



**2022 - 2023 Annual Report
of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)**

**Presented at the AGTA Annual General Meeting
by Dr Susan Caldis, AGTA Chair
22 October 2023**

As Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA), it is my pleasure to present the 2023 Annual Report. I write the report from the lands of the Cammeraygal People, whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this land from time immemorial. I extend my respect to Elders past and present and acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as enduring traditional custodians of the unceded land and waterways upon which we gather and meet. Throughout 2023, the AGTA Board have met in person on Whoodjak Boondja Country on 20 and 21 May; also in Naam, Wurundjuri Country on 21 - 22 October. We acknowledge the many Countries from which we come together, and from those upon which we reside, work, enjoy our leisure activities, and notice the features of place and time.

Whilst the 2023 Annual Report is a requirement of AGTA operation, it is also an important mechanism to formally share and reflect on key items of influence and interest for geography education across Australia.

The Annual Report addresses key activities and items of particular interest for geography education in 2023 and offers insights into AGTA initiatives for the year ahead.

1. AGTA Board

There was no change to the Executive for 2022 – 2023 and there were some changes to the Board overall. I extend my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to each member of the Board for their time and continued support in progressing the work of the Association. I extend my thanks also, for your willingness to share considered advice:

During 2022 – 2023, the Executive were: Dr Susan Caldis (GTANSW&ACT, Chair), Simon Miller (GTASA, Vice Chair), Shane Albertson (GTAQ, Secretary), Dr Grant Kleeman (GTANSW&ACT, Treasurer) and Trish Douglas (GTAV, Immediate Past Chair).

During 2022 – 2023:

- There was no change in representation from three affiliates: GTASA, GTAV and TGTA. Simon Miller is the Director and Fiona Greig is Nominated Director for GTASA. From GTAV, Peta Turner remains as Director and Trish Douglas remains as Nominated Director. Caryn Shield remains as Director for TGTA and Karen Caporelli remains as Nominated Director.
- There was a slight change in representation from four affiliates: GAWA, GHTANT, GTANSW&ACT and GTAQ. For GAWA, Leo Conti moved from Director to Nominated Director, and in response to the departure of Anna Griffin, Peggy Bakalis joined the Board as Director. From GHTANT, Steve Hawkins remains as Director and Caleb Mattiske joined as Nominated Director. For GTANSW&ACT, Katerina Stojanovski joined the Board as Director, Dr Grant Kleeman remained as Nominated Director and Michael Da Roza continued as a non-voting representative for the ACT. The implication was Dr Susan Caldis was co-opted as Chair at the May 2023 meeting.
- For GTAQ, the personnel remained the same, but the roles swapped; Shane Albertson became Director and Julie Davis became Nominated Director.

Further information about additional roles and responsibilities of AGTA Board members is available on the Association website <https://agta.au/agta-board/>

The remainder of the Annual Report covers core business items, and other items of note for AGTA during 2023: Website development; Planning for AGTA Biennial Conference in 2024; Geographical Education, journal of AGTA; Australian Curriculum: Geography; Australian Geography Competition, Big Week Out and Olympiad; Progressing recommendations of Geography: Shaping Australia's Future; Co-design Research Project.

Whilst the chosen items are not an exhaustive list of Association items, they have been instrumental to national dialogue and action about geography education during 2023.

2. Website development

AGTA recently invested in the development of a Geo-Careers focused website and in the re- development of the Association website. AGTA commissioned Red Jelly to lead the website design and development for both projects.

The 'Go with Geo' website <https://www.gowithgeo.com.au/> was launched at the AGTA Conference in Tasmania during October 2022. The refreshed AGTA website <https://agta.au/> was completed in May 2023.

The AGTA Board would like to extend their sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr Grant Kleeman for leading the website design, development and redevelopment projects from conception to publication, and for the time spent in regular liaison with Red Jelly. The AGTA Board would also like to respectfully farewell and extend their gratitude to Rob Berry who held the role of website manager for over a decade. As part of website management, Steve Hawkins and Simon Miller have agreed to liaise with Red Jelly and manage website updates; thank you for your time and input with this important work to maintain an engaging web presence for the Association.

3. Planning for the 2024 AGTA Conference 2024 (Biennial)

The biennial AGTA Conference will be held in Darwin between 2 - 4 October 2024. The theme is 'A sense of place' <https://agta24.au/> The conference convening team are formed from a collaborative effort between GHTANT and GTASA. The program and venue

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decisions are still under development, however, expressions of interest for workshop presentations have opened. There are ongoing discussions about fieldwork opportunities to be undertaken with traditional custodians at the Tiwi Islands and Kakadu National Park. The leadership team from GHTANT have a close relationship with Larrakia and Yolngu Elders; discussions are underway to determine the most appropriate and meaningful ways to develop and maintain presence during the conference.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Conference convening team led by Steven Hawkins, Caleb Mattiske, and Julie Hearnden, also to the GHTANT Committee for embracing the work of AGTA.

4. Geographical Education, journal of AGTA

The 2022 edition of the journal, *Geographical Education* volume 35, was published in January 2023. The journal theme was 'Perspectives on Teaching, Curriculum and Geospatial Technologies in School Geography' and four papers were included. A synopsis of the papers are below:

- Alaric Maude's article 'A critique of version 9 of the Australian Curriculum: Geography for primary schools' recognises the importance of the curriculum in providing teachers with a conceptually-coherent guide to what to teach. He rightly contends that primary school geography has the potential to make significant contributions to the education of young people.
- Mick Law's article 'Positioning geospatial' explores how the use of geospatial technologies (GSTs) in schools connects to pedagogical knowledge. GSTs have been shown to have numerous benefits for students to promote spatial thinking, help students understand geographical content, enhance geographic inquiry, and increase student engagement. However, more research is needed to fully understand the connection between spatial thinking and GSTs, how students use GSTs, how teachers teach with them, and how they can be best implemented in the classroom.
- Susan Caldis, Michael Cavanagh and Mary Ryan's paper 'Know the subject and how to teach it: Using the GEOGStandards to develop pedagogical practice amongst pre-service teachers on professional experience' reports on a study that provides evidence that incorporating theory-practice reflection, based on the GEOGStandards, into initial teacher education can

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significantly enhance the development of pedagogical practice amongst pre-service geography teachers. By actively and purposely incorporating these standards into reflective discussions and unit design, teacher education programs can better support pre-service teachers in developing their capacity to teach geography effectively.

- Jeana Kriewaldt and Shu-Jun Lee's paper 'Tracking the extent of out of field teaching in geography' The final article offers national data on outof-field teaching, which remains a significant issue in Australian geography classrooms and raises questions about the effects of its prevalence. This practice involves assigning teachers to teach subjects outside their area of expertise, is potentially harmful to student learning and risks driving teachers away from the profession. In order to address this issue, the authors recommend a concerted effort to educate and recruit in-field teachers who have studied a subject for at least one semester at the tertiary level and received subject-specific teaching instruction.

The 2023 edition is on track for publication in December. The theme is 'Agile Geographer' based on the AGTA 2022 Conference. Three papers have been accepted to date. Due to there being a large number of new initiatives for journals which often offer faster reviews and on acceptance for online publication, an avenue of exploration for Geographical Education is to offer 'early-view' or online first publication of articles on the AGTA website. This practice is increasingly common in academic journals to enhance visibility and potential impact.

I would like to extend thanks and appreciation to Associate Professor Jeana Kriewaldt as editor of the journal for time and input in seeking papers, reviewers and exploring options to increase journal impact. Thanks and appreciation is also extended to Geoff Paterson for coordinating the Book Reviews.

5. Australian Curriculum: Geography v9

The Australian Curriculum: Geography v9 is a product of a recent national Curriculum Review. Whilst the Australian Curriculum document is adopted and adapted in states such as NSW and Victoria, the curriculum document is used in existing forms in states and territories such as ACT, SA and TAS. The AGTA Board, the Institute of Australian Geographers and highly regarded academics from the discipline of geography have noted

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and expressed concern to ACARA and Ministers of Education about inaccuracies within revised curriculum content. Members of the AGTA Board based in South Australia have also been working with Royal Geographical Society of South Australia to promote awareness about the importance of a rigorous Australian Curriculum document. The AGTA Board will be continuing to work with IAG and academics to agitate with Ministers of Education and have been working together closely to advocate for a quality curriculum.

6. Geography's Big Week Out and Olympiad

The Australian Geography Competition is held online during May and mostly consists of multiple-choice questions which are designed to assess a range of geographical knowledge and skills. Each participant receives their result and a certificate of participation. Assessment of responses are based on year levels. All schools are encouraged to participate as a means of assessing the geographic knowledge and capabilities of their students, with the added possibility of having students sent across Australia for Geography's Big Week Out and internationally for the Olympiad. The 2023 Geography's Big Week Out (GBWO) was held from 25th – 29th September in Darwin and Litchfield National Park, coordinated by GHTANT team, Steve Hawkins, Caleb Mattiske and past AGTA Board member, Julie Hearnden. Seventeen students from Year 11 students across Australia were invited to participate, based on their outstanding performances in the Australian Geography Competition.

The GBWO program is a mix of stimulating and hands-on geography activities, focusing on fieldwork and an application of geographic knowledge. The GBWO is designed to challenge and extend high-performing senior students, whilst also providing them with a week of engaging and enjoyable activities with like-minded individuals who share a passion and enthusiasm for Geography.

In 2024 and 2025, GTANSW&ACT will be hosting GBWO. The purpose of GBWO is to select four finalists to represent Australia in the Olympiad during the following year. In 2024, the Olympiad will be held in Dublin, Ireland, as competitors for Australia an annual competition for 16 to 19-year-old geography students from all over the world.

During GBWO in 2023, students spent two days undertaking fieldwork in Litchfield National Park, investigating whether this area was being managed sustainably as a tourist attraction while still maintaining the values of a national park. Investigation methodologies included surveying tourists, interviewing park rangers, tallies and mapping of tourism infrastructure, as well as some primary research in how effective the swimming holes are at cooling down individuals on 37° days!. Students were also offered the opportunity to participate in tourism activities in Darwin, visiting the Darwin Waterfront Precinct, museum and art gallery, and Darwin's famous deckchair cinema. Here, they were lucky enough to view Tim Flannery's new documentary 'Climate Changers' which set the tone for an environmentally conscious fieldwork topic. Students worked in groups throughout the week to collect their data, before collectively bringing all data together to form a holistic understanding of tourism and sustainable practices in National Park. On the final day, students were assessed on the sustainability of the park in the style of the International Geography Olympiad. The results of which were used to determine the team representing Australia at the 2024 International Geography Olympiad

Further information about the Australian Geography Competition and GBWO can be found at: <https://geographycompetition.org.au/> .

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation for the time and input to GBWO from Steve Hawkins, Caleb Mattiske, Julie Hearnden from GHTANT, also for the incoming GBWO team from GTANSW&ACT Michael Da Roza, James Harte and Alex Pentz, with support from Rebecca Sutcliffe and Katerina Stojanovski.

7. Co-design research project

Discussions are underway about developing a co-designed research project to explore the complexities of geography education across Australia. We hope participants from initial teacher education, primary education and secondary education contexts will join the study so that a national profile can be developed about the enablers and constraints to practice and the relevance of geography education within and beyond the classroom. The GEOGStandards will form an important foundation for assessing and understanding practice.

8. Progression on recommendations from *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*

The AGTA Board continue to work steadily on recommendations from Chapter 13 of *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*.

- Recognition of geography as a STEM subject: After a national focus on this recommendation which was also emphasised and encouraged through a STEM Ambassador appointment (2020, 2021), this recommendation is now becoming the domain of affiliate responsibility - typically in professional learning programs. AGTA sees affiliate responsibility as a natural progression after having co-ordinated a series of nationally focused dialogue and awareness raising activities through the development of background reports (Caldis & Kleeman, 2019; 2021), conduct of online symposiums and in-person conference plenary sessions, responses to curriculum consultations, and publication in 2021 of a Geography-STEM focused issue of *Geographical Education*

<https://agta.au/geographiceducation/geographical-education-34/>

- Out of field teaching (or teaching beyond specialisation): This recommendation sits predominantly in the domain of affiliate responsibility, again, typically in professional learning programs. By

drawing on key messages from

- (i) background reports (Caldis & Kleeman, 2019 <https://agta.au/geographiceducation/geographical-education-32/>; and Hobbs et al., 2022 <https://oofas-collective.org/toofsummit/>);
- (ii) outcomes from research about transition into the teaching profession (Caldis, 2022); and
- (iii) (a recent survey by Kriewaldt & Lee (2022 <https://agta.au/geographiceducation/geographical-education-35/>) there are discussions are underway for a bringing a national voice and action to out of field teaching in geography. Discussion focuses on the conduct of ethics-approved research for school-university- professional association partnerships via, for example, online symposiums and in-person conference plenary sessions, to

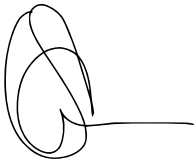
culminate in a national mentoring program for those who teach geography out of field.

- Collaboration with academic geographers: This recommendation is gaining a lot of traction within affiliates and remains important at the national scale. Locally, each affiliate has built a meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship with either an academic society (e.g. RGSQ – GTAQ; GSNSW – GTANSW&ACT; RGSSA – GTASA; GV – GTAV) or with a geography department at a local university (e.g. GAWA – Curtin University and UWA; TGTA – UTAS). Co- badged professional learning events and co-opted members of the relevant Boards as appropriate are the most common initiatives. The GeoNight format developed by GAWA-Curtin University is an exemplar model the affiliates are hoping to adapt and adopt in their own context. An upcoming GTASA and University of Adelaide night for Year 12 students is another model for affiliates to incorporate into their program if not done so already. Nationally, the relationship between AGTA and IAG remains positive and productive. For example, discussion about and co-construction of letters to Ministers about the Australian Curriculum: Geography are ongoing and also include input from Associate Professor Alaric Maude; the co- badged webinar for the IAG-Wiley series: Geography Education – Flourish or Flounder was well received; invitations to attend each other’s key meetings are long-standing and actioned where possible; academics are invited as keynote speakers, to hold workshops and run fieldwork sessions at AGTA conferences and affiliate centred professional learning; a geography education focused conference session now has clear presence in the IAG conferences after having three consecutive years of acceptance and papers being presented.
- Improve the quality of teacher training in geography: Whilst this occurs more generally through advocacy, it requires a focused approach and is part of our future work. Ideally, the AGTA Board would like to explore research opportunities to validate the Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of Geography (GEOGStandards). <https://agta.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/geogstandards.pdf> and if possible, also for the Academic Standards for Geography [http://disciplinestandards.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/52684122/altc_standards GEOGRAPHY_080211_v2.pdf](http://disciplinestandards.pbworks.com/w/file/attach/52684122/altc_standards_GEOGRAPHY_080211_v2.pdf)

I hope you enjoyed reading through and reflecting on the work of AGTA during 2023. As a Board we do important work in connecting state and territory understanding to national plans for action, and we will continue to do so. I would like to extend my appreciation to each Board member and associated representative for the role they play in shaping the future of geography education in Australia.

In particular, I would like to thank Simon Miller (Vice Chair), Shane Albertson (Secretary), Dr Grant Kleeman (Treasurer) and Trish Douglas (Immediate Past Chair) who are an exceptional Executive team, full of wisdom, energy, ideas and unwavering support.

AGTA has a lot to look forward to in 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Caldis', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Dr Susan Caldis,
Chair of AGTA October 2023**