

Statement Addressing the AASW Key Attributes & Criteria

Candidate: Greg Rusha, BSW, JP

Position Sought: Ordinary Director, Board of the AASW

1. Professional Integrity

For over four-decades, my north star has been the AASW Code of Ethics and the advancement of our professional identity. My commitment to professional integrity is evidenced by continuous, active stewardship of the profession:

- **Developing Future Generations:** I have supervised dozens of students across universities, statutory offices, and NGOs. In private practice, I provide clinical and reflective supervision to both emerging and seasoned practitioners to keep practice accountable, ethical, and reflective. I also contribute directly to policy submissions and training/course development in the fields of Family & Domestic Violence and Aged Care.
- **Governance and Service to AASW:** My contribution to the Association spans decades. In 2004, as a WA Branch Management Committee (BMC) member, I convened two practice groups (Private Practice and Mental Health). Today, I continue that service as Vice President of the AASW WA Branch Management Committee (2024–2026).
- **Celebrating and Elevating Peers:** I believe integrity includes championing the excellence of others. I actively identify and nominate outstanding colleagues for the AASW Social Worker of the Year Awards, to ensure their vital work is recognised.
- **Moral Courage and Independent Judgment:** Whether functioning as an Authorised Mental Health Practitioner, presiding as an independent Justice of the Peace, or steering departmental policy, I have consistently shown the courage to place human rights, institutional ethics, and public trust ahead of convenience or expediency.

2. Cultural Awareness and Humility

Cultural awareness and humility cannot simply be learned from a textbook; they must be lived through humble practice, genuine listening, and self-reflection:

- **Decolonising Practice & First Nations Engagement:** Early in my career with the Department of Social Security in Berri (SA), I spent months sitting on the earth, yarning with Elders and community members on their terms. This relationship-first approach resulted in a 10,000-word research report that directly reshaped departmental service delivery. Later frontline management in Roebourne and Karratha further cemented my commitment to Aboriginal-led solutions.
- **Trauma-Informed Cultural Safety:** Across mental health clinics, health services, and private practice, I apply a trauma-informed lens that accounts for intergenerational trauma and systemic racism, ensuring physically and emotionally safe spaces for clients and colleagues.

- **Supporting International and Emerging Colleagues:** I actively champion diversity by mentoring international students and overseas-qualified practitioners, helping them navigate registration, cultural nuances, and employment so they find a genuine home in our profession.
- **Active Allyship with LGBTQIA+ Communities:** Real advocacy is visible. I proudly march under the AASW WA banner at the Pride Parade, standing in solidarity with LGBTQIA+ communities and reinforcing our association's commitment to human rights.

3. Critical Thinking

Board governance requires the capacity to navigate ambiguity, synthesise conflicting priorities, and make decisions that stand up to financial, legal, and ethical scrutiny.

- **Executive-Level Complexity at Anglicare WA:** As General Manager of Relationship Services, I oversaw six programs across 15 metropolitan and regional sites, continuously balancing operational risk, clinical fidelity, industrial agreements, budgets, and tender benchmarks.
- **Statutory Risk & Systemic Analysis:** As a Senior Case Coordinator at Swan Community Mental Health Clinic managing an active clinic load of 350 complex clients, and as an Authorised Mental Health Practitioner, I regularly conducted high-stakes risk analyses. Weighing individual human rights, the Mental Health Act, clinical safety, and community wellbeing demanded advanced critical reflection and independent, defensible decision-making.
- **Reflective Practice Leadership:** In supervision and when lecturing at TAFE and university in politics, ethics, and social policy, I teach critical thinking by encouraging practitioners to look beneath surface issues and interrogate power, policy, and systemic drivers.

4. Communicates Constructively

Constructive communication is my primary tool for finding common ground and driving change::

- **Cross-Sector Diplomacy:** Collaborating with GPs, psychiatrists, police, hospital executives, and community advocates, I translate complex social work principles into accessible, shared goals that secure multi-agency buy-in.
- **Advocating for WA and Connecting National Leadership:** A national association thrives when branches and national leadership maintain genuine dialogue. I took the initiative to invite AASW national leadership, including requesting Liz Little fly to Perth to engage directly with WA practitioners, ensuring our local and regional realities were heard at the highest level.
- **Conflict De-escalation:** My training and accreditation as a lead facilitator with the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) reflect my deep commitment to de-escalation, self-awareness, active listening, and turning potential conflict into cooperative dialogue.

- **Public & Media Relations:** Whether serving as Public Relations Coordinator for the Darlington Arts Festival, presenting research to government departments or delivering lectures, I communicate clearly, persuasively and adapting to my audience's needs.

5. Focuses Strategically

I bring a big-picture strategic mindset shaped by both macro systems thinking and micro, frontline reality.

- **Creating Sustainable, Scalable Solutions (The ALIVE Suicide Program):** Over 15 years ago, I co-designed the ALIVE Suicide Intervention Program creating collaboration with GPs and mental health networks. Its sustainable design allowed it to grow from a local pilot into an enduring model still operating in its adapted form across four sites today.
- **Creative Community Engagement:** In Geraldton, when faced with public disengagement and systemic barriers between the Department of Social Security and vulnerable populations, I looked at the big picture. I initiated creative public participation, such as designing and entering Social Security community floats in the annual regional Sunshine Festival. This transformed a historically stigmatised government office into an approachable, community-embedded service.
- **Multi-Agency & Regional Strategy:** As Primary Health Manager for Avon Health Service, I led the consolidation and strategic direction of allied and community health budgets across a vast geographic catchment, ensuring regional and remote communities retained equitable access to essential services.
- **Board & Governance Alignment:** Serving as Deputy Chair of the Midland Royal Association of Justices and on the AASW BMC gives me a working understanding of ACNC Governance Standard 5, board responsibilities, and fiduciary duties under Corporations Law.

Collaborates in the Best Interests of the Association

The strength of the AASW lies in its collective unity, collaborative spirit, and responsiveness to its diverse membership across all states and career stages:

- **Dedicated, Long-Term Association Contributor:** I have never been an armchair critic of our profession; I step up to do the work. From serving on the WA BMC in 2004 to my current term as Vice President (2024–2026), I have consistently worked on advancing the collective stature, relevance, and unity of the AASW.
- **Collaborative, Flexible Team Player:** Throughout my career, I have brought disparate groups together, operating with humility, optimism and respect for collective wisdom, and I will bring this non-defensive, collaborative ethos directly to the Boardroom.
- **Commitment to the AASW Vision:** As an Ordinary Director, I will champion the national strategic plan, safeguard our financial sustainability, ensure that regional branches feel

intimately connected to national leadership, and fiercely advocate for the status and statutory recognition of professional social work across Australia.