Preamble
It is a requirement of most professions that its members work to a code of ethics. In the case of community work practitioners this is fundamental because their work is with some of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of people in our society.

A code of ethics is an explicit document that lays down the expectations of a professional working in the field. The ACWA code of ethics sets the tenor for exemplary community work practice and is a benchmark for all members. The code was developed by the founders of the association and is as relevant today as a guide for everyday ethical practice as it was in its inception. Australian Community Workers Association members agree to the ACWA Code of ethics and demonstrate adherence to the code in every aspect of their professional life.

Introduction to Code of Ethics
The welfare and community worker is a person who, through professional training and field education, has the requisite values, attitudes, knowledge and skills to work autonomously or with a team in a social welfare agency or program intended to promote or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, social groups or larger communities.

The welfare and community worker as a professional practitioner in the field of welfare and community work is concerned to promote the worth and well-being of all individuals regardless of ethnicity, gender, beliefs, age, social status or other individual differences. The professional behaviour and practice of the welfare and community worker is aimed at maximising the human potential and worth of all persons.

Conduct opposed to the full recognition of human dignity and well-being for all persons within the welfare worker’s professional practice shall be considered improper and unacceptable to the welfare and community work profession. Welfare and community workers are concerned with issues of social justice and equity for clients including access to quality services and the opportunity for maximum client participation in service delivery.

Principles
1. Every human being, regardless of ethnicity, gender, beliefs, age, social status or other individual differences has a right to maximise his or her potential providing it does not infringe upon the rights of others.

2. Every society has an obligation to provide for and deal equitably with all its members and to make extra provision for those persons who by reason of disability or misfortune are disadvantaged.

3. The welfare and community worker in professional practice has an obligation to utilise all available skills and knowledge to promote the well-being of individuals, groups and communities.

4. The welfare and community worker has a professional obligation to give clients all knowledge, information and skills, which will assist clients, and client groups to maximise their human potential.

5. The welfare and community worker as a practitioner within complex social structures has an obligation to safeguard the human value of all persons encountered in practice.
Responsibilities
The welfare and community worker is placed in a unique relationship to other persons because of employment and profession. Obligations arise from that relationship – to safeguard the dignity of the client, to maintain the integrity of the practitioner and to recognise the value and worth of all persons involved in the welfare work practice.

Responsibility to clients and client group
Confidentiality – The welfare and community worker shall regard all information concerning clients disclosed in the course of practice as confidential, except where:
• with the client’s permission referrals are to be made and other professional consultation is sought;
• failure to disclose information would breach the terms of the welfare worker’s employment (such exceptions must be notified to the client).

Accountability – In exercising certain powers and using information, the welfare and community worker has an accountability to both the employing agency and to clients. However, special accountability to clients in preserving their dignity and autonomy is acknowledged.

Respect – The welfare and community worker has an obligation to treat clients with dignity, and to safeguard and promote the capacity for free choice by the client.

Responsibilities to colleagues
Respect - As a professional the welfare and community worker is expected to respect the practitioner skills and conceptual abilities of colleagues
Loyalty - The community work practitioner should provide loyalty and support to colleagues where this does not contradict the principles of this code of ethics
Sharing - The practitioner should share knowledge, skills and insights with colleagues
Accountability - The practitioner should bring to the attention of colleagues unprofessional or unethical conduct, and if unresolved, to refer the matter to the appropriate body
Professional conduct - refrain from any personal behaviour which may damage the profession.

Responsibility to employers and employing organisations
Managing employer expectations that conflict with the code - The welfare and community worker is expected to have clarified prior to employment that agency policies and practices are likely to allow the application of the principles contained in this code of ethics and to therefore allow the full discharge of their duties.
Accountability - As an employee of an organisation the welfare and community worker is expected to carry out the duties and responsibilities outlined as terms of employment, except where such contradicts this code of ethics, by:
• promoting the stated aims of the employing organisation in terms of policy, procedure and practice;
• distinguishing in public statements or behaviour whether acting as an authorised spokesperson of the employer or in a private capacity; and
• using approved channels only to express criticism of employment practices which are detrimental to the profession.

Responsibilities to the profession
Maintaining professional standards - The welfare and community worker will maintain proper standards of practice, and uphold principles and ethics of the code at all times.
Continuing with professional development - The practitioner will maintain the standards of knowledge, skill and learning appropriate to professional development.
Promoting the profession - The practitioner will promote understanding of the role and skills of welfare and community work practitioners.