

Applied Sociology Thematic Group *For the Australian Sociology Practitioner* **Contact Email for February 2013**

Deb King, our Immediate Past President, has indicated that our Association's Executive is keen to learn how/what TASA could do to provide better support for people who work outside of academia and has asked me to get from all of you any or all the unmet needs you have as a sociology practitioner (to use a term we talked about a while ago) that would make your professional life easier. The day before this request from Deb I had a discussion with Nick Osbaldiston, one of the editors of Nexus, about how we might get more written material from those outside of universities to balance the material from universities.

What I want to do in this email is to set out something of the background to our thematic group, because we are not a homogeneous group, and therefore what we each want from the association might be different. This will also give you time to collect your thoughts for me to get them from you in April and prepare a report for the Executive in June.

We have members whose fulltime occupation is being a sociology practitioner. Some in private industry; some in government departments; some in welfare organisations and some in schools.

We have members who are part-time sociology practitioners and part-time academics and we have fulltime academics who have an interest in sociology outside of the university.

In addition to this diversity, we have larger external issues that play a part in preparing and supporting sociology practitioners. These include:

1. Presenting how and why sociology is of benefit to the community. (One way to achieve this would be to have a media savvy sociologist, in each capital city, ready to respond on issues to and for the media.)
2. We need to ensure that those who choose to work outside academia are adequately trained and have ongoing professional development. This means we have a concern about how universities are training sociologists.
3. One wider issue is the absence of a professional sociology bachelor's degree. B.Soc. or B.A. (Soc). (Can we begin to get universities to acknowledge the value of a professional degree for sociology? Philosopher Alain de Botton, in a lecture in Sydney recently, said that the Arts degree was dead, because enrolments were at an all-time low. If the Arts degree goes, so does sociology, unless we can demonstrate to others that we have a value in our own right.
4. Another issue that becomes important at times, when support for a lone sociologist is needed, because they work in a professional team whose other members already have professional bodies to back them up, if needs be, as do sociologists in academia. Quite how this can best be done, I don't know, but a strong professional body, in addition to helping individuals, would help sociology have greater strength in the community at large.

Please begin to gather your thoughts ready to response to my April Contact email.

Alan Scott
Convenor