

Candidate Statement - Nomination to the AASW VIC BMC Member Position - Dr Josy Thomas

I am a mental health specialised social worker with extensive experience in the community services sector including in statutory child protection, family violence, and trauma informed clinical mental health practice as evidenced in my resume. I have been predominantly working with vulnerable children and young people aged 0-18 years, and their families for the past 19 years in Australia. Prior to migrating to Australia in 2007, I had worked in various social care settings in India for 16 years. After having obtained a master's degree in social work, an MPhil Degree (clinical) in Psychiatric Social Work, and a Diploma in Statutory Child Protection (from SA DFC college for L&D), I completed my PhD Degree (Mental Health Social Work) from Monash University, Melbourne in 2017. I am currently working as Team Leader of a community case management team in the Western Health Mental Health Services in Melbourne. Previously I was working as a Specialist Family Violence Advisor in the Mental Health & Wellbeing Specialist Services Division at Eastern Health in Melbourne. I have demonstrated knowledge and skills across a broad range of community service areas and stakeholder engagement. My social work practice is strengthened by my lived experiences and the expertise that arises from utilising this experience in critical areas of interventions and supported by my specialised knowledge of mental health. I have been a member of the AASW for the past 5 years. Last year (in April), I presented at the AASW webinar: 'Social Work Leaders - Celebrating Excellence of PhDs'.

I have been a member of the AASW VIC Branch Management Committee since September 2025 and have learned quite a bit regarding the functioning of AASW in general and the VIC BMC in particular in the last one year. We, the VIC BMC, have successfully conducted a statewide Social Workers Forum in April following a few months of preparation. I am currently chair of the 'Membership sub-committee' of the VIC BMC, and member of another sub-committee for 'Events & Promotions'. I am seeking renomination as a candidate for the VIC BMC member as I look forward to continuing working on projects and initiatives we commenced in the recent months including forming sub-committees and contribute to strengthening our VIC branch. I am bringing my wealth of knowledge and experience of social work practice in various settings in India and Australia. I have some ideas to offer in this important task of regaining the trust of the members and its lost glory. I am committed to volunteering my time as required/expected by the National Board. I was involved with a couple of organisations in the past by serving in their management committees - Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council (VMIAC) between 2019 - 2021 and until very recently with the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) between Nov 2023 and June 2026.

I have been engaged in doing several activities outside of my professional life via various professional and social platforms in raising education and awareness about parenting, child safety, family violence and mental health. I have been involved in forming and leading a culturally based Professional Social Workers Platform Australia wide with over 200 members joining it. They are a mix of members and non-members of AASW. We commenced it in March 2025, and we have members in all States and Territories of Australia. We are immigrants (most of us migrated via skilled migration program) from the state of Kerala in India and we speak a language called 'Malayalam' and we are known as 'Malayalees' ('Keralites' in English). We named the platform as "Australian Association of Malayalee Social Workers" (AAMSW) in line with the name of AASW. It's purely a voluntary initiative and informal at this stage. We have developed Vision, Mission, Objectives and a Plan of Action for supporting the members. The plan is to associate very closely with AASW (plan for organising state/regional chapters in future) and source support in membership promotion and professional development including cultural adaptation in practice. I gained some useful insights from forming and running this platform, and I can bring those insights and a cultural lens in the reformation activities being undertaken by the National Board. We have increasing number of

social workers from multicultural backgrounds, and I believe my cultural background would represent/reflect our multiculturalism.