



**2023 - 2024 Annual Report
of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)**

Presented at the AGTA Annual General Meeting

by Dr Susan Caldis, AGTA Chair

Wednesday 2 October 2024

In Darwin, as part of 2024 AGTA Conference proceedings

As Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA), I wrote the report from lands of the Cammeraygal People, and am delighted to present the 2024 Annual Report on lands and waterways of the Larakia People as part of the 2024 AGTA Conference proceedings. I extend my respect to Elders past and present and acknowledge enduring nurturing and custodianship of unceded lands and waterways upon which we gather and meet. I also extend my respect and to all Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander Peoples and other First Nations Peoples who are joining us at the AGTA Conference and crossing our paths throughout. Thank you to all conference delegates for joining the AGTA Board in this additional conference session, and for your interest in and engagement with our work.

Throughout 2024, the AGTA Board have met in person on lands of the Gadigal People on 18 - 19 May 2024 also on Larakia Country on 2 and 5 October 2024. Throughout 2024 we have also met on multiple occasions via email. 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 interconnected, changing features of place and environment across scale and over time.

Whilst the 2024 Annual Report is a requirement of AGTA operation, it also serves as 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 items of particular interest for geography education in 2024 and offers insights into AGTA initiatives for the year ahead.

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As a Board we are cognisant of challenging facing various affiliates – it is not one size fits all but there are commonalities of experience across our contexts. During 2023 – 2024 solutions focused discussion revolves around how best to support out-of-field teachers of geography, how to increase viability of professional learning offered by each affiliate, and how to envision resource development opportunities suitable for the national scope of work in the first instance, and then be adapted for affiliate uptake.

Several affiliates raised concerns about the viability of offering professional learning (online and/or in person) due to declining member retention, registration for the event but non-attendance, reduced timing options (schools reluctant to release teachers during the school day due to teacher shortage; weekends and after school hours are not always achievable from affiliate capacity), out-of-field teachers who may not 'see themselves' in the professional learning offering. Early actions include:

- (i) national circulation and promotion of individual affiliate events; opening affiliate events to interstate attendees (explicitly, has mostly been implicit);
- (ii) offering member-prices to interstate attendees if they are members of their state/territory affiliate;
- (iii) a request for affiliate websites to be reviewed for explicit inclusion in the front-text / landing page, and professional learning events for visibility of out-of-field teachers / those teaching beyond specialisation / those new to teaching geography

The report first addresses changes or otherwise to the AGTA Board for 2023 – 2024 compared to the previous year. The remainder of the Annual Report covers items of note for AGTA during 2024: GeoNight; Consultation around the *Australian Curriculum: Geography, Senior Secondary*; Initiatives for resource development; Geographical Education, journal of AGTA; Engagement with the Institute of Australian Geographers; the 2024 AGTA Biennial Conference in Darwin; Australian Geography Competition, Olympiad and Geography's Big Week Out; Refinement to the Don Biddle Award; and Progressing recommendations of *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*.

Whilst the items identified above, and elaborated on below, are not an exhaustive list of Association items, they have been instrumental for AGTA being able to have a continuous and impactful presence in national dialogue and action about geography education during 2024.

1. AGTA Board

There was no change to the Executive for 2023 – 2024, from 2022 - 2023 and Dr Susan Caldis (GTANSW&ACT) remained co-opted as Chair of the Association. I extend my thanks also to the Executive, for willingness to share considered advice: Simon Miller (GTASA, Vice Chair), Shane Albertson (GTAQ, Secretary), Dr Grant Kleeman (GTANSW&ACT, Treasurer) and Trish Douglas (GTAV, Immediate Past Chair).

I extend also 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. There were some changes to the Board for 2023 – 2024 from 2022 – 2023.

- From GTASA, Fiona Greig departed the AGTA Board, Simon Miller remained, and April Bickley was welcomed to the AGTA Board
- From GHTANT, Caleb Mattieske departed the AGTA Board, Steven Hawkins remained, and Yulia Snoxall was welcomed to the AGTA Board
- From GAWA, Peggy Bakalis and Leo Conti remained on the AGTA Board
- From GTAQ, Shane Albertson and Julie Davis remained on the AGTA Board
- From GTANSW&ACT, Katerina Stojanovski and Dr Grant Kleeman remained on the AGTA Board; Michael da Roza remained as a non-voting representative from ACT
- From GTAV, Trish Douglas and Peta Turner remained on the AGTA Board
- From TGTA, Caryn Shield and Karen Caporelli remained on the AGTA Board

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

2. GeoNight

'Around the world in 60 minutes' was the first ever GeoNight event to be hosted by AGTA. The event was held on 12 April 2024 via zoom between 7.30pm – 8.30pm AEDT. The event comprised of three lightning talks which included opportunities for audience interaction through questions posed in the chat facility and in verbal discussion. The speakers were Associate Professor Alaric Maude (Australia), Dr Emma Rawling Smith (England) and Dr Susan Pike (Ireland). The lightning talks focused on two recently published books: *Thinking Geographically: A guide to the core concepts for teachers* (Maude) and *Encountering ideas of place in education* (Rawling Smith & Pike) which showcased how to use and apply the concepts to think geographically, and how to engage with and implement place-based education.

The event had three objectives to: (i) To foster international connections between geography educators in school-based and initial teacher education settings; (ii) To demonstrate the relevance and importance of geography's distinctiveness; (iii) To promote recent publications in geography education.

There were 30 attendees who joined GeoNight from Australia, United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany, New Zealand. Attendees were all connected to geography education in secondary school settings or initial teacher education from across career stages from pre-service through to experienced and retired. The AGTA Board would like to thank members of the GeoNight organising team for joining our event.

Book synopsis for *Thinking geographically: A guide to the core concepts for teachers*: This book is about how to use geography's core concepts to teach young people to think geographically, deeply and ethically. Thinking geographically is about the ways that geographers perceive the world and the questions they ask, and how these can teach students new ways of thinking. It is based on the key concepts of place, space, environment and interconnection. Thinking deeply is about the ability to understand and explain, and to use that knowledge to comprehend the present and think into the future. It is based on the same four concepts, with the addition of the analytical ones of scale and time. Thinking ethically is about critically evaluating environmental and social situations and trends, and to think about alternatives. It is based on the evaluative concepts of sustainability and human wellbeing.

Book synopsis for *Encountering Ideas of Place in Education*: Place is central to all our lives. It is not only a meaningful location, but also a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world in which we live. In this lightning talk, Emma and Susan will introduce their collaborative book project *Encountering Ideas of Place in Education* and outline why it is important for children and young people to have opportunities for engaging with and extending their situational knowledge through experiential place-based learning. Emma and Susan will then share some of the many place-based pedagogies included in their book that provide children and young people the opportunity to learn in and through place and take them beyond their everyday thinking.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the AGTA Board for their support of this new initiative and thank them for their attendance in the zoom audience during GeoNight.

3. AGTA response to the ACARA review of Senior Secondary: Geography:

ACARA invited two AGTA representatives to be part of the ACARA Senior Secondary forum for revisions to the *Australian Curriculum Senior Secondary: Geography*. Julie Davis (GTAQ) and A/Prof Jeana Kriewaldt (editor for Geographical Education, journal of AGTA) are the AGTA representatives, noting that Dr Susan Caldis and A/Prof Alaric Maude are the representatives for the Institute of Australian Geographers at their request. Currently, feedback has been invited only around the front-matter documents related to curriculum structure and the rationale. Feedback provided from AGTA to ACARA includes strong support for the retention of 'curiosity and wonder' in the Rationale as something that resonates strongly with teachers; early identification of the underpinning concepts and identification of such throughout the front-matter and upcoming curriculum content; explicit inclusion of concepts, inquiry and fieldwork, geographical tools or skills in the Aims of the curriculum as being representative of the distinctive core of geography's content and practice; emphasis on environmental, economic and social aspects of geography

On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Julie Davis and Associate Professor Jeana Kriewaldt for taking on the AGTA representative role in the Senior Secondary Forum. Further, I would also like to offer heartfelt thanks to the AGTA Board for understanding the confidential nature of discussion and materials related to our involvement in this consultation activity. Finally, I would like to emphasise that AGTA also contributes to the national education space more broadly, through representation on the Board of the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education, and through active participation in their Forums. For this, on behalf of the Board, let me extend thanks to Trish Douglas for several years of AGTA representation on the AAAE Board and active contribution to each Forum.

4. Initiatives for resource development

The AGTA Board are pursuing two initiatives for resource development. Both Nick Hutchinson (a Past AGTA Chair and Don Biddle Award recipient), and Associate Professor Alaric Maude (a long-term friend of the AGTA Board and Don Biddle Award recipient), approached the AGTA Board and joined us at our May meeting about developing teacher-ready professional learning resources, and classroom-ready units of work for students to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum v9.

For the resources under development by A/Prof Alaric Maude, he is crafting as lead author and seeking input and refinement through a co-design process with members of the AGTA

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Board. Working titles for the package include 'Curriculum Insights' or 'Unpacking the Australian Curriculum: Geography'. Currently, the AGTA Board are reviewing and providing input into *Water in the World*. We are anticipating a late 2025, early 2026 publication.

Nick Hutchinson provided a professional learning session to the Board about research, theory and practice around decolonising classroom practice in geography. Ideas were discussed about (i) developing a resource around Human Wellbeing suitable for national uptake and state/territory adaptation where appropriate, to highlight inclusive and decolonised content delivery and pedagogical practice (ii) decolonising practice as a future direction to be led by AGTA, drawing on key research from and learnings gained from the work of GAUK, AAG and IAG. Nick has written a paper for the 2024 edition of *Geographical Education* based on the professional learning session he presented to the AGTA Board.

On behalf of the Board I would like to thank Nick Hutchinson and Alaric Maude, for continuing to take an interest in the work of AGTA and for coming to us each with an actionable, thought-provoking proposal.

5. Geographical Education, journal of AGTA

Geographical Education is a double-anonymized review publication and published articles are available open access from EBSCO, a range of other databases and directly from the AGTA website. The journal is listed in Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) 2022 by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

The submission details are usually no more than 5000 words, and the requirements are outlined in more detail on the inside cover of the journal and the AGTA website. Past copies of the journal are at

<https://www.agta.asn.au/Resources/GeographicalEducation/index.php>.

Each paper will be available for free download from the AGTA website.

The 37th edition of *Geographical Education* is progressing steadily. The 2024 edition is estimated to be 55 pages. It will contain one editorial, four articles, and approx. 11 book reviews.

The theme for *Geographical Education 2024* is 'Navigating the Present, Shaping the Future'. I have received four research articles for this edition, which are being reviewed. One article will be published soon, which was presented at the May 2024 AGTA Board meeting. The

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article is titled 'Race and Racism in Australia: White Settler Colonisers That "Have Come to Stay," Multicultural Immigrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: A Three-Part Essay', by Nick Hutchinson

Further article submissions are welcomed especially from those who are researching in the geographical education space. Submissions including shorter articles of 2000 words, featuring classroom strategies, reflections on particular issues and practices in geography teaching, in-service education workshops and comments on previously published articles are also welcomed.

At the time of writing, the titles of other articles received cannot be listed here until the peer review process is complete.

The endorsed initiative from 2023, to publish in 'early view' is being actioned in 2024. After acceptance of the final manuscript, the article will be published first online, enabling researchers to share their works more quickly. This streamlined publishing processes allow researchers to share their insights rapidly.

Book review update – Geoff Patterson

- Eleven books were posted to reviewers.
- Six reviews have been received and remainder are promised.

On behalf of the Board, 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. I also extend thanks and appreciation to Geoff Paterson for his editing expertise and coordination of Book Reviews.

6. Engagement with the Institute of Australian Geographers

The relationship between AGTA and IAG remains positive and productive. In 2024 the AGTA Board were delighted to see Geography Education have a specific and sustained presence at the IAG Conference, including related papers dispersed across *Geography Education: Solutions for a new era*; and *Geography Education: Dialling it Up*) and a Curriculum Workshop (*In conversation about the Australian Curriculum Geography: Harnessing the salience and responsiveness of IAG members*). The AGTA Board were delighted to offer active engagement and financial sponsorship to the IAG conference including:

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- (i) an AGTA table (no cost) in the plenary/foyer area of the IAG Conference [University of Adelaide], to be staffed by GTASA representatives, Susan and co-chairs of the Geography Education session) and
- (ii) AGTA to provide funding up to \$2000 for the Wednesday fieldtrips, pending an IAG commitment to recommend and support a suitable keynote speaker for the AGTA conference.

7. 2024 AGTA Biennial Conference in Darwin

At the time of writing and presenting this report, the conference is underway, and we are 24 hours ahead of announcing the AGTA Award recipients.

On behalf of the AGTA Board, I would like to extend immense thanks and appreciation to Team NT for organising and delivering what I know will be a superb and memorable conference: Steve Hawkins, Yulia Snoxall, Julie Hearnden, Jenni Webber

8. Geography Olympiad and Geography's Big Week Out

In August, Julie Hearnden (a past AGTA Director and Don Biddle Award recipient) accompanied the Australian team of four students to Dublin, Ireland, to compete in the Geography Olympiad. Julie also took on the role of marker for the fieldwork component. The Australian team was one of 46 teams competing and were placed second overall with 2 gold medals and 2 silver medals and 281.60 points awarded. Further, in the fieldwork component, the Australian team members came 1st, 2nd, 7th and 14th overall. Team USA were placed first with 282.51 points, then Australia (281.60 points), Indonesia on 272.63 points and Romania on 268.69 points. A magnificent achievement! Huge congratulations to Team Australia and Julie Hearnden.

Geography's Big Week Out is being hosted by GTANSW&ACT in Canberra and the Snowy Mountains region between 29 September – 4 October 2024. Michael da Roza (ACT representative on the AGTA Board) is leading the program. At the time of writing and presenting this report, Geography's Big Week Out is underway. Information will be updated accordingly ahead of this report being published on the AGTA website.

On behalf of the AGTA Board, I would like to extend deep appreciation to both Julie Hearnden and Michael Da Roza, for their time, their commitment to the programs, and to their tenacity in developing student excellence in geography.

9. Refinement of the Don Biddle Friends of Geography Award

Dr Don Biddle is the founding Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association. The profound and enduring influence and impact of Dr Don Biddle in shaping geography education across Australia is recognised by AGTA through the Don Biddle Friends of Geography Award. This award is peer nominated and peer reviewed by a committee of three members of the AGTA Board. A current serving member of the AGTA Board is not eligible for nomination or receipt of the Award. The Don Biddle Friends of Geography award is presented at each biennial AGTA Conference, and recognises individuals, groups or institutions who have made a significant contribution over an extended period of time to the work of AGTA in promoting geographical education in Australia.

Sadly, in January 2022, Dr Don Biddle passed away. In further acknowledgement of Dr Biddle, the prestige associated with his namesake award, and to further add gravitas to the award overall, from 2024 the Board will be presenting award recipients with a trophy and citation, in addition to the previously awarded certificate.

At the time of writing and presenting this report, we are 24 hours ahead of announcing the 2024 recipient of the Don Biddle Award. Information will be updated accordingly ahead of this report being published on the AGTA website.

Further information about the award, the life of Dr Don Biddle, and a list of past Award recipients are available on the AGTA website <https://agta.au/awards/>

8. Realising the recommendations from *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future* in affiliate and national practice.

Throughout my time as a member of the Executive on the AGTA Board – as Secretary, GTANSW&ACT Director, and also as Chair – a ‘special project’ has been to find ways to action recommendations from Chapter 13 of *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*. As a Board we have continued to work steadily on finding national and/or affiliate-based approaches towards addressing the following areas: recognition and awareness of Geography as a STEM subject; the implications arising from out-of-field teaching; strengthening collaborative opportunities and connections with academic geographers;

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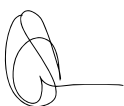
advocacy for quality school-based curriculum documents and for geography education within initial teacher education.

There is now only left to report that these recommendations have become part of our practice – we modelled nationally and then took it to our state and territory. By reviewing the current AGTA 2024 conference program, affiliate conference programs and other professional learning offerings, and previous Annual Reports since 2018, it is evident that theory and big ideas were actioned and have become embedded in the work we do from local to state to national arenas.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to Dr Grant Kleeman for his active and sustained contribution to the National Committee for Geographical Sciences as the AGTA representative until end 2023, and to leading the development of Chapter 13 Geography In Australian Schools for *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*. Whilst I took on the actioning of recommendations from 2019 onwards, and am now privileged to sit on the National Committee for Geographical Sciences as the AGTA representative, these recommendations would not have appeared with such clarity had Grant not been an instrumental part of the National Committee for Geographical Sciences and of AGTA Board as Vice Chair and Chair and Immediate Past Chair during the conceptualisation, development and subsequent release of *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*. Further, I would like to offer immense thanks and appreciation to the AGTA Board for their willingness to embrace the recommendations, by working first at a national scale before affiliate level, and then for leading the incorporation of selected recommendations into core business of their affiliate.

I hope you enjoyed reading through and reflecting on the work of AGTA during 2024. 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. In closing let me offer again my appreciation to the Executive, each Board member and associated representative not only for their support of my leadership but more importantly for bringing joy to the Board, and for the active role each person plays in shaping the future of geography education in Australia. It is a privilege to work alongside and lead a dedicated, wise, solutions-focused, reliable enthusiastic team.

We are not many, but we are effective. There is a lot to look forward to in 2025.



Dr Susan Caldis, Chair of AGTA

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