



**AASW**  
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**Australian Association  
of Social Workers**

# *CHECKLIST FOR COMPLAINANTS:*

## *Prior to submitting an Ethics Complaint*

### **About this information sheet**

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The AASW treats all complaints seriously and gives each matter careful and respectful consideration.

The AASW recognises that reaching a decision and proceeding to make a formal complaint can be very difficult and stressful. We also recognise that making a formal complaint can be a time-consuming process.

This information sheet is designed to:

- assist you to consider if making an Ethics Complaint to the AASW is an appropriate complaints mechanism for your particular concerns;
- provide information about lodging an Ethics Complaint, including with other authorities;
- encourage you to contact us if you have any questions about the complaints process;

### **Prior to making a complaint to the AASW**

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Some concerns can be dealt with by the social worker, health service or agency directly. This may prevent a matter escalating unnecessarily and can result in your concerns being addressed more quickly than through other formal complaint processes. This is suitable for many general concerns or complaints in relation to a social worker's conduct, if it is safe and appropriate to do so, to make your concerns known.

- Consider contacting the social worker directly to raise your concerns. For example, this may be appropriate if you are seeking a further explanation about a social work service you are receiving, or you would like a social worker to complete a service which has already begun.
- If contacting the social worker directly doesn't resolve your concerns, and if the social worker works for an organisation, you could contact the organisation and ask about their complaints policy. Most organisations and all health services have one.
- Consider if another health service complaints mechanism would be better for you to use. All States and Territories have a complaints mechanism, which receive complaints about health practitioners and other health care workers.
- Note that if your concerns are of a potentially criminal nature, then we recommend that you notify the police.

## Checklist to consider before submitting a complaint to the AASW

If have considered the alternative complaints options and you have a reasonable belief that your concern should be brought to the attention of AASW because you believe that it raises a serious ethical issue, consider this Checklist.

Is your reasonable belief that:	YES/NO	Possible next steps:
The social worker is a current member of the AASW and was a member at the time of the alleged conduct?		AASW may receive the complaint only if a social worker held membership at the time of the alleged conduct and this status is confirmed by AASW.
The matter of your complaint occurred within the last 2 years?		For reasons of procedural fairness, AASW is ordinarily only able to consider complaints about recent conduct.
You are not a vexatious complainant and that your complaint is not frivolous?		Please read the information sheet <i>Information for complainants regarding vexatious complainants and/or frivolous complaints</i> It is within the AASW' s discretion to not proceed to consider any complaint if it forms a view that a complainant is behaving in a vexatious manner and/or a complaint appears to be frivolous.
Do you have consent from the appropriate person/parties and/or organisations to release confidential documentation (such as reports) as part of your Complaint to the AASW?		The AASW requires specific permission under the Privacy Act 1988 to access and consider confidential information. This may include reports, case notes and outcomes of other Complaints processes, that belong to another person's and/or organisation. The AASW cannot obtain such information on your behalf.
Your potential complaint does not relate to a Family Court matter?		Under law, AASW is not able to receive complaints related to Family Court matters. The information sheet <i>Complaints relating to the Family Court of Australia</i> sets out alternative complaints options.

## Contact

The AASW Ethics Complaints Office can be best contacted at [ethicscomplaint@asw.asn.au](mailto:ethicscomplaint@asw.asn.au) or by leaving short phone message on (03) 9320 1044