



Dr David N Jones
Elections Officer
International Federation of Social Workers

Via email

22 April 2026

Tēnā koe Dr David,

**Strong endorsement of Sharyn Roberts (Aotearoa New Zealand)
for IFSW Global President**

On behalf of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW), we write to offer our full and unequivocal endorsement of Sharyn Roberts (Aotearoa New Zealand) for election as IFSW Global President. ANZASW's endorsement is grounded in Sharyn's proven track record across practice, national association leadership, governance, and thought leadership.

This is a consequential moment for social work worldwide. Our profession is being tested by widening inequality and inequity, conflict and displacement, climate disruption, migration pressures, and polarisation. In this context, IFSW needs leadership that can hold moral clarity with practical effectiveness: leadership that is values-led, relational, and demonstrably able to deliver. Sharyn brings that rare combination.

Sharyn has been an active member of the ANZASW since 2012 and has served as Perehitana (President) of the ANZASW since 2019. She provides steady, courageous leadership through challenging times, maintaining dependability to social work ethics, commitment to indigenous-led practice, and strengthening a public voice grounded in human rights, social justice, and equity. Sharyn is highly regarded for her unwavering values, dedication to the promotion of Māori Social Workers and holds significant mana (respect) both nationally and within the relationships she has fostered internationally.

Sharyn has been the visionary hand in leading the ANZASW through changes in operational leadership, significant strategic planning and revisioning, and deliberately charting a human-rights led apology and practical response to the Abuse in Care Inquiry. Her work leading the board and subsequent support of the operations team has resulted in key projects such as the Social Justice and Engagement Strategy which sets out how our active advocacy for Social Workers and influencing of social policy is rooted in our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and our Association values. Sharyn would bring these skills, values and dedication to the IFSW Global President role.

Sharyn has been in both frontline and executive leadership positions for over 14 years with Te Ora Hou Ōtautahi. This includes a decade in senior leadership roles (Social Work Manager; Pou Arahi/Senior Manager). Sharyn has led in complex community environments where outcomes, safety, and integrity matter. She has recently moved into the role of Kaiwhakauruora (Strategic Advisor) for Te Ora Hou Aotearoa National Board (Governance) and brings with her practice knowledge, executive experience and thought leadership into each space she commits herself to.

Sharyn is a long-standing board member of Presbyterian Support Upper South Island, including senior governance leadership as Deputy Chair and current Co-Chair Māori. She has supported regulatory and practice development work (including Social Workers Registration Board assessment and scope development contributions) and continues to build workforce capability through supervision and teaching. Sharyn is a published author on practice with Māori (including multiple book chapters), and the developer and facilitator of the Mana Māori frame, a kaupapa Māori supervision framework supporting practitioners across fields. She also led research and development work that helped shape TOHATOHA as a practice model implemented nationally across Te Ora Hou centres. These accomplishments speak of her devotion to indigenous led practice-based solutions coupled with strategic insight to support the work of Social Workers, advocating for Social Service Organisations and positioning herself to produce high quality national level results.

Sharyn's candidature is compelling because it aligns with what IFSW requires now, and because she has articulated clear, deliverable priorities that ANZASW believes will strengthen the Federation's relevance and impact. ANZASW is confident Sharyn will represent IFSW with integrity, credibility, and effectiveness. She combines the relational strength needed to unite diverse perspectives with the discipline required to deliver tangible progress.

For these reasons, ANZASW strongly encourages IFSW voting members to support Sharyn Roberts for IFSW Global President. Her election would strengthen IFSW's unity, ethical leadership, and practical impact at a time when global social work leadership is urgently needed.

Ngā mihi nui,



Suzanne Cocker
Vice President
ANZASW



Nathan Chong-Nee
Pou Whakahaere (Chief Executive)
ANZASW



Tangata Whenua
Social Workers Association

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS (IFSW): EXECUTIVE POSITION:

GLOBAL PRESIDENT.

CANDIDATURE: SHARYN ROBERTS

POSITION:

The Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association (TWSWA) is in full support of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) nomination of Sharyn Roberts as Global President of the International Federation of Social Workers

As both Associations are in agreeance, the nomination therefore is endorsed by the IFSW Coordinating Body of Aotearoa New Zealand.

RATIONALE:

We believe Sharyn Roberts would be an ideal candidate for the position of Global President because:

- The representation of indigenous peoples
- The elevation of the social work voices from the Pacific
- The navigation of difference and diversity while upholding the mana of people.

Sharyn is herself an indigenous person from Aotearoa and as such, brings that richness of connection to any global position but importantly, Sharyn would foster and encourage the development of indigenous representation within and alongside social work associations and member countries, so that indigenous representation is not just within a Commission, but can be evident throughout the whole of IFSW.

This eventuality would give legitimacy and indeed poignancy to the reference in the Global Definition of Social Work to *indigenous knowledges*, but the theory would then become a reality.

For too long Aotearoa has been the sole representative of the Pacific Voice and it is now for Pacific Voices to be represented in their own rangatiratanga sovereignty. Sharyn would be able to nurture this development.

As the Perehitana President of Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers, Sharyn has been instrumental in supporting the Executive to develop closer working relationships with Pacific Nations, especially through their social work associations and

last year, in supporting the Commonwealth Organization for Social Work at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Western Samoa.

The Pacific Nations from Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia are not only indigenous in practice but absolutely, social work in context. The vulnerability of these nation states is apparent in geopolitics because of their strategic positioning as land formations and in particular, the influence of superpowers such as China and the United States of America but as well, the enormity of climate change and rising oceans. It is predicted that some low-lying island nations will no longer exist as seas rise, decimating traditional homelands and displacing people from the very origins of who they are in their whakapapa genealogical connections.

Sharyn not only has a keen understanding of these influences and growing concerns but is also in a position to bring the people themselves to the forefront so they can share how such concerns might be mitigated.

As the Pehitana President of ANZASW, Sharyn is not unaccustomed to ‘navigating turbulent waters’ and the tension that is often present between divergence of opinion and upholding the recognition of diversity. The Association would suggest that these are very real considerations within the obligations of a Global President position.

As well, Sharyn has very real experience within her own work as a social worker and in roles of leadership.

The experience is therefore self-evident, but experience also needs to be matched with aptitude, and this is obvious in Sharyn’s manner. Sharyn’s intent to uphold people’s mana yet not be afraid to broker difficult discussions and the concerted working, to bring people together while being mindful of political and historical dissensions.

The bringing together requires a deep sense of not *dominating* but *facilitating* and the collective collaboration in decision making becomes integral to how people feel heard and respected.

The Association believes these qualities Sharyn would bring to the Executive of IFSW in the role of Global President.

The other important aspect to the sustainability of the role as Global President is self-care, a quality that is often sadly neglected by many social workers. However, Sharyn has a very acute sense of how to manage demand, time and yet, not diminish the importance of work. This balance is imperative to offsetting the potential for ‘burnout’ and the obligation to whanau family.

May we therefore reiterate three primary points that we believe support the candidature of Sharyn Roberts for Global President:

- **CONTEXT:**
 - An understanding of the influences of geopolitics, the environment and climatic events on the profession of social work and social work practitioners.

- The recognition that patterns of migration and settlement create different and diverse origins of population cohorts that are often preserved in narratives and relationship connections.
 - The place of indigenous peoples within the histories of nation states and the importance of representation of indigenous peoples in international forums and their valuable contribution to the profession and practice of social work.
- **CONTENT:**
 - The influences of personal and cultural values, codes of ethics and conduct on the practice of social work and practitioners themselves in the determination of authenticity and the building of trust.
 - The importance and imperative nature of supervision and continued professional development to the competence of the practice of the social worker and the ‘safety’ of the recipients of that practice.
 - The centrality of organizational processes to the effective delivery of services, the practice of social work and the professional wellbeing of the social worker.
 - **CONTACT:**
 - The necessity to recognize global, regional and national connections that foster and effect engagement within political, economic and social forums influencing decisions that create social indicators and parameters integral to social work.
 - The sustainability and preservation of networks and relationships (both personal and work related) that are imperative to the integrity of the profession and practice of social work.
 - The vital nature of balance between responsibilities to the workplace and obligations to family to mitigate ‘burnout’.

The Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association as a member of the Coordinating Body of Aotearoa New Zealand absolutely and unequivocally supports the nomination of Sharyn Roberts as the Global President of the International Federation of Social Workers.

Mauriora!

**Te kai a te rangatira, he kōrero
Te tohu a te Rangatira, he manaaki**

Te mahi a te Rangatira, he whakatira i te iwi

The food of the leader is talk
The sign of the leader is
generosity
The work of the leader is to
unite the people.