

Social work field education in a global world, views from educators

Cate Hudson¹, Ines Zuchowski², Sophie Diamandi³, Brenda Bartlett⁴

¹*Social Work and Rural Practice Unit, Centre for Regional Engagement, University of South Australia, Whyalla, Australia*

²*School of Arts and Social Sciences, James Cook University, Douglas, Australia*

³*School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia*

⁴*School of Social Sciences and Psychology, University of Western Sydney, Sydney, Australia*

Social Workers in the field are operating under significant stress as workplace ideologies and neo-liberal market principles (Agllias, 2010) place pressure on the human service industry to focus on efficiencies rather than effectiveness (Chiller & Crisp, 2012). Schools of social work are also under pressure which is derived mainly from the need to graduate highly skilled and competent professional social workers within the confines of a neoliberal funding model which dictates that universities do more with less. Of particular concern is the effect on field education placement or practicum, the point where service providers and schools of social work join forces to enhance student learning. The current climate makes it increasingly difficult to source and maintain placements offering quality social work learning environments, particularly for some groups of students. It is therefore necessary to seek new and creative ways of working in partnership with the service providers to secure placement opportunities and enhance the experience for both service provider staff and social work students on placement. Informed by the experiences of field education academic staff from around Australia this presentation offers insight into some of the potential solutions to challenges faced in the current climate, with a focus on rural and remote placements, overseas placements and supporting students from culturally diverse backgrounds. In particular it provides practical strategies and argues for schools of social work and particularly field education staff to work more closely together to share information and guide the development of field education standards and requirements.

References:

- Agllias, K. (2010). Student to practitioner: A study of preparedness for social work practitioners. *Australian Social Work*, 63(3), 346-360
- Chiller, P., & Crisp, B. R. (2012). Professional Supervision: A Workforce Retention Strategy for Social Work? *Australian Social Work*, 65(2), 232-242. doi: 10.1080/0312407x.2011.625036