback is provided and that those evaluated are included in the process.

5.5 Responsibilities in particular contexts

5.5.1 Education, training, supervision and evaluation

In addition to the general provisions of the *Code*, social workers engaged in education, training, supervision or evaluation will undertake specific ethical responsibilities.

a) Social workers will possess and maintain the necessary knowledge, skills and methodology to perform these tasks competently.

b) Social workers will seek to ensure that their professional relationships in these areas are constructive and non-exploitative.

c) Social workers will include the social work profession's ethical values and responsibilities as a component of their instructions.

d) Social workers will ensure honesty and integrity by fully acknowledging and accurately referencing other people's work.

e) Social workers will foster in social work students and supervisees a knowledge and understanding of both the social work profession and this *Code*, emphasising the relationship of these to their practice, teaching and research.

f) Social workers will inform students of their ethical responsibilities to agencies, supervisors, research participants and clients.

g) Social workers will seek to ensure that students are effectively supervised when on field placement.

h) Social workers will provide appropriate training, supervision, mentoring, guidance and support for students and trainees.

i) Social workers will take all reasonable steps to ensure that social work students and social workers under their supervision act in accordance with the values of this *Code*.

j) Social workers will adhere to the principles of privacy and confidentiality in the supervisory relationship, acknowledging any limitations that may apply in particular circumstances.

k) Social workers will recognise that the supervisor's role is intended to be educational, supportive, developmental and work-focused. In the event that supervisees request or require therapy, they will be referred to another competent practitioner.

l) Social workers will evaluate the performance of students and supervisees fairly and responsibly, ensuring that timely feedback is provided and that those evaluated are included in the process.

m) Social workers will ensure that supervision and training are culturally safe places for social workers with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, disabilities and other identities.

5.5.2 Research

In addition to the general provisions of the *Code*, social workers engaged in research will undertake specific ethical responsibilities and observe the conventions of ethical scholarly enquiry. (See Appendix 3: Relevant national guidelines on ethical research.)

5.5.2.1 General approach to research

a) Social workers will honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and ensure that research conducted with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities is based on established Indigenous research protocols.

b) Social workers will promote appropriate individual and community participation in research.

c) Social workers will ensure that the research has merit and integrity by demonstrating its potential benefit, utilising appropriate methods (articulated in a rigorous research proposal) and by basing it on a thorough review of the literature.

d) Social workers will ensure that research is conducted, either independently or under supervision, by people who have the appropriate levels of competence, experience and qualifications.

5.5.2.2 Respect, consent, privacy and review in research

a) Social workers will place the interests of research participants above the social worker's personal interests or the interests of the research project.

b) Social workers will consider carefully the possible consequences for individuals and society before participating in, or engaging in, proposed research or evaluation.

c) Social workers will ascertain that due care has been taken to protect the privacy and dignity of research participants.

d) Social workers will ensure that informed consent to participation has been obtained from either the potential participants or persons with lawful authority to make decisions on behalf of the prospective participants. Children and others whose ability to provide consent is compromised for any reason, will be offered the opportunity to express their assent or objection to research procedures and their views will be given due regard. Informed consent involves two elements:

- all prospective participants will have the purpose of the research, their role as participants and any risks explained to them in a way that they can understand
- all prospective participants make a voluntary decision to participate.

e) Social workers will consider carefully the process of voluntary consent in situations where the research participant may be a child or adolescent; a person with an intellectual or mental impairment; a person highly dependent on medical care; or a person in a dependent or unequal relationship with the social work researcher.

f) Social workers will ensure that consent is given voluntarily, without coercion or inferred disadvantage for refusal to cooperate. Participants will be informed that in general they may withdraw from a program at any time, taking into account stated conditions of entry and closure, and without compromising any treatment being received from a service. Researchers may sometimes need to apply to waive consent (such as the use of de-identified data in large scale epidemiological studies; observation of individuals in public places; or use of anonymous surveys).

g) Social workers will assess, minimise and actively manage risk for harm (including physical, psychological and social harm), discomfort and inconvenience.

h) Social workers will seek to ensure the anonymity and/or confidentiality of research participants and data and discuss them only in limited circumstances for professional purposes. Any identifying information obtained from or about participants during the research process will be treated as confidential.

i) Social workers will submit research proposals to an appropriate ethics or review body where applicable. Research projects involving humans must be reviewed by an accredited Human Research Ethics Committee. Quality improvement projects for which the results are used to inform service provision and are kept internal within an agency do not generally require ethics approval.

j) Social workers will retain, store and manage research material for the required period taking into account professional, institutional and legal requirements.

5.5.2.3 Publication and distribution of research findings

a) Social workers will accurately and fully disseminate research findings.

b) Social workers will inform research participants or their representatives, where possible, of research results that are relevant to them.

c) Social workers will bring research results that indicate or demonstrate social inequalities or injustices to the attention of the relevant bodies.

d) Social workers will acknowledge and attribute fully the work of all authors/contributors.

e) Social workers will adhere to general policies on authorship. In research and scholarly endeavours, credit will be taken only for work actually performed.

f) Social workers will disclose any financial or other support for the research accurately and acknowledge potential conflicts of interest.

g) Social workers will ensure that publication and dissemination is conducted responsibly, taking into account the risks and possible consequences to individuals and communities.

h) Social workers will ensure that peer review is conducted responsibly, in particular that it is fair, timely, respects confidentiality and declares potential conflicts of interest.

5.5.3 Self-employment

In addition to the general provisions of the *Code*, social workers who are self-employed will undertake specific ethical responsibilities.

a) Social workers will advise clients regarding fee schedules and any costs before commencing professional service and charge only for hours and services contracted with them.

b) Social workers will provide clients with secure payment methods and will issue receipts promptly.

c) Social workers will arrange appropriate temporary or substitute service for clients when unavailable or unable to continue practice.

d) Social workers will inform clients and offer suitable referral when clients' needs fall outside the practitioner's area of expertise or ability to provide services/resources.

e) Social workers will not solicit the clients of either their colleagues or their place of employment for private practice.

f) Social workers will maintain practice records in accordance with this Code and with all other relevant legal requirements.

g) Social workers will maintain adequate professional indemnity and public liability insurance coverage as a protection for clients.

h) Social workers will ensure that when providing services funded by third parties, social workers have a primary responsibility for the welfare of their clients. In negotiations to provide services to clients on behalf of an agency or funding source, social workers will ensure that the services they provide are ethically and professionally appropriate.

i) Social workers will discuss the nature and duration of their contact with clients, so that interactions can proceed with informed consent. Prior to commencing professional service, social workers will inform clients of their role, the nature of their services, any agency requirements (if services are funded by a third party), any statutory obligations and the expected outcome/s of their contact with the client.

j) Social workers will ensure their practice venue offers privacy, confidentiality, suitable access and is safe and secure for clients and staff.

k) Social workers will not solicit or receive a fee or other considerations to or from a third party for the referral of a client.

l) Social workers will ensure that client confidentiality is protected in the event of the social worker's termination of practice, incapacitation or death.

5.5.4 Remote service delivery

a) Social workers will explain, at the outset of the professional relationship, the limitations of remote service delivery, the potential impact of this, and obtain the participant's informed consent to proceed with the service.

b) Social workers will maintain up to date anti-virus, anti-spyware and firewall programs.

c) Social workers will ensure that they regularly back-up their computer and securely store a copy of all client documents off-site.

d) Social workers will ensure that all computers that they use for the provision of remote services are password protected, and that passwords are stored securely.

e) Social workers will recommend that clients accessing remote social work services also have access to face to face support, if assessed that this may be required.

5.6 Responsibilities to the profession

a) Social workers will uphold the dignity and integrity of the profession and will inform their practice from a recognised social work knowledge base.

b) Social workers will strive for and promote excellence in the social work profession. They will engage in discussion about, and constructive criticism of the profession, its theories, methods and practices.

c) Social workers will promote the profession of social work, its processes and outcomes and will defend the profession against unjust criticism.

d) Social workers will take action where a breach of this *Code* occurs, if permitted by law.

e) Social workers will cooperate with both AASW investigations into matters of complaint against themselves or other social workers and the requirements of any associated disciplinary hearings.

f) Social workers will report to the AASW and/or relevant organisational body, persons who misrepresent their qualifications as a social worker, or their eligibility for, or membership of, the AASW, if permitted by law.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Terms used in this Code of Ethics *that are defined in the Glossary have the meaning given in the Glossary.*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples	"An Aboriginal person is often defined legally as a person who is a descendant of an Indigenous inhabitant of Australia, sees himself or herself as an Aboriginal person and is recognised as Aboriginal by members of the community in which her or she lives. Torres Strait Islanders have cultural origins in nearby Melanesia. Traditionally they lived in the Torres Strait, which separates the north of Queensland from New Guinea, though today many have migrated and now live on the mainland" (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2008).
Advocacy	"Advocacy is a term with roots in legal practice. It refers to the activities associated with negotiating or representing on behalf of a person" (Burke & Dalrymple 2009, p. 265).
Anti-oppressive practice	"A form of social work practice which addresses social divisions and structural inequalities … to provide more appropriate and sensitive services by responding to people's needs regardless of their social status. Anti-oppressive practice embodies a person-centred philosophy, an egalitarian value system concerned with reducing the deleterious effects of structural inequalities upon people's lives; a methodology focusing on both process and outcome; and a way of structuring relationships between individuals that aim to empower users by reducing the negative effects of hierarchy in … the work they do together" (Dominelli, cited in Dominelli 2009, p. 53).
Anti-racist	"Anti-racist practice calls for the development of theories and practices which privilege understandings of the complex and particular operations of race power together with relevant cultural knowledge" (Quinn 2009, p. 98).

Autonomy	"The power of a person to act (1) freely and intentionally; (2) with substantial understanding; and (3) without controlling powers forcing them to choose to act in one way rather than another. The term 'self-determination' has a similar meaning" (Clifford & Burke 2009, p. 64).
Client	Clients are individuals, families and other kinship arrangements, groups, communities, organisations and societies, especially those who are neglected, vulnerable, disadvantaged, alienated or have exceptional needs.
Code of Ethics	"Codes of ethics are documents that aim to identify the broad values, principles and standards of ethical conduct on which a particular profession is based" (Bowles, Collingridge, Curry & Valentine 2006, pp. 75, 76).
Competence	"This is about care-giving, the actual work of care that needs to be done – one's ability to do something about another's needs. The term 'competence' is being used here in an holistic sense relating to professionals' abilities and capacities, rather than a set of discrete technical skills (competencies)" (Banks & Gallagher 2009, p. 104).
Confidentiality	"Respecting private and personal information, unless there are overriding ethical reasons for not doing" (Clifford & Burke 2009, p. 68).
Culturally competent practice	"Cultural competence can be achieved through a commitment to achieving culturally appropriate service delivery and a culturally appropriate workplace environment. This commitment would require a focus on systemic, organisational, professional and individual levels" (Farrelly & Lumby 2009, p.17).

Cultural safety	*"*An environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together" (Williams, cited in Bin-Sallik 2003, p. 21).
Culturally sensitive practice	"Culturally sensitive social work practice builds on the general principles and ethical standards of social work. The core of the model is to recognise and respect clients' ethnic, cultural and race-based values, characteristics, traditions and behaviour, and to integrate these characteristics successfully into social work practice. Culturally sensitive social work practice requires that social workers are aware of their cultural values and perceptions and how these impact upon their work with clients" (Soydan 2010, p. 144).
Culture	"The distinctive ways of life and shared values, beliefs and meanings common to groups of people" (Quinn 2009, p. 266).
Discrimination	"Negative discrimination is the prejudging and unfavourable treatment of people on the basis of perceived difference. Positive discrimination refers to policies, programs or actions that favour disadvantaged persons or groups" (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2008, p. 267).
Dual or multiple relationships	"Dual or multiple relationships between social workers and clients can assume many forms. Issues can arise in relation to having social contact, exchanging gifts, sharing meals, maintaining friendships, sharing personal details with clients, having business dealings with clients, and becoming involved with clients sexually" (Reamer 2006, p. 109).

Ethical decision making	"Ethical decision-making is the process by which social workers engage in an exploration of values – that may be evident in the personal, professional, social and organisational spheres – in order to establish where an ethical dilemma might lie according to what competing principles, and what factors take priority in the weighing up of alternatives" (McAuliffe 2010, p. 41).
Ethics	"Ethics is a branch of philosophy which addresses questions about morality, such as what is the fundamental nature of morality and the way in which moral values are determined" (Gray & Webb 2010, p. 1).
Human rights	"Human rights refer to the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled. They are socially sanctioned entitlements to the goods and services that are necessary to develop human potential and well-being" (Ife 2010, p. 148).
Informed consent	"In general, for consent to be considered valid six standards must be met: (1) coercion and undue influence must not have played a role in the client's decision; (2) clients must be mentally capable of providing consent; (3) clients must consent to specific procedures or actions; (4) the consent forms and procedures must be valid; (5) clients must have the right to refuse or withdraw consent; and (6) clients' decisions must be based on adequate information" (Reamer 2006, pp. 167, 168).
Involuntary clients	"Involuntary Clients: people who have not chosen to receive services, or who may be actively opposed to receiving services, which are often court-ordered or provided under threat of some other legal sanction" (Trotter 2006, p. 2).

Natural justice (also procedural fairness)	"Open and clear processes of decision-making, which explicitly identify the evidence, the reasoning and the authority used to reach a decision, and provide a clear and succinct statement that sets out these elements and can be challenged. Procedural fairness also demands that those affected by a decision have the opportunity to know the detail of the case against them, to challenge the basis of that case, to mount an alternative argument, and to know the avenues for further appeal, if any" (Swain & Bigby 2009, p. 339).
Oppression	"Oppression designates the disadvantage, marginalization and injustice some groups of people experience as part of their everyday life. It involves the devaluation of people's attributes and contributions to society on the grounds of who they are as members of a group socially configured as inferior" (Dominelli 2010, p. 160).
Remote service delivery	Remote service delivery refers to the electronic delivery of the full range of services (including counselling, supervision, teaching, research and so on) provided by social workers. This includes but is not limited to services provided via: telephones and mobile phones (including verbally and via sms), computers (including internet and online environments and email), Skype, social networking sites etc.
Sexualised conduct	Includes all conduct of a sexual nature including: physical contact and verbal, non-verbal, written and electronic (i.e. via sms, email, social networking sites etc.) expressions. It also includes the creation of a sexualised atmosphere (e.g. "discussion of what a sexual or romantic relationship might be like between the professional and the client, a voyeuristic interest by the professional in the client's sex life", sexual suggestion or innuendo) (Disch 2001, p. 206).

Social justice	"Social justice refers to the concept of a society in which justice is achieved in every aspect of society, rather than merely through the administration of law. It is generally considered as a social world which affords individuals and groups fair treatment, equality and an impartial share of the benefits of membership of society" (Ife 2010, p. 148).
Spirituality	"Spirituality is a search for meaning, and purpose and connection with self, others, the encompassing universe and ultimate reality" (Gilligan 2010, p. 60).
Values	"Professional values are a particular grouping and ordering of values within a professional context. In social work such values tend to focus on human functioning, capabilities and development" (Congress 2010, p. 19).

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APPENDIX 1: HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTS

Human rights treaties

Please see the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade *Australian Treaties Database* for a full and current listing of treaties to which Australia is a signatory. www.dfat.gov.au/treaties/index.html

- Protocol additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Adoption of an Additional Distinctive Emblem (Protocol III) [2010]
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2009]
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women of 18 December 1979 [2009]
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [2008]
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography [2007]
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict [2006]
- Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime [2005]
- Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty [1991]
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment [1989]
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women [1983]
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [1980]
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [1976]
- Convention on the Political Rights of Women [1975]
- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination [1975]
- Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees [1973]

- Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery incorporated in the Final Act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries [1958]
- Final Act and Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees [1954]
- Protocol amending the Slavery Convention signed at Geneva on 25 September 1926 [1953]
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide [1951]
- International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic, as amended by the Protocol signed at Lake Success, New York, 4 May 1949 [1949]
- Protocol amending the International Agreement for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic, signed at Paris on 18 May 1904, and the International Convention for the Suppression of White Slave Traffic, signed at Paris on 4 May 1910 [1949]
- Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War [1931]
- Slavery Convention [1927]
- Convention revising the General Act of Berlin of 26 February 1885 and the General Act and Declaration of Brussels of 2 July 1890 [1920]

Relevant declarations

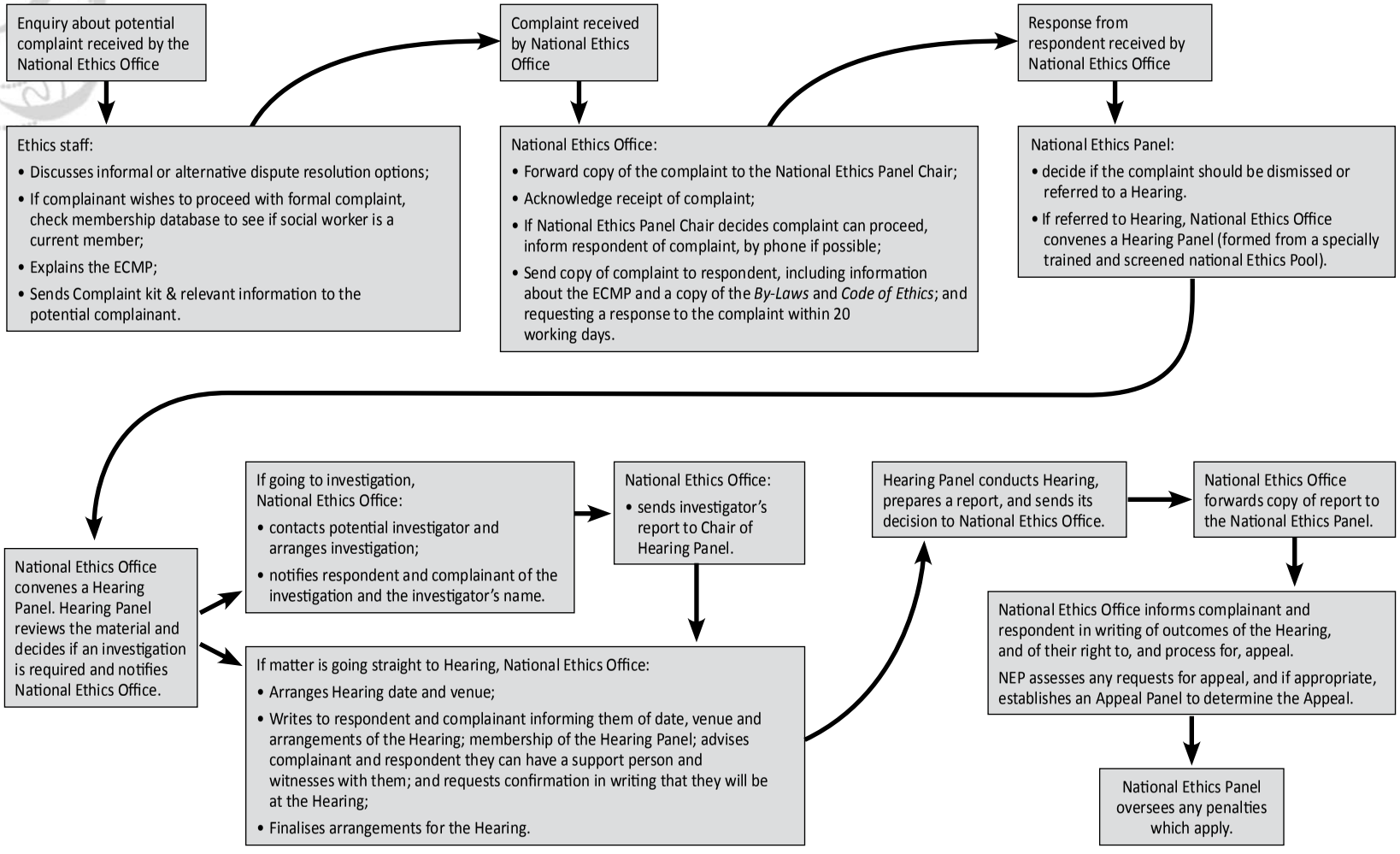
- Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [2007]
- Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief [1981]
- Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons [1975]
- Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons [1971]
- Declaration of the Rights of the Child [1959]

National legislation relevant to the above treaties and declarations

- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth) (formerly called the *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*)
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004* (Cth)
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Race Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT PROCESS FLOWCHART

Please refer to www.aasw.asn.au for the current version of this process.



APPENDIX 3: RELEVANT NATIONAL GUIDELINES ON ETHICAL RESEARCH

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) 2000, *Guidelines for ethical research in Indigenous studies*, AIATSIS.

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)and Consumers Health Forum 2002, *Statement on consumer and community participation in health and medical research*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

NHMRC 2003, *Values and ethics: guidelines for ethical conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

NHMRC 2005, *Keeping research on track: a guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples about health research ethics*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

NHMRC, Australian Research Council and Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee 2007, *National statement on ethical conduct in human research*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

NHMRC, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia 2007, *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

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Convenor: **Associate Professor Donna McAuliffe** (National Ethics Group Convenor)

Members: **Christine King** (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Working Group representative)

Roslyn Giles AM (Practice Standards Committee Convenor)

Gail Slocombe (National Ethics Group member)

Sharlene Nipperess (Code of Ethics Review Project Officer)

Kym Daly (National Ethics Officer)

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- **Code of Ethics Review Reference Group**

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    - NHMRC, Australian Research Council and Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee 2007, *National statement on ethical conduct in human research*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
    - NHMRC, Australian Research Council and Universities Australia 2007, *Australian code for the responsible conduct of research*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

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Professor Bob Lonne
National President
Australian Association of Social Workers
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