

October 2013 AGM Report

*Malcolm McInerney
AGTA Limited, Chair of Directors*

Putting together the National jigsaw for geography

AGTA's work in 2013 has continued to be focused on the development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography through the work of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the creation of on-line resources with Education Services Australia (ESA) to support the implementation of the new curriculum. Both of these developments are critical for the future growth of geography in our schools and certainly warrants the energy and financial commitment AGTA has made to the process.

This year has been one of significant milestones for AGTA, with the F-10 Australian Curriculum: Geography being published on 20 May 2013 and on 5 August 2013 the senior years going live on the ACARA site. This completed the curriculum development stage of the process and meant that we now have an F-12 Australian geography curriculum finally available for jurisdictions and schools around Australia to implement. AGTA was also very pleased to publish on-line the GeogSpace resource on 30 May 2013. GeogSpace has developed the resource with funding from ESA to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography. Whilst this work has created an increased workload and investment from AGTA and its officers, this report will show that AGTA continues to put together the 'National Geography Jigsaw' to promote geographical education in Australia. Our work in the second half of 2013 and beyond is a critical piece of the Australian geography jigsaw as AGTA commences to implement the new geography curriculum in collaboration with geography teachers associations and jurisdictions around Australia.

AGTA PUTTING THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY JIGSAW TOGETHER



In this report I will briefly report on the key AGTA initiatives and happenings to provide an appreciation of why AGTA exists and how it is advancing the teaching of geography in Australia.

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 are heard. Such roles are increasingly important in terms of the national focus and the national curriculum developments.

Portfolios for the purpose of representation were allocated as follows:

Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and the Environment: Rob Berry

Institute of Australian Geographers: Grant Kleeman

Australian Academy of Science's National Committee of Geography: Grant Kleeman

National Education Forum: Malcolm McInerney (Executive member of the NEF)

National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition: Lerece Roberts

Spatial Education Advisory Committee: Malcolm McInerney

AGTA is considered an important member of these groups and as one of the associations with a 'Big picture' view of the need for representation via national umbrella organisations. AGTA has always been prepared to invest in members of its board being represented at national meetings and to participate in national association initiatives. This attitude and perception of AGTA is especially important in terms of the new initiative by the National Education Forum (NEF) of creating the Australia Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE) to represent all National teacher associations. At the NEF meeting in May 2013 the proposed structure for this body was passed and the new entity will be established at the November 2013 NEF meeting. It is envisaged that this new entity will give national associations, such as AGTA, a national voice of significance in cahoots with the other national associations when issues of national education are discussed. Associations want to be involved in the development of education policy impacting on learning areas and teachers, not just in consultation after policy has been drafted.

AGTA 2013 Geography Going National Conference in Perth

The AGTA 2013 conference was successfully held in Perth from January 7-10th, 2013. The conference, held at Perth College was convened by the Geography Association of Western Australia (GAWA). The convener for the conference, the highly competent and enthusiastic GAWA President, Darryl Mitchie developed a great program with plenty of field trips and classroom relevant workshops.

For many reasons this was an exciting and enjoyable time for the geographers attending. Professors David Lambert and Simon Catling from the United Kingdom and Professors Peter Newman and Lyn Beasley from Australia presented outstanding keynote addresses and certainly stimulated the thinking of those attending. The videos and PowerPoint's of their presentations can be accessed on the AGTA site at

http://www.agta.asn.au/Conferences/conf2013/presentations/presentations_2013.php

The response to the conference via the evaluations was very positive and I would like to thank Darryl and his GAWA colleagues for putting together a wonderful conference and experience for the 200+ geographers attending.

AGTA 2015 in New Zealand

After much discussion the AGTA 2015 conference is to be held in Rotorua, New Zealand. The *Group Events* tour operator company has been engaged to organise the AGTA 2015 conference

with all aspects overseen by the conference convener, Nick Hutchinson and treasurer, Rob Berry. AGTA sees this as a great opportunity to connect with New Zealand geographers whilst providing a fantastic venue for conducting some outstanding human and physical geography during the conference. Planning is already underway and details of AGTA 2015 can be found on the Group Events website at

<http://www.groupevents.com.au/index.php/destinations/conferences/agta-conference-2015>

AITSL Exemplar Project

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) contracted AGTA in June 2011 to develop annotated illustrations of practice (exemplars) to support the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Rob Berry and Roger Smith developed four exemplars of good practice (three static and one dynamic) in geography teaching for the AITSL site. The exemplars are now published on the AITSL site at <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/>. AGTA thanks Rob and Roger for their very professional work on this project.

GeogSpace launched

In March 2012 Education Services Australia (ESA) contracted AGTA to develop on-line resources to support the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography. After some planning sessions on the project at the May AGTA Board meeting, the project was named GeogSpace.

The Project Management Plan for GeogSpace states that:

GeogSpace is a national initiative for the improvement of primary and secondary Geography education. The project focuses on increasing the amount of inquiry-based learning undertaken by students and a commensurate reduction in the reliance on didactic pedagogies. AGTA considers that the development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography provides a unique opportunity to enhance the quality and status of geographical education in Australia. AGTA considers that curriculum implementation is as critical, if not more important, than the framing and development of the curriculum and that considerable support is required to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and capacity to deliver the curriculum to students. This concern is further heightened by the fact that we have a paucity of Geography-trained teachers in schools around Australia. It is also important to note that the proposed site will be a valuable resource for pre-service teachers and teacher educators.

The GeogSpace project aimed to:

- provide an online learning model for teachers to access
- create a framework to support teachers teaching Australian Curriculum: Geography
- develop the knowledge, skills and pedagogical capacity of teachers to teach geography
- be supportive of the non-geographically trained, as well as the trained geographer teacher
- cater for primary and secondary school implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography
- integrate ICT's relevant to the teaching of geography throughout the curriculum
- include exemplars from F-10 directly linked into the content and skills of the Australian Curriculum: Geography
- employ geographical inquiry and geographical thinking approaches throughout
- be resource rich, providing teachers with access to a range of quality geographical teaching resources available around the world.

A team of AGTA GeogSpace writers and editors developed Curriculum Core and Curriculum Support units which include resource links, classroom activities and pedagogical advice for teachers.

There was great excitement when the GeogSpace stand-alone website went live ten days after the publication of the curriculum on 30 May 2013. AGTA is confident that the GeogSpace website will provide high quality support to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography.

Already the site at <http://www.geogspace.edu.au/> is getting plaudits from those around Australia and beyond.

“This is all an amazing achievement.” Professor David Lambert (former GA CEO)

Congratulations to all those who managed, edited and wrote for the GeogSpace project. AGTA looks forward to add to the resource in coming years to ensure that GeogSpace continues to play an important role in the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography.

GeogSpace implementation initiative

The May AGTA Board meeting approved funds to develop an implementation strategy for the GeogSpace site. AGTA considers it is not enough to just have the GeogSpace site on-line, there is a need to be pro-active in its promotion and use. To this end AGTA has developed GeogSpace advertising materials and a professional learning model for the resource. In the second half of 2013 AGTA is conducting ‘train the trainer’ workshops with the GTA’s in each state, designed to provide a model of professional learning using GeogSpace. Such professional learning activity is the focus of AGTA’s work over coming years so that we penetrate and have traction with the many ‘non- geography’ teachers around Australia who will be required to deliver the new geography curriculum. This is indeed a daunting task for AGTA but one I am sure will be met with the same professional enthusiasm that has been employed by AGTA members whilst developing the Australian Curriculum: Geography and creating the GeogSpace resource.

Student Geography competitions/activities

For many years AGTA has been involved in conducting in liaison with the RGSQ and GTAQ a range of geographical competitions and activities. These initiatives are extremely important in raising the profile of geography in the community.

The Australian Geography Competition is a joint initiative of AGTA and the RGSQ. This competition continues to grow and be a great success in promoting geography in schools around Australia (<http://www.geographycompetition.org.au/>). In 2012, over 80 000 students again participated in the competition Australia wide. The U16 Final was held on the 18 June 2012 at the Foxtel Studios, Sydney. Congratulations to all the students who participated in this major Australian-wide event.

The 2012 International Geography Olympiad was held in Cologne, Germany, from 21 to 28 August. The team comprised: Anthony Chen from Radford College in Canberra, Sarah Godman from Cootamundra High School, Sarah Naco from Canberra Girls’ Grammar School, and Kate Parrott from Hobart College.

The 2012 Geography's Big Week Out was held on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria. The participating students won their places through outstanding performances in the National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition. Thanks to Pat Beeson and the GTAV team (and as always Kath Berg and Margaret McIvor) for their great work with this outstanding and important student focused initiative. Go to <http://www.geographycompetition.org.au/geography%E2%80%99s-big-week-out> for more information on this event.

The **2013 Geography's Big Week Out** will be held from 29th September to 4th October 2013, at the Northern Beaches of Sydney. They will be looking at Catchment Management in the Northern Beaches and urban development in the study area of Northern Sydney beachers.

I would like to thank again Kath Berg (RGSQ) and the dedicated geographical educators from the GTAQ, GTAV and GTANSW for all their hard work on these geographical initiatives aimed at promoting geography across Australia. .

Geocareers Website

One of AGTA's important promotional activities is the Geocareers website at www.geocareers.net.au. The site, developed by Rob Berry is proving to be an outstanding resource for educators and students, linking our discipline with potential careers. At present the major sections include Meet a Geographer, Studying Geography, Using Geography and Resources.

This report shows

The world of geography in Australian schools continues to be a dynamic and exciting one for teachers and students. AGTA's capacity to deliver continues to be tested by the challenges of promoting the 'brand' of geography in the new National Education Agenda and putting together the jigsaw for the implementation of a National Curriculum for Geography. AGTA continues to meet these challenges with confidence and continues to be seen by others in the education community as an association of high standards and professionalism. Such a reputation is only possible through the support and hard work of all Directors on the AGTA Board and teacher members of affiliates.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the AGTA Board and all those involved in geography for their work over the past five years that I have been AGTA Chair. It has been a huge privilege to be involved in the work of AGTA and to have the opportunity to lead AGTA through this very exciting time for geography in Australian schools. I would also like to thank the AGTA Executive of Rob Berry (Treasurer), Rebecca Nicholas (Secretary) and Grant Kleeman (Deputy Chair) for all their support and hard work over the past five years. I would like to think that I finish my role as AGTA Chair with AGTA in a prime position to take advantage of the fact that we now have the curriculum and resources to ensure that geography grows in Australian schools over coming years. I look forward to a positive future for geographical education in our schools.