

Charlotte Brewer's Statement

As a recently retired AMHSW I still feel a passion for social work, a profession that has given me so much. That is why I am standing for the AASW Board of Directors because I have received considerable benefit in many ways from the AASW and would like to “give back”, especially joining a Board of the calibre of the present one. The Board members have achieved a great deal in terms of advocacy, training, and willingness to communicate with members in the past 12 months. I would feel privileged to be a member of this Board.

To give you a little background on myself, I came to Australia planning to spend a year or 18 months working my way round the country. I ended up marrying an Australian and having a small family here, as well as studying social work. My social work background is in child protection, family work including family violence, rehabilitation, research, policy development and providing trauma therapy and counselling to people with depression, anxiety, disabilities, victims of crime, veterans and TAC and many who have experienced sexual assault. This has been at ground level, management and board level. One layer informs the next.

Mental health and social justice are my passions. If we could give every child a half decent upbringing, very few social workers, youth workers, mental health workers would be needed. However, that day seems a long way in the future but we need to aim for it.

My experiences as a social worker in case management, management and board level across several fields of interest have given me insight into what members look for and need. Mostly they are looking to improve the lives of their clients but often overlook their own needs. The old adage “Look after yourself or you won't be able to look after anyone else” still

holds true. Whilst the AASW is committed to social justice, members also need to be encouraged to consider their own needs. What do I need to be a more effective social worker? This is another area I am passionate about. If elected, I shall encourage courses on avoiding vicarious trauma and burnout to social workers and to employers.

I believe social workers, whatever their field(s) of expertise need some core skills in order to give optimal service to clients. My role as an accreditor for AMHSW accreditation led me to reflect on what these core skills and knowledge should be and to try to get these embedded in all social work degree courses is one of my main motivations in standing for election. My platform is to give social workers time to absorb mental health education by increasing mental health education, particularly trauma. All social workers need to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of trauma. They also need excellent verbal and written communication skills in order to communicate at all levels, and have their reports accepted in the Courts and by other professions. If we lack these skills we fail our clients. I would dearly love to know other skills and knowledge you consider essential.

There is strength in numbers. At present the AASW has nearly 18,500 members. Twenty thousand would seem achievable, perhaps 25,000. This is important when the AASW advocates with governments on behalf of AASW members. It makes us more effective. It also provides funds to make sustained advocacy possible. So, please let me know why you maintain your membership, what else you would like AASW to do and why any colleagues you have are not members.

If elected I promise to have an open door policy, more likely an open email policy. I promise I will respond to all and if I can help, I will. I will encourage “Have Your Say” surveys on a frequent basis to make it easy for all members to let the Board know what they are happy with and what else they would like. It is important to read the emails and newsletters that come out as often people want something that has already been done.

I welcome any queries social workers might have.

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