

Candidate Statement

Harsumeet Singh

I am nominating for the AASW Board of Directors because I want to contribute to a strong, transparent and member-focused professional association at an important stage in my development as an emerging social worker.

I am currently completing the Master of Social Work (Qualifying) at Western Sydney University and am an AASW student member. Alongside my studies and field education, I have developed substantial experience in university governance, student representation and advocacy. I was elected as the postgraduate student representative on Western Sydney University's Academic Senate and have also served on the Academic Senate Assessment Committee, Academic Senate Education Committee and the School of Business, Education, Law and Arts Faculty Academic Board. I also hold a postgraduate education representative role within the Student Representative Council.

These roles have given me practical experience of governance beyond advocacy alone. I have learned to read papers critically, consider competing interests, raise difficult issues respectfully, contribute to committee deliberations and recognise the distinction between representing a particular perspective and making decisions in the broader interests of an organisation. I have advocated on issues including social work field education capacity, student wellbeing, academic policy and access to appropriate student facilities. In doing so, I have sought to move concerns from individual stories to evidence, systemic analysis and constructive proposals for change.

My social work field education has further shaped what I would bring to the Board. My first placement with Number 8 Prison Project – Mana Restoration involved work connected with Pasifika individuals and families affected by the criminal justice system, including reintegration, employment and culturally responsive practice. My final placement with Scope Australia has developed my experience in disability, employment readiness, person-centred practice, supported decision-making and community participation. These experiences have reinforced for me that good social work leadership must remain connected to the realities of practice, the voices of people using services, and the structural conditions that shape opportunity and wellbeing.

I am particularly interested in strengthening the connection between the AASW and students, emerging practitioners and members working across diverse practice settings. The transition from university to professional practice is a critical period in which social workers form their professional identity, experience the pressures of field education and early career practice, and decide whether they feel connected to their professional association. I believe the AASW has an important role in ensuring that emerging social workers see membership not simply as a credential, but as a source of professional identity, advocacy, support, standards, connection and collective voice.

I am also strongly aligned with the AASW's current focus on rebuilding trust, strengthening governance, improving member value, advancing professional recognition and maintaining strong public advocacy. For me, trust is built through transparency, meaningful consultation, clear accountability and visible follow-through. A professional association should be willing to listen carefully to members, communicate honestly about constraints, and demonstrate how member concerns inform strategic decisions.

If elected, I would bring an emerging-practitioner perspective together with practical governance experience, critical reflection, cultural humility and a willingness to ask constructive questions. I would not approach the role as a delegate for one constituency. I understand that a Director has a duty to act in the best interests of the Association as a whole. I would therefore seek to contribute independently and responsibly, respect

confidentiality and collective decision-making, engage seriously with governance training and Board papers, and support decisions that strengthen the long-term sustainability and credibility of the AASW.

I believe there is value in a Board that combines experienced senior practitioners with emerging voices who are close to contemporary social work education, field education and the transition into practice. I would be honoured to contribute that perspective while learning from fellow Directors and working collectively to advance social work and its values across Australia.