

Candidate Statement - Greg Rusha, BSW, JP, MAASW

For over forty years, social work has not simply been my profession - it's been my life's vocation. My constant guide has been the AASW Code of Ethics and an unwavering belief in the transformative, human-rights-based power of our discipline. I'm applying for Board Director because I believe our Association must be deeply collaborative, and passionately dedicated to its members.

We need Board leadership that merges high-level governance with the ground truth of practice. We need leadership that understands our collective identity from the grassroots up: leadership that fiercely champions our diverse practice areas, listens to members, and ensures marginalised voices actively shape our national direction.

Championing Our Profession

Social work is extraordinary in its scope, yet our value is too often misunderstood by governments, allied sectors, and the broader community. Throughout my career, I have made it my mission to showcase and elevate what social workers achieve across the full spectrum of human services.

My own background reflects this rich diversity. I've managed acute statutory risk and human rights as an Authorised Mental Health Practitioner, co-managing a caseload of 350 complex clients at Swan Community Mental Health; overseen six distinct programs across 15 delivery sites as General Manager at Anglicare WA; consolidated regional allied and community health services as Primary Health Manager for the Avon Health Service; served the judicial system as an independent Justice of the Peace; and supported emerging and experienced colleagues through clinical supervision in private practice.

Every setting has reinforced the same conviction: whether working in aged care, youth justice, family and domestic violence, health clinics, or community development, social workers bring a vital, systemic compass that no other discipline provides. I will be an energetic ambassador for our profession, promoting our unique identity across sectors and tirelessly advocating for the statutory registration of social workers in Australia.

An Ethos of Listening and Grassroots Connection

Good governance cannot take place behind a distant boardroom table. It requires an authentic ethos of listening. As lead facilitator with the Alternatives to Violence Project, I've spent years learning that lasting solutions emerge only when we set aside assumptions, practice humility, and truly listen to people on the ground.

This grassroots commitment defines my relationship with the AASW. From serving on the WA Branch Management Committee (BMC) in 2004 - where I convened the Private Practice and Mental Health practice groups - to serving currently as Vice President of the AASW WA Branch.

I have never been an armchair observer. I know our national Association is only as strong as the connection between its national office and local branches. When WA practitioners felt distant from national dialogues, I was involved in organising AASW national executive leadership visiting Perth so local voices and regional realities were heard firsthand. As your Director, I will champion an open, two-way channel between our grassroots members, branch committees, and the national Board.

Equity, Diversity, and Amplifying Marginalised Voices

Social justice is meaningless if it remains theoretical; it must be lived through humble practice and intentional allyship. Early in my career with the Department of Social Security in South Australia, I spent months sitting down, yarning with Aboriginal Elders on their terms. That relational consultation produced a groundbreaking research report that reshaped departmental service delivery. Frontline management in Roebourne and Karratha permanently reinforced my conviction that First Nations communities must determine their own solutions.

Inclusion also means standing actively with those navigating systemic barriers. I actively mentor international students and overseas-qualified social workers, helping them overcome isolation and find professional community in Australia. I proudly march alongside colleagues under the AASW banner at Pride, demonstrating visible solidarity with LGBTQIA+ communities. Our Board must model this inclusive ethos, ensuring our policies actively uplift First Nations self-determination, intersectional identities, and regional practitioners whose challenges are often overlooked.

A Clear Strategic Vision

I bring a big-picture strategic mindset shaped by both macro systems thinking and micro, frontline reality. Combining executive and board experience - including governance, multi-million-dollar budgets, and industrial compliance - with the living reality of daily practice, I will ensure our Association is financially resilient, transparent, and focused on our national strategic priorities.

I offer you four decades of integrity, unbroken commitment to our Association, and a respectful, collaborative voice. I ask for your vote so I can help steer an AASW that listens and supports its members, stands up for social justice, and elevates the stature of social work across Australia.