

Responses to Key Attributes

Board Director Nomination 2026 | Colin Sparrow

Draft candidate attachment for submission with nomination form

I am a, current AASW National Director and Co-Chair of the Board People and Culture Committee. My professional background spans public health, child protection, human services governance, policy, workforce development and service improvement. The responses below address the key attributes identified for candidates for election to the AASW Board.

Key attribute	Response
Professional integrity	I have held roles where professional judgement, accountability, confidentiality and procedural fairness are central to good practice. My current work as Principal Lead Social Work at the Women's and Children's Health Network requires me to provide professional leadership across governance, workforce development, policy and service improvement. As an AASW National Director and Co-Chair of the Board People and Culture Committee, I have contributed to Board-level consideration of appointments, capability, culture, performance and governance matters. I seek to place the interests of AASW, its members and the profession above personal preference, and to ask difficult questions respectfully where integrity, accountability or member trust require it.
Cultural awareness and humility	I understand cultural safety as a governance and relational responsibility, not simply a statement of good intent. As a non-Aboriginal social worker and Director, I do not claim cultural authority. My responsibility is to support governance conditions in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, participation and authority are respected, and where cultural labour and colonial load are not taken for granted. In my professional and governance work I aim to listen carefully, communicate inclusively, and remain alert to whose knowledge is being relied on, who is affected by decisions, and who has legitimacy to interpret cultural matters.
Critical thinking	A consistent theme in my work has been bringing structure to complex and ambiguous issues. I have worked across adverse event review, child protection practice improvement, health service leadership, mortality review, workforce development, ethics and organisational governance. These roles require careful use of evidence, clear distinction between fact, interpretation and judgement, and attention to the practical consequences of decisions. In Board work, I try to test assumptions, identify decision rights, consider legal, financial, workforce and reputational implications, and distinguish matters that require Board decision from those that are properly operational. I value robust discussion because it leads to better, safer decisions.
Communicates constructively	I have substantial experience preparing executive advice, chairing and contributing to committees, engaging with stakeholders and translating complex professional issues into clear decisions and actions. As a former President of the AASW South Australian Branch Management Committee and current National Director, I understand the importance of listening to members, acknowledging different views and communicating in a way that supports trust rather than defensiveness. I aim to be direct without being dismissive, and constructive without avoiding difficult issues. My approach is to clarify the purpose of a discussion, name the material issues, and help groups move towards accountable next steps.
Focuses strategically	My current roles require a broad view of systems, workforce capability, organisational change and governance. At WCHN, I provide professional leadership across a large public health network, with attention to social work practice, workforce development, policy, service improvement and executive advice. At AASW, I have contributed to Board discussions during a period of organisational repair, member trust rebuilding and strategic renewal. I am particularly interested in how AASW can strengthen professional standards, member

Key attribute	Response
	value, advocacy, financial sustainability and public recognition of social work. I bring a strategic focus that is grounded in implementation: ambition matters, but only if it can be delivered and governed well.
Collaborates in the best interests of the Association	I have worked across government, health, child protection, community services, professional association and committee environments. These settings require collaboration across different professional roles, perspectives and accountabilities. I understand that a Director contributes to collective Board governance and does not act as an individual delegate for a particular constituency. I value member-led governance, but also recognise that Directors must act in the best interests of AASW as a whole. My contribution is to work respectfully with other Directors, management, members and stakeholders while maintaining independent judgement, clear boundaries and a focus on the Association's purpose and long-term sustainability.

Qualifications and professional standing

AASW Accredited Social Worker. Bachelor of Science with Honours in Sociology and Social Work, University of Bath. Postgraduate Certificate in Management, Queensland University of Technology. Current AASW National Director and Co-Chair of the Board People and Culture Committee. Former President, AASW South Australian Branch Management Committee, and former member, AASW South Australian Branch Ethics Committee.