

## **Vote for Andrew Richardson for Ordinary Member on the AASW Board**

*'It's time for the Social Work profession to come together'*

I am nominating for the AASW National Board because I believe the Association is at a critical turning point. It can either evolve to meet the needs of a diverse, dynamic and widely dispersed membership - or continue on a path that many members feel is inconsistent with the core values of the profession.

I am a proud social worker. I bring over 20 years' experience as a practitioner, educator and leader in social work. As a social worker, my practice experience has been focused on mental health, social inclusion and community development. I am currently a Senior Lecturer in Social Work, living and working on Larrakia land in the Northern Territory. Since 2023 I have also served as the AASW Northern Territory Branch President and have worked tirelessly in that role to represent and advocate for members.

Social work is a values-based profession. That means the Association representing us must live out those values in its governance, leadership and day-to-day operations. In recent years, the AASW has faced criticism regarding its internal culture, its responsiveness to members and its commitment to social justice. I have heard these concerns in my role as NT Branch President from a diverse group of members including Accredited Mental Health Social Workers, students, early-career professionals and Life Members. I stand with members calling for change.

If elected to the AASW Board I will work collaboratively with fellow Directors, Branches, members and key stakeholders to:

- Drive implementation of an ambitious change agenda.
- Make membership fees and professional development opportunities more affordable.
- I will advocate for making use of new technologies to modernise operations, improve efficiency, provide flexible working for AASW staff and deliver cost savings that can be reinvested to provide better member services.
- Champion fairness, participation and member engagement at every level of the Association.
- Advance transparency in budgeting, governance and decision-making.
- Rebuild and repair relationships with key stakeholders, industry and educational partners, office holders and former members.
- Lead genuine collaboration and engagement with all stakeholders about important issues such as professional registration and education standards.
- Seize the opportunity of registration to come together as a profession. We need to bridge the false divisions and chart a path forward that recognises the specialist contributions of Accredited Mental Health Social Workers in Allied Health settings and the social justice focus we all share and are proud of.
- Harness the talents of our members in our advocacy efforts. We need to do much better in several areas, including advocacy about social work in the NDIS.

- Secure ethical corporate governance: embed accountability and ethical leadership at every level of the AASW.
- Review policies and procedures for gaining and maintaining AASW credentials – make them more user friendly.
- Ensure our Code of Ethics and Education Standards remain in the hands of the profession, not external regulators.
- Review the AASW English Language Policy to ensure it is fair, coherent and consistent with the contemporary needs of industry partners.
- Restore trust through principled leadership and open communication.
- Overcome false and counterproductive divisions and bring our profession together.

Our profession is built on principles of social justice, human dignity and collective responsibility. The AASW must reflect those same principles - not only in our public advocacy, but in how we govern ourselves and how we treat our own.

If elected, I will formally call on the National Board to issue an apology to Linda Ford, the first Aboriginal woman to hold the office of AASW National President. This is not about politics or personalities; it is about truth-telling, reconciliation and honouring the contributions of a trailblazing leader whose legacy should be recognised and celebrated. An apology must be the beginning of a deeper, more transparent process of cultural reform within the organisation. It must be accompanied by meaningful and tangible actions that achieve genuine progress and demonstrable outcomes for the AASW's Reconciliation Action Plan.

This is not a time for maintaining the status quo. It's time for change. I offer my candidacy as someone committed to thoughtful, courageous and member-focused leadership.

Let's build an AASW that truly reflects and represents the values of our profession - across the country and into the future.

*Vote for change.*

*Vote for member-focused leadership.*

*Vote for social justice.*

*Vote for Andrew Richardson*