

July 2026 – June 2027 Strategy

The AASW is at a critical inflection point. The AASW faces significant challenges: member trust has eroded (NPS of -25), internal systems and culture require repair, and the profession itself is navigating a period of unprecedented complexity.

The opportunity is equally significant. A refreshed Board, a new CEO, 18,000 members, and a profession of over 45,000 social workers looking to their professional body for leadership provide a strong foundation for purposeful renewal. More than 3,000 of them responded to the 2025 Stakeholder Survey to tell AASW exactly what they need.

The Blueprint for Change, endorsed unanimously by the Board in December 2025, gives the incoming leadership a member-led mandate for reform. This plan is deliberately constrained to one year. Its purpose is not to solve everything, but to stabilise the foundations, demonstrate credible progress on the issues that matter most, and create the conditions for a longer-term strategy built with the profession.

12 month strategic goal

Over the next 12 months AASW will rebuild trust by repairing core organisational foundations, delivering visible value to members and strengthening the profession's voice on the issues that matter to social workers.

AASW purpose

To advance social work and its values.

Principles

- **Repair before ambition.** Fix what is broken before launching anything new. Trust is rebuilt through consistent follow-through, not announcements.
- **Member-led priorities.** The 2025 survey data, not internal assumptions, drives what gets prioritised. Professional standards, pay parity, government advocacy, and public awareness of social work ranked highest.
- **Decolonised and co-designed.** Every initiative is developed and delivered in partnership with First Nations, CALD, and disability communities. Not a separate program. A lens applied across how we listen, decide, and act. This includes First Nations Governance input, culturally safe engagement methods, accountability for implementation and explicit attention to whose knowledge, labour and authority is being relied on.
- **Visible progress, openly communicated.** Members need to see and feel change over the strategy. A quarterly progress report to members is non-negotiable.
- **Staff are the strategy.** No plan survives contact with a demoralised workforce. Investing in people, clarity, and culture is not a “nice to have” but a precondition for delivery.
- **Blueprint alignment.** Every initiative is traceable to the 11 strategies in the Blueprint for Change. This provides legitimacy with the membership base that authored and endorsed it.
- **Sustainability over spectacle.** The temptation will be to do too much. The discipline is in doing fewer things well and building capacity to do more later.

Our impact (What tangible impact do we want to make on the profession in the next year?)

Stand up for the social work profession

Social workers are recognised, fairly compensated, and valued for our scope of practice.

- Convene a national discussion on professional recognition to resolve the best way forward.
- Explore compensation and funding mechanisms for social work.
- Commence a review of the code of ethics, practice standards and capability statements.

No social worker stands alone

Social workers have access to peer support and professional guidance when they need it most.

- Enhance the social worker practitioner-led support line.
- Enhance the insurance offering for members.
- Deliver useful, accessible practitioner resources.
- Create solutions to enable practitioner personal safety.

A social work voice where decisions are made

Social work expertise shapes the policies that affect the people social workers serve.

- Advance a structured government and stakeholder engagement plan.
- Create a framework and process for policy development and positioning.
- Drive conversations on the issues that matter to social workers.

Key shifts (What are the key shifts we want our members and the broad social work profession to see AASW make over the next year?)

From division to connection

AASW connects the profession rather than talking at it.

- Reimagine, activate and support member-led communities and branches.
- Build strong mentoring networks.
- Review the membership model and foundations.
- Embed a clear focus on working with First Nations social workers and community.

From surveying to hearing

When members tell us something, we respond, we act, and we show what changed.

- Establish inclusive consultation, feedback, and follow-up mechanisms to enable input into association decision-making.
- Overhaul the communications, engagement, and events to support responsive, transparent, two-way engagement.

From silence to voice

AASW shows up in public debate, media, and the halls of power on the issues that matter.

- Recruit and brief a roster of social work practitioners available for media commentary.
- Commit to a visible, sustained approach to advocacy and public relations with fewer issues, greater depth, and consistent presence.

Foundational fixes (How does the organisation need to improve operationally to deliver the above?)

People, culture, and performance

Change only works if the people delivering it are capable, well supported and clear on what's expected.

- Enhance organisational capability and resilience.
- In conjunction with the staff, develop and implement organisational values and behaviours.
- Build in cultural safety and resilience.
- Grow staff empathy and understanding of the profession, and leadership development.

Digital evolution and enablement

Fix what's broken. Stop investing in what doesn't work. Build the foundation for better decisions

- Rationalise the CRM and technology solutions.
- Ensure the website delivers an exceptional user experience.
- Adopt and integrate AI responsibly and in ways that will enhance our effectiveness and the member experience.

Governance and financial sustainability

Demonstrate that the organisation is well run, financially sound, ethical, and accountable.

- Review Board governance processes, policies, and frameworks to enhance Board effectiveness.
- Ensure the association maintains adequate financial reserves, effective and ethical investment strategy, and auditing.
- Ensure the Board has access to the right expertise and capabilities to advance social work.
- Ensure all the regulatory functions that are under contract or for a fee are covering their costs.