How do we use story telling in casework to empower students in financial difficulty, and to develop our best practice?
Robyn Angus, La Trobe University

An interactive session with practitioners who work with high needs students.
How can Positive Psychology inform us in this “strengths based” approach in financial counselling with students?
How can we use narratives to build our best practice?

Student financial need:
Research and data are prevalent about the plight of University students attempting to live on low income. But statistics alone are often inadequate to really express and identify the problem. We will look at some quantitative data.

How can we use Student Stories (qualitative data) to strengthen our casework? (group discussions)
Apart from collecting qualitative evidence of student needs, there is also benefit in collecting case studies and qualitative data through listening to the student story.
The complete story or circumstances can be used to inform our case work, to assist the student more holistically. For example, a student with difficult cultural and social conditions or lack of financial literacy may lead to financial difficulties or a case study of significant debt to highlight inappropriate lending.

In un-covering this sometimes-painful background of events, an acceptance is gained and ability to act. Then, character strengths can be identified, affirmed, and draw on to manage these difficulties. E.g. resilience and determination.

How can stories inform our best practice? Can we also identify our character strengths in that story to debrief upon?
Reflecting on the strengths we use to assist the student? For example, character strengths of perspective, patience and hope. This should encourage us.

How can we apply this in our practice?
When we return to our office, can we share student stories with our peers to identify best practice?
We can reflect on which character strengths we used in this casework, and what we need to develop further.

Learning outcomes
- An interactive session for Practitioners to identify client strengths to empower students.
- Using the student narrative in peer reflective practice.
- Identifying our strengths in order to develop our own practice, based on Positive Psychology.

Presenter
Robyn Angus, La Trobe University

Ms Robyn Angus was appointed Financial Counsellor at the Student Union, La Trobe University in Melbourne in 2015 working with students in financial difficulty. Previously, Robyn worked with Uniting Care and Camcare and formerly in the banking industry. A graduate in Economics from University of Melbourne and holding a Masters in Economics from RMIT University. Robyn is a member of the Financial and Consumer Rights Council and Financial Counselling Australia and Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association.