

Ethics and Professional Practice

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What makes a Profession?

- Identified body of theory
- Sanction of the community
- A shared value base
- Code of ethics

Why is ethics important?

- Ethics are values in action
- Guidance for appropriate and inappropriate conduct in the carrying out of professional responsibilities
- Accountability – to self, employers, colleagues, clients and users of services, general public and society at broader level.
- Establishes integrity, equity, respect.

Role of professional associations (Australian Association of Social Workers)

- Promote the profession of social work
- Enhance the public and professional recognition and identity of social work
- Establish, monitor and improve practice and ethical standards
- Contribute to the development of social work knowledge and research
- Develop, review and accredit the education standards for Social Workers
- Advocate for the pursuit of social justice and changes to social structures and policies in order to promote social inclusion and redress social disadvantage
- Promote and facilitate members' professional development and life-long learning
- Represent and advocate for the interests of members as a group

Ethics inside the AASW

- 1999 last review of code
- 2003 Practice standards
- 2006 Review and development of National Ethics Framework
- 2008 Ethics framework in place with ethics complaint management system; National Ethics Group and National Ethics Consultation Service.
- 2009-2010 Review of Code of ethics
- AASW Code of Ethics (2010) launched November 2010.

Resourcing ethics

- Ethics team resourced well by AASW Board – seen as core business
- Full-time Ethics Officer plus administration plus project workers
- Volunteers – National convenors of ECMS and NEG.
- Ethics Pool and Ethics Panel (paid for investigations and hearings)

Ethics review strategy

- Literature review
- Appoint Project Officer and COERC
- National Ethics Think Tank
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group collaboration
- Draft 1
- Public Consultation – online, phone
- International consultation
- Draft 2 – minor consultation
- Legal and editing
- Launch

Significant changes

- Preamble
- Indigenous artwork
- Change of core values:
- Respect for persons
- Social justice
- Professional integrity
- Significant restructure

New additions to Code of Ethics

- Environmental protection
- Culturally competent, safe and sensitive practice
- Dual relationships (rural)
- Gift-giving
- Informed consent (children)
- Deceased clients
- Remote service delivery

Environmental clauses (new)

- The social work profession: promotes the protection of the natural environment as inherent to social wellbeing (S3.2)
- Social workers will meet their responsibilities to society by engaging in action to promote societal and environmental wellbeing... (5.1.3j)
- 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 (5.1.3m).

Where to now?

- Ethics education – engagement with Schools of Social Work
- National Ethics Consultation Service – research and publications
- FAQ sheets
- Australian College of Social Work – continuing professional development