

Candidate Statement for AASW President Nomination of Jaime Ahwang

My name is Jaime Ahwang, and I am nominating myself for the Torres Strait Islander Director position for the Australian Association of Social Workers.

I am a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman with traditional and cultural connections to Malu Kiwai (Boigu Island), Erub (Darnley Island) and Old Mapoon, and am extremely passionate and motivated to work with, and for my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

I hold a bachelor's degree in social work and have worked in the human service industry for over 15 years, majority of which being in the FNQ Region. I have in-depth knowledge about the demographics of Cairns and the Cape and Torres, as well as knowledge of the unique strengths, needs and challenges both historical and contemporary for this area. As I identify as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, I believe my cultural/community knowledge and connections, along with my work experiences will be highly beneficial to this position. I am well known and respected locally and state-wide for my cultural knowledge, work ethic and my passion in creating opportunities for self-determination for First Nation's peoples.

My lived and work experiences have ultimately led me into pursuing social work as a career. Briefly, I was born and raised in Mackay in Central Queensland however have lived in many towns throughout Queensland, from Brisbane to Thursday Island. At a young age I became a parent of 2 children, and with the death of my brother and my parent's inability to care, I eventually became the full-time carer of my 3 siblings. My experience of caring for children who have lived through and with trauma led me into working with young people within the education system and ultimately into child protection, where I was successful in obtaining an Indigenous Career Progression Scholarship with Department of Child Safety. Through this scholarship I completed my social work degree at James Cook University (JCU). During this time, I became recognised for my academic achievements and was approached to be on the Social Work Advisory team. In addition, for the past 3 years I have guest lectured in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Skills and Frameworks for Practice course at JCU.

The experiences throughout my life have now led me into applying for this position. My passion for raising the profile of First Nations women and creating improved opportunities for First Nations peoples will be an asset to this position. My knowledge of culture and communities, my relationships with key stakeholders and my advocacy skills along with all my other attributes will support the AASW's strategic priorities of championing the social work profession, driving professional growth and creating a better future. I am a believer in education and through this position I believe I can contribute my cultural knowledge and work experience to the social work sector to inform practitioners about 'best practices' when engaging and working with First Nations peoples.

In concluding, I believe the Torres Strait Islander Director position is a perfect fit with my work history, personal and professional strengths, my ability and passion to advance self-determination for First Nations peoples. I would greatly value an opportunity to demonstrate how my skills and ability can assist the AASW to achieve its goals to ensure that we deliver and support an inclusive, respectful and responsive profession to our First Nations families.