



**2024 - 2025 Annual Report
of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)**

Presented at the AGTA Annual General Meeting

by Dr Susan Caldis, AGTA Chair

Sunday 12 October 2025, in Brisbane/Meanjin

As Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA), I write the report from lands of the Cammeraygal People in New South Wales and from Brisbane/Meanjin in Queensland. I am delighted to present the 2025 Annual Report at our Annual General Meeting in Brisbane/Meanjin, on lands and waterways of the Turrbal and Yuggera Peoples. 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 engage with, collaborate with, and take interest in, the work of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA).

Throughout 2025, the AGTA Board have met in person in Adelaide, traditional Country of the Kaurna Peoples on 17 - 18 May 2025, also in Brisbane/Meanjin, traditional Country of Turrbal and Yuggera Peoples on 11 – 12 October 2025. Throughout 2025 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 2025 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. This Annual Report addresses key items of interest for geography education at a national scale and closes the four-year chapter of my time as AGTA Chair.

As a Board we used 2024 – 2025 to consider how to raise the profile of AGTA and consolidate our work in responding to challenges facing us all, especially the smaller affiliates. As a Board we are respectful and supportive of differences across our contexts and allow our national focus and perspective to bring an adaptive stance to our work.

Part of raising the profile of AGTA and supporting smaller affiliates relates to the development of an online presence. During 2025 we launched an AGTA FaceBook page

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with a view to establishing profiles on LinkedIn and other platforms during 2026. We also initiated an audit and refresh of our #GoWithGEO Careers website. Our social media and Careers website refresh are led by colleagues from TGTA. I would like to extend my thanks to Caryn Shield, Karen Caporelli and Dr Greg Calvert for their time and willingness to lead this work; we look forward to ongoing interest in our online spaces.

Solutions-focused discussion continues to revolve around how best to support the smaller affiliates (for example, GHTANT, TGTA and GTASA) through the development of national initiatives; how best to support out-of-field teachers in geography, given state and territory differences in uptake and adaptation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography, registration and professional learning priorities; how to increase viability of professional learning in geography and develop resources which are both suitable for a national scope of work yet have potential to respond to the specific needs of states and territories.

In 2024 – 2025, we continued the actions below from 2023 – 2024. Overall, such actions were beneficial to the smaller affiliates:

- (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 2024 – 2025 compared to the previous year. The remainder of the Annual Report also continues from the previous annual report (2023 – 2024) to consolidate our 2025 activity and look ahead into 2026. This report covers GeoNight; responding to directions from the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE); Initiatives for resource development; Geographical Education, journal of AGTA; the upcoming 2026 AGTA Biennial Conference in Canberra; the Australian Geography Competition, the Olympiad and Geography's Big Week Out; 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 2025.

1. AGTA Board for 2024 - 2025

At the 2024 AGM in Darwin, there was no immediate change to the Executive team for 2024 – 2025 (from 2023 – 2024). Dr Susan Caldis (GTANSW&ACT) remained co-opted as Chair of the Association, Simon Miller (GTASA, Vice Chair), Shane Albertson (GTAQ, Secretary), Dr Grant Kleeman (GTANSW&ACT, Treasurer) and Trish Douglas (GTAV, Immediate Past Chair). In May 2025, we were sorry to see Shane Albertson depart from the AGTA Board as a GTAQ representative and AGTA Secretary. Shane is a long-term AGTA Board member,

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having taken on the roles of Nominated Director for GTAQ, Director for GTAQ and AGTA Secretary. I would like to extend my thanks to the Executive team for their tireless work in between meetings and for their ongoing support of my leadership and willingness to share considered advice.

There were some changes to the AGTA Board for 2024 – 2025 compared to 2023 – 2024. I extend also my sincere thanks and deep appreciation to each member of the Board for their time, enthusiasm for national work, and for their continued support of my leadership and in progressing our important work.

- From GAWA, Peggy Bakalis and Leo Conti remained on the AGTA Board.
- From GHTANT, Steven Hawkins and Yulia Snoxall remained on the AGTA Board.
- From GTAQ, Shane Albertson and Julie Davis remained on the AGTA Board. After the departure of Shane Albertson, due to a change in Presidential roles in the affiliate, Erin Merrin was officially welcomed to the AGTA Board at our May meeting.
- 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 GTASA, Simon Miller and April Bickley remained on the AGTA Board.
- From GTAV, Trish Douglas and Peta Turner remained on the AGTA Board. After the departure of Peta Turner, due to a change in Presidential roles in the affiliate, Stephen Barrett was officially welcomed to the AGTA Board at our May meeting.
- 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

‘Geography Technology Industry Careers: Making Connections’ was the second GeoNight event hosted by AGTA. The event occurred on 4 April 2025 via zoom between 7.30pm – 8.30pm AEDST. The event comprised of lightning talks from practitioners and industry experts who are leading the way in making connections between the school-based geography classroom, industry and career pathways using technology or by making an explicit connection to science. The speakers were Yuliya Snoxall (Geography teacher and AGTA Board member representing GTA Northern Territory), Dr Adam Liedloff (Research scientist, CSIRO) and Brett Dascombe (Geography teacher, 2023 Peter Doherty STEM Awardee and member of Council for GTA Queensland).

The event had three objectives: (i) To share and celebrate innovative classroom practice in Geography (ii) To showcase the relevance of Geography as a meaningful contributor to the field of STEM; (iii) To reach an audience of geographers, geography educators, and community members who are interested in geography education

The talk by Yuliya and Adam focused on insights gained from a STEM Professionals in Schools partnership between Darwin High School and CSIRO. Emphasis was on how Geography teachers and Year 12 students can gain access to a STEM professional’s skillset and perspectives on people, processes and environments, and use such learning to compare and contrast geographical-forward and science-forward understandings.

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The talk by Brett focused on how to embed the use of geospatial technologies (such as ArcGIS and StoryMap) and innovative problem-solving approaches into classroom practice and fieldtrips so students can see tangible career pathways such as urban planning and disaster management. Focus was also on how teachers can use technology and develop sustained connections with the planning industry and local university(ies) to provide a dynamic, multidisciplinary lens through which students can engage with complex issues, technological proficiency, critical thinking and spatial literacy.

There were 20 attendees who joined GeoNight from Australia. Attendees were all connected to geography education in secondary school settings. We did not record the event at the time of presentation, however, discussion is underway about the merits of recording future GeoNight events and make available on the AGTA website.

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

3. Responding to directions from the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE)

AGTA also contributes to the national education space more broadly, through their membership to the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE) and having an AGTA representative sit on the AAAE Board. In 2024 – 2025, AAAE invited each member association to develop a pedagogical position to showcase the strengths and distinctiveness of pedagogical practice, specific to the given subject. As a Board, we are in the process of crafting a position paper, entitled Pedagogy in Geography, and we look forward to its release during October 2025. The paper is led by Dr Susan Caldis, A/Prof Jeana Kriewaldt, and Dr Grant Kleeman, with the 2024 – 2025 AGTA Board as contributing authors.

During 2024 – 2025, AAAE also invited member associations to respond to a proposal from the Federal Government about the establishment of a Teaching and Learning Commission, and to join a Roundtable discussion about. We were fortunate to hear directly from AAAE President, Dr John Nicholas Saunders about key strategy from AAAE.

On behalf of the Board, let me extend thanks to Trish Douglas for seven years of AGTA representation on the AAAE Board, for keeping the AGTA Board updated about AAAE activities, and for sustained, active contribution in each AAAE Forum.

4. Initiatives for resource development

During 2024, Associate Professor Alaric Maude (a long-term friend of the AGTA Board and Don Biddle Award recipient), approached the AGTA Board with a proposal for developing teacher-ready professional learning resources, and classroom-ready units of work for students to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum v9. Draft versions of resources for Water in the World were made available for review and discussion during 2025 with further units of work to be developed during 2025 and 2026 to form a suite for Stage 4.

For these resources, A/Prof Alaric Maude, he is acting as lead author and seeking input and refinement through a co-design process with members of the AGTA Board. Currently, the AGTA Board are reviewing and providing input into Water in the World. We are anticipating the resource package to be launched at the upcoming 2026 AGTA conference.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank A/Prof Alaric Maude, for his time and commitment to supporting school-based geography education nationally. I would also like to thank Alaric for progressing the resource development initiative.

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* was published, and contains one editorial, three articles and 11 book reviews. The edition comprises 55 pages and is available via the following weblink

<https://agta.au/geographiceducation/geographical-education-v37-2024/>

At the time of writing, Volume 38 is underway. The theme **A sense of place** is aligned with the successful 2024 AGTA Conference. Currently there are four research articles, currently under review. The titles of manuscripts received cannot be listed here until the peer review process is complete.

The endorsed initiative from 2023, to publish in 'early view', continues in 2025. After acceptance of the final manuscript, the article will be published first online, enabling researchers to share their works more quickly.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend thanks and appreciation to Associate Professor Jeana Kriewaldt as editor of the journal for her time and input in seeking papers and reviewers, also for 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. 2026 AGTA Biennial Conference in Canberra

At the time of writing, preparation for the 2026 AGTA conference is underway. The conference is hosted by GTANSW&ACT with Michael Da Roza as conference convenor. Michael is the ACT representative on GTANSW&ACT Council and the AGTA Board.

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The conference will be held at the Shine Dome between 30 September – 2 October 2026, with 2 October being an optional day for fieldwork. The conference theme is *Ignite Shine ACT* and the venue will be at the Shine Dome.

Further information about abstract submission, conference registration and a draft conference program will be distributed through the affiliates shortly.

7. The International Geography Olympiad and Geography's Big Week Out

The 21st International Geography Olympiad (iGeo) 2025 was hosted in Thailand between 26 July – 1 August, bringing together top young geographers from around the globe for a week of intense competition and cultural exchange. Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok hosted the event with the department of Geography, Faculty of Arts providing many of the wonderful volunteers all sitting under the Royal patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, President of the Promotion of Academic Olympiad's and Development of Science Education (POSN).

The Australian Team of Ben Bauer (WA), Dylan Phelps (ACT), Oliver Roxburgh (NSW) and Dylan Mathew (VIC) were selected through the Australian Geography Competition and Geography's Big Week Out reflecting their academic excellence and commitment to Geography. Once selected, the team set about producing a poster, the only group submission of the Olympiad, around this year's theme of "Unity in Diversity". In country the participated in a range of intellectual and practical challenges, further strengthening ties with fellow geography enthusiasts and showcasing the nation's geographic expertise on the international stage.

Michael da Roza (ACT representative) and John Tasker (Royal Geographical Society of Queensland) accompanied the Australian team of four students to Bangkok, Thailand, to compete in the International Geography Olympiad. There were 47 teams competing in 2025 and Australian team were placed ninth overall with 234.73 points. For medals, Australia was placed second, with 1 gold medal, 1 silver medal and 2 bronze medals awarded. In the written response test component Australia was placed 13th; in the fieldwork component, Australia was placed 4th, and in the multimedia component, Australia was placed 7th. Congratulations to Team Australia, Michael da Roza and John Tasker for all you achieved during the week in Bangkok and thank you for your excellent demonstration of quality geography education in Australia at the International Olympiad.

Geography's Big Week Out is being hosted for the second year by GTANSW&ACT in Canberra and the Snowy Mountains region between 28 September – 2 October 2025. Michael da Roza (ACT representative on the AGTA Board) is leading the program, supported by Ella Williamson (GTANSW&ACT Councillor), Kath Berg, Rachel Honey and John Tasker from the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland. Peggy Bakalis (Director, GAWA) joined the team as an observer because GAWA will be the next affiliate to host GBWO for 2026 and 2027.

On behalf of the AGTA Board, I would like to extend deep appreciation to Michael Da Roza, for his time and enthusiasm in leading the Olympiad team. Thank you also to Michael for

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leading GBWO on behalf of GTANSW&ACT and for liaising closely with RGSQ colleagues to ensure a continued development of a relevant and rigorous program. Thank you also to Peggy Bakalis for nominating Western Australia to host GBW) for the next two-year timeframe.

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

I take the liberty of reiterating the following excerpt from the previous annual report. *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future* was published in 2018. Several current and past AGTA Board members were involved in the development of Chapter 13 Geography in Australian Schools: Dr Grant Kleeman (chapter lead), Malcolm McInerney, Nick Hutchinson, Associate Professor Alaric Maude, Associate Professor Jeana Kriewaldt, Dr Susan Caldis and John Butler OAM. As an incoming Executive team enter the arena, I offer the following excerpt as being instrumental in raising the profile of AGTA and of geography education whilst also being a reflection on what I consider to be a legacy of my leadership.

- Excerpt taken from the 2023 – 2024 annual report

Throughout my time as a member of the Executive on the AGTA Board – as Secretary, GTANSW&ACT Director, and 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; 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.

Looking ahead to 2025 - 2026.

The 2025 Annual General Meeting concludes the four year term of the current Executive team

- Dr Susan Caldis, from GTA NSW & ACT, as AGTA Chair
- Simon Miller, from GTASA, as AGTA Vice Chair
- Shane Albertson, from GTAQ, as AGTA Secretary
- Dr Grant Kleeman, from GTA NSW & ACT, as AGTA Treasurer
- Trish Douglas, from GTAV, as Immediate Past Chair

At this meeting, we will farewell Dr Grant Kleeman, who has served on the AGTA Board for 22 years, continuously. A series of surprises are organised across the weekend of the 144th Board meeting and Annual General Meeting in Brisbane/Manjin. Past AGTA Chairs, together with Current and Past Chairs of other committees Grant had served on, were invited to share a short written reflection about Grant's contribution to geography education. An excerpt of the farewell speech is below and will be published in full, shortly, in *Geographia*, the newsletter of AGTA.

The landscape of your contribution to geography education is vast and you spoke with action. Within your 22 years of continuous service to the AGTA Board – which is almost 40% of AGTA's lifetime – you served on the Executive team for 17 years and were the 21st Chair of the Association: Vice Chair (2008 – 2013), Chair (2013 – 2016), Immediate Past President and Treasurer (2016 – 2021); Treasurer (2021 – 2025).

For over a decade, you represented AGTA and geography education on the Institute of Australian Geographers Council and National Committee for Geographical Sciences. As part of these roles, you lead the development of Chapter 13 Geography in Australian Schools for *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future, a decadal plan for the discipline*. This chapter formed an important set of recommendations for advocacy and improvement of geography education nationally which, in time, set the foundation for AGTA's strategic planning.

As people move on, from committees and in life, their spirit continues in others. You embody the spirit of the late Dr Don Biddle, founder of AGTA who was revered as:

“a source of wise counsel for its executive members; a teacher and academic who passionately promoted geography, the Association and other professional geographical organisations, the teaching profession, and Australian curricula; and inspired others to follow his lead.”

Your contribution to geography education, nationally, is immense. You are the definition of commitment to the work of professional associations, and your commitment to AGTA sets the standard. You are an inspiration to us all.

The 2025 Annual General Meeting also signals an incoming Executive team, and we look forward to learning about and supporting their vision for geography education, nationally:

- Steve Hawkins, from GHTANT, as AGTA Chair
- Caryn Shield, from TGTA, as AGTA Vice Chair
- Karen Caporelli, from TGTA, as AGTA Secretary
- Michael da Roza, from GTA NSW & ACT, as AGTA Treasurer
- Dr Susan Caldis, from GTA NSW & ACT, as Immediate Past President

In closing, let me underscore the important volunteer work we do in navigating the complexities of leading nationally focused work against a backdrop of our state and territory contexts. The activity that occurs both at, and in-between our May and October meetings are immense and in addition to our affiliate responsibilities.

As a national Board, we look ahead from a range of perspectives, and we act together to shape the future of geography education in Australia. It has been a privilege to lead the Australian Geography Teachers Association for four years, and it is an experience for which I am very grateful. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Executive team and AGTA Board for their positive energy, ideas, willingness to act, and for their tenacity in managing affiliate and national responsibilities.

Dr Susan Caldis, Chair of AGTA (October 2021 – October 2025)