

Alongside and with fellow citizens.

Reflecting on power relations in social (justice) work practice and education and rethinking the meaning of “professionalism”.

By Ros Thorpe

In this key note address Ros Thorpe will explore the theoretical foundations for and the practice challenges of “service user” participation and power sharing in social (justice) work practice and education. In preparation she will have worked *alongside* and *with* some fellow citizens (service users) from the Family Inclusion Network in Townsville, who will be present with her at the address to share some of their experiences and participate in the discussion.

My Social Work Biography: Ros Thorpe. April 2016



I qualified as a social worker in 1967 so, astonishingly, this is my 50th year in social work.

My training in the UK was almost totally in orthodox social casework, with only a brief introduction to group work and not a hint of community work, nor of the radical critiques which were to emerge/erupt just a few years later. Nonetheless I had the good fortune to have as my tutor a young academic, Bob Holman, who introduced me to grass roots community work in a poor, multi-racial area of Birmingham, and to critical sociology, with its focus on the political alongside the personal.

Bob has been a very powerful influence in my social work career and, in my retirement, I am thrilled to have an opportunity to follow his example in practising empowerment community development in my volunteer part time work with The Family Inclusion Network Townsville.

Prior to this, in my career I have practised, and researched in family and child welfare; worked in social work education at Birmingham, Nottingham, Sydney, and James Cook Universities; taught and researched radical social work with particular focus on community work, women and welfare, family and child welfare, values and ethics; published several books, some with Jude Irwin; and, *inter alia*, together with a few like-minded colleagues in Townsville, I have met monthly in a peer support group which 30 years ago we named ***Critical Edge***. Our aim is to maintain our commitment to social justice principles and identify how each of us can do this despite the constraints of our practice contexts.