

## **Chair of Director's Annual Report, 2021**

Trish Douglas, Chair, Australian Geography Teachers Association Limited

The continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 again disrupted the activities of AGTA and its members. Although we were fortunate to be able to hold our May Board meeting in Hobart with most Board members attending in person with a couple via Zoom, our activities in the second half of the year were much reduced – most noticeably via the postponement of AGTA's Biennial Conference. Whilst some Affiliates have been able to hold their professional development activities on a face-to-face basis, others have had to move to online formats. Fortunately, Geographers are well experienced at being adaptable and, amongst other things, using geospatial technologies to produce exciting and engaging online activities for both teachers and students.

In 2021, we welcomed some new Directors to the Board due to changes in the various Affiliates. As per our Constitution, Presidents of each member state or territory Affiliate are automatically appointed to the Board. Additionally, each Affiliate has a nominated Board member. Since each Affiliate has slightly different timings for their annual general meetings, Board membership changes throughout the year. The current list of AGTA Directors is maintained on our website. AGTA Executive for 2021 consisted of myself as Chair with Joanne Wegener (SA) as Deputy Chair. Dr Grant Kleeman (NSW) fulfilled the roles of both Treasurer and Immediate Past Chair and Susan Caldis (NSW) again took on the role of Secretary.

### **AGTA's representative work**

AGTA has an important role in representing geography teachers on a range of national committees to ensure that the voice of geography educators in schools is heard. Thank you to the following people who have represented AGTA at meetings involving the following organisations:

Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE): Trish Douglas;  
Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG): Susan Caldis;  
Australian Academy of Science's National Committee of Geography: Dr Grant Kleeman;  
Australian Geography Competition: Julie Davis and Shane Albertson

We also continued to invite a representative of the Institute of Australian Geographers to attend our Board meetings as an observer in order to maintain links with the tertiary sector.

### **Major Board activities in 2021**

The following outlines some of the key actions which have been undertaken this year:

- AGTA has provided vital input to ACARA regarding the review of the Humanities and Social Science (HASS) Australian Curriculum. Trish Douglas, Susan Caldis and Dr Grant Kleeman continued to liaise with Terry Gallagher, Senior Manager, Australian Curriculum Review. When the Draft Curriculum was released in late April, AGTA Affiliates worked to inform their members and develop their own responses to ACARA. In addition, this was a major focus for our May Board meeting, following which AGTA produced detailed feedback for ACARA in response to the draft. Thank you to Dr Grant Kleeman who undertook much of this compilation. The updated version of the F-10 Australian Curriculum, once approved by Ministers, will be made available on the Australian Curriculum website for the start of 2022 and we hope that the recommendations made by AGTA and its members will be considered.
- Considerable progress has been made on the development of the AGTA Geo Careers

website. Aply led by Rowan Harris (TGTA), the aim is to provide a platform for the active promotion of Geography. By informing students, and parents, of potential careers linked to the subject, we hope to encourage more students to further their Geography studies in the post compulsory years. AGTA Board members have approached various organisations in regard to sponsoring this website. We had hoped to launch the website at the AGTA Conference in 2021 but the launch has also been postponed with the change in conference dates.

- In *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future* there is a recommendation for formal recognition, in policy and practice, of Geography as a STEM subject. Susan Caldis and Dr Grant Kleeman are leading the AGTA response to continue to push for this. Susan's role as STEM Ambassador for Geography Education and Grant's position as a member of National Committee for Geography Sciences are key avenues for facilitation here.
- Trish represented AGTA at the Department of Education, Skills and Employment - Schools and Youth Group Forum held in June. The focus for this was on Disability Standards for Education and the Online Formative Assessment Initiative (OFAI).
- AGTA endorsed *A Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Declaration by Geographers in Australia* presented at the IAG/NZGS 2021 Combined Conference. The declaration was launched on 7 July 2021 as part of the keynote address by Susan Caldis entitled *Understanding a climate emergency in and through geography education: What can geography educators declare.*
- In 2019 Grant Kleeman and Susan Caldis wrote a paper for *Geographical Education*, in regard to out-of-field teaching. Subsequently an invitation was extended to Susan to join the Out of Field Teaching Collective (OOFTC) (coordinated as a national project through Deakin University) Associate and led by Professor Linda Hobbs from Deakin University. The National Summit on Teaching Out-of-field to be held online 21-23 October 2021 at which Susan Caldis and Trish Douglas will represent AGTA. As we are well aware, many schools across Australia face this issue where teachers who are not qualified to teach Geography are in fact teaching this subject. The implications of the out-of-field teaching phenomenon for education will be the focus of the presentations and discussions. Some key themes in relation to this include: data needed to inform policy, school management and leadership, initial teacher education, teacher registration and accreditation policies and teacher professional learning. Susan and Trish will provide a report on this event at the next Board meeting.

### **AGTA Resources**

The AGTA series of textbooks, *Geography skills unlocked*, *Geography literacy unlocked* and *Geography fieldwork unlocked*, continue to sell well across Australia. All publications have been reviewed most favourably with pre-service teachers finding them a particularly valuable resource (and available for them at a special package discount price). AGTA remains indebted to Dr Grant Kleeman for all his work in relation to these textbooks. The publication of these resources continues to provide an essential income stream for our organisation.

### **Student Geography competitions/activities**

AGTA continues to be involved in a joint initiative with the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland (RGSQ) in the running of the annual Australian Geography Competition. This competition helps raise the profile of geography both within schools and at a national level. In 2021, the competition was again impacted by COVID-19 but not to the extent of the previous year. Approximately 728 schools participated with around 73 000 students registered.

The top performing students in the competition are usually invited to participate in Geography's Big Week Out (GBWO) which forms the basis of selection for representing Australia in the International Geography Olympiad (iGeo). Due to COVID-19 travel restriction uncertainty, the Big Week Out event, originally scheduled to be hosted by the Geographical Association of Western Australia (GAWA) has been moved to Queensland. GTAQ will host the event 22-26 January. From this group of seventeen students, the top performers will be selected for the 2022 Olympiad. GBWO will be hosted by GTAQ in 2022 with support from GHTANT.

The iGeo event scheduled for Istanbul, Turkey in 2020, took place in August 2021 via an online format. Interstate travel restrictions meant that not all of the four-member Australian team could travel to Darwin for this so they did it remotely. Time differences meant some late hours for the students as all tests had to be conducted at the same time. The students performed very well, each receiving bronze medals in the event.

Thank you to Shane Albertson and Julie Davis from the AGTA Board who have made a significant contribution to the Australian Geography Competition Committee this year to ensure the strengthening of the relationship between AGTA and RGSQ.

In 2022, the Australian Geography Competition will move to an online platform hosted by Education Perfect. This will allow for interactivity and testing of geospatial skills. Such a development will help ensure the relevance of the competition in the current educational context.

### ***Geographical Education***

*Geographical Education* (ISSN 2204-0242) is the professional journal of AGTA and is on the DEST Register of Refereed Journals. The journal was published in print form until Volume 25, 2012. Since then the journal has been published in a digital format and is available on the Association's website.

Contributions of varying length are invited, with a maximum of 5,000 words for major articles and research reports. Shorter articles of 2,000 words, featuring classroom strategies, reflections on particular issues and practices in geography teaching, in-service education workshops, and comments on previous articles are especially welcome.

In 2021, Dr Terri Bourke, assisted by Susan Caldis, continued in the role of Journal Editor and Geoffrey Paterson has continued in the role of Reviews and copy editor. We thank them all for their valuable contributions. Dr Terri Bourke will relinquish the Editor role at the end of the year with Dr Jeana Kriewaldt of the University of Melbourne (and former AGTA Chair), taking on this position for 2022.

### ***Geographia***

AGTA's newsletter *Geographia* is used to update the broader membership on the activities of AGTA and its state and territory-based Affiliates. This vital role was filled this year by Steve Hawking (GHTANT). His work in producing this important document is much appreciated.

**Website**

Once again, huge appreciation to Rob Berry for his continued excellent management of this vital form of communication for our organisation.

**AGTA Conference 2021 Postponed to 2022**

The AGTA Conference was to be hosted by the Tasmanian Geography Teachers Association in Hobart 29 September to 1 October 2021 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Unfortunately, due to the impact of COVID-19 travel restrictions, the difficult decision was made to postpone this conference to the following year. It will now be held 28 to 30 September 2022 at the same venue. Thank you to Karen Caporelli and Debbie Claridge, ably supported by Dr Greg Calvert, who have put so much time into organising such an exciting program. We look forward to being able to participate in this event next year and encourage members of all Affiliates to attend.

**Thank you**

On behalf of the Board, thank you to those involved in AGTA's operation over the past year. Particular thanks to fellow AGTA Executive members and everyone on the Board for their work in yet another challenging year.

After five years in the role of AGTA Chair, I will be stepping down from this position at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting but hope to continue my involvement in the organisation. I wish the incoming incumbent every success. No matter who takes on this mantle, I am confident AGTA will continue to make a positive contribution to geographical education in Australia.

Trish Douglas

AGTA Chair, 2021