

## Plenary Sessions

**Title:** Moving beyond defining: An overview and reflection on issues in international social work.

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### **Abstract:**

In this paper the authors introduce a broad discussion around the nature and scope of international social work. Efforts to define international social work are discussed and some particular definitions and dimensions presented for consideration. The role of organisations such as the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) and the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) in setting the parameters of international social work are briefly discussed. The authors then go on to identify some of the key debates that characterise discussions around international social work. Particular attention is paid to the universalist – indigenous continuum, where the discussion is informed and framed by post-imperialist, post-colonialist perspectives. The universalist and indigenous positions are explored, both in a general sense, drawing from some of the existing literature in this area, and more particularly by drawing on the authors' own experience as social work educators in Australia.

### **Biographies:**

**Associate Professor Debra Miles** has worked in the tertiary education sector in Australia since 1995, teaching in professional social work and women's studies courses at James Cook University in Queensland and at Charles Darwin University, in the Northern Territory. Her social work practice background includes work in child protection, the disability sector and women's services. She is currently the Deputy Head of the School of Arts and Social Sciences and the Convener of the Women's Studies Research Unit at James Cook University. Her teaching foci include human rights and social work practice. Debra's current research projects include internationalisation of social work education; women and leadership; and the experience of Indigenous students in social work education.

**Mr Peter Jones** is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Human Services at James Cook University. His primary teaching and research interests are in the areas of eco-social justice, social work education and transformative learning. He is actively involved in grass-roots environmental activism as well as developing approaches to social work curriculum which reflect a globally informed and ecologically literate approach to practice. His current research activities include an examination of environmental ethics in social work; the application of transformative learning theory in social work practice; and the internationalisation of social work education.

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