

AGTA Annual Report 2014

**Dr Grant Kleeman
Chair, AGTA Board**

2013–2014 has been a year of consolidation for AGTA. This follows a busy few years during which AGTA played a leading role in the development of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* and facilitated the development of the *Geospace* professional learning website in conjunction with Educational Services Australia. The Association's challenge going forward is to support the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* and the promotion of school Geography more generally.

Changing of the guard

The leadership of the Australian Geography Teachers Association Inc. has changed following the retirement of Malcolm McInerney (President), Rebecca Nicholas (Secretary) and Rob Berry (Treasurer). The new President (Chairperson) is Grant Kleeman (NSW) while Susan Caldis (NSW) takes over as Secretary and Leonie Brown (Victoria) takes over as Treasurer.

It is impossible to understate the terrific contributions that Malcolm, Bec and Rob have made to AGTA during their time in office.

Malcolm's led the Association to a new level of recognition, relevance, influence and achievement. The leading role AGTA played in the development of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* was due, in no small measure, to Malcolm's insistence that that the Association be seen as the discipline's principal stakeholder. He made sure that AGTA, and its affiliates, were at the centre of the curriculum development process either directly or indirectly.

GeogSpace is another lasting legacy of Malcolm's tenure. Malcolm was determined that the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* be well resourced. He successfully lobbied for, and secured, \$500,000 in Commonwealth funding to showcase best practice in pedagogy and professional learning. The delivery of this project – on time and on budget – was a remarkable achievement and no better example of the managerial flair and leadership skills that Malcolm demonstrated throughout his time as President.

Malcolm will be remembered for his inclusive leadership style, his energy and his passion for Geography (albeit with a bias towards GIS!).

Bec carried out the role of AGTA Secretary with great dedication and good humor. Her detailed minutes that record the Association's deliberations and decisions are a work of art even though some of us are a bit tardy when it comes to attending to the duties listed in the 'actions list'. We all admire Bec's mastery of ICT. Her recent presentation at the recent GTA NSW was superbly delivered and very well received. Bec has a lot to offer the discipline in coming years.

Rob Berry has been more than just an excellent custodian of the Association's finances. He has been a wise counsel in all the big decision made by, and on behalf of AGTA in recent years. He played an enormous role in the *GeogSpace* project and has done a terrific job maintaining the Association's online presence.

Rob's contribution as treasurer has been outstanding. His reports to the Board are always thoroughly prepared and Rob not backwards in providing cautionary advice when expenditures threatened to exceed income. We all appreciated Rob's honesty and integrity.

The three retiring executive members did an outstanding job and we thank them for their contribution. We also look forward to their ongoing contributions in whatever capacity they choose.

The Australian Curriculum: Geography

With the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* F-10 and the senior years now a reality (not withstanding any redirection resulting from the Federal Government's Review of the Australian Curriculum), Australian students have, for the first time, an opportunity to develop a knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of the places that make up our world.

Each state and territory has approached the implementation of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography* differently and over a different time scale. These are outlined in the attached document. In NSW, the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) has just release the NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum: Geography K-10. For those interested the draft syllabus can be found at: http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/australian-curriculum/pdf_doc/geography-k-10-draft-syllabus-for-consultation.pdf.

As we are all aware, the Australian Geography Teachers Association Inc. (AGTA) played an important role in making the curriculum a reality. Together with other professional bodies, including the IAG and the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland, it lobbied for Geography to be included in Phase 2 of the curriculum development process and played an active role in the curriculum development process.

The challenge for AGTA is now to support the implementation of the Curriculum, especially through the provision of quality professional learning and resources.

As a peak body, AGTA seeks to foster the teaching and learning of Geography in all Australian schools and enhance awareness of its applications in society by:

- promoting and circulating the results of research into geography education;
- maintaining a professional network through which teachers of geography in Australia may express opinions on educational matters; and
- representing the interests of its member affiliates on national education decision making bodies.

AGTA believes that a study of geography contributes to:

- an understanding why societies and environments occur as they do;
- the acquisition of skills that enable students to investigate, formulate and communicate their understandings and opinions; and
- the clarification of students' values concerning themselves, the society in which they live and the environment.

In particular, AGTA supports and promotes the three values areas of democratic process, social justice and ecological sustainability.

AGTA's Constitution and Membership

AGTA now has a new constitution and representational structure; The Board now has 15 directors. These consist of two directors from each member affiliate, one being the President of the affiliate association and the other being nominated by the affiliates membership. The Northern Territory is now represented on AGTA as an affiliate.

AGTA's Curriculum Related Initiatives

Some of AGTA's most important curriculum-related initiatives include the *GeogSpace* website, its biennial conference, and the Association's professional learning program and resources.

GeogSpace

The *GeogSpace* website is an initiative of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA) supported by the resources of Education Services Australia. *GeogSpace* has been designed to support primary and secondary teachers in implementing the *Australian Curriculum: Geography*. It has been developed by AGTA's team of practising Geography teachers, dedicated to ensuring all schools across Australia have access to a unique resource that reflects best practice using current technology and pedagogies.

Malcolm Mcinerney, who led the development of GeogSpace has played an important role in introducing the website and its many features to teachers across Australia.

AGTA Conference

The 2015 AGTA Conference, to be held from 11-16 January 2015 in Rotorua, New Zealand, is a great professional learning opportunity aligned to the requirements of the *Australian Curriculum: Geography*. The Conference also features an extensive fieldwork program in addition to pre- and post-Conference tours. Further details can be found on AGTAS's website [<http://www.agta.asn.au/>].

Nick Hutchinson, with the assistance of Rob Berry, has assembled an excellent array of keynotes, workshops and fieldwork activities. Nick's efforts in convening the conference are very much appreciated.

Review of the Australian Curriculum

AGTA developed a submission to the Federal Government's Review of the Australian Curriculum. Led by Nick Hutchinson all affiliates had the opportunity to provide input into, and comment on, the various drafts of the document. The recommendations of the Review are a 'mixed bag' and certainly lacks rigor. It is problematic that one Geography teacher's perspective should hold such sway given the hours of consultation involved in the development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography.

Professional Learning

In 2015, AGTA will launch a nation-wide professional learning initiative focusing on the *Australian Curriculum: Geography*. This will include a program directly related to the needs of both primary and secondary school teachers.

Publications

Geographical Education 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. The ISSN for Geographical Education is ISSN 0085 0969.

Contributions of varying length are invited, with a maximum of 5000 words for major articles and research reports. Shorter articles of 2000 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.

Nick Hutchinson took on the role of Journal Editor in 2014 replacing Ken Purnell who had edited the journal for some years. Geoff Peterson continues in his role of copy editor.

Thinking Geographically DVD. The second edition of this popular resource has over 50 additional *Thinkpieces*, new links to Australian Curriculum resources materials, new professional learning presentations and new curriculum planning suggestions. The DVD contains:

- geographical thinking examples, exercises and articles;
- over 50 Thinkpieces on geography;
- curriculum planning and assessment processes and templates;
- hundreds of links to geographical thinking and teaching of geography Internet sites; and
- presentations and video resource links to support professional learning.

AGTA has also supported the publication of *Teaching Primary Geography for Australian Schools* by Simon Catling, Tessa Willy and John Butler. *Teaching Primary Geography for Australian Schools* helps to develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of Early Years and Primary Geography and its teaching. It discusses the nature of Geography and geographical knowledge and understanding, and links this with everyday life, in particular, with children's environmental and geographical experiences, a thread running throughout the book. Key aspects of Early Years and Primary Geography are covered, including the core ideas in the subject, and understanding places and environmental sustainability. It considers inquiry approaches to teaching and learning geography, learning outside the classroom through fieldwork, the geographical skills children need, such as map work and visual skills, world knowledge and

global issues, citizenship and cross-curricular approaches. Aspects of planning geography teaching and learning and assessment are discussed, as are ways in which you can investigate and reflect on your geography teaching and children's learning in your classroom.

AGTA has also endorsed *Understanding and Teaching the Australian Curriculum: Geography for Primary Schools* by Alaric Maude. The publication is designed to ease the burden of primary teachers by showing them how to understand and use the curriculum they are being asked to teach.

Primary teachers with an interest in Geography are being encouraged to become actively involved in their local Geography teachers association.

Keys to Geography Skills AGTA is committed to publishing a Geography skills book to replace *Keys to Geography Skills*. This follows Macmillan's decision not to proceed with a Third Edition of the widely acclaimed publication. The new book will contain additional material aligned to the requirements of the Australian Curriculum: Geography.

Reaching out to Primary teachers

Now that Geography is a discrete subject in the early years of schooling (F-6) AGTA is seeking to meet the professional learning needs of Primary teachers. In many instances conferences and other accredited professional learning activities will now feature a dedicated program focusing on Primary Geography.

Professional advocacy

Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE).

Thanks largely to the work of Malcolm Mcinerney, the AAAE is now a reality. AGTA is a founding member of the newly established entity. The AAAE is a body specifically formed to represent the interests of teacher professional associations at a national level. There are 23 founding member associations, and the AAAE will be able to lobby at a federal level on issues affecting teachers and their professional practice.

Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and Environment (AFSSSE).

AFSSSE is a consortium of four professional associations – the Australian Association for Environmental Education (AAEE), the Australian Geography Teachers' Association (AGTA), Business Educators Australasia (BEA) and the Social Educators Association of Australia (SEAA). AFSSSE was formed in 1992 to act as the peak organisation for the broad area of study known as Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE). Rob Berry continues to represent the views and interests of AGTA on AFSSSE.

National Committee for the Geographical Sciences

The AGTA Board recently voted to support the Academy of Science's National Committee for the Geographical Science's Decadal Plan for the discipline. To be known as *Strategic Directions for the Geographical Sciences* the plan will include a focus on the contribution of school geography to the nation's strategic research priorities. The purpose of the document is to Inform policy makers – in

government and industry – about the role of Geography. We look forward to making a contribution to the development of the plan.

Geographia

Geographia is AGTA's 'newsletter'. It is used to update the broader membership on the activities of AGTA and its state and territory based initiatives. Alexandra Piggott is to be congratulated on the quality of the newsletter.

Australian Geography Competition

AGTA is pleased to be associated with this important national initiative offered by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland. In 2014 more than 70,000 students participated in the competition.

The National Geography Competition is a great opportunity to promote the study of Geography in schools. Winners of the competition can also be invited to join the Geography Olympiad team and attend Geography's Big Week Out (this year held in NSW). The Australian team represented the country at the International Geography Olympiad held in Krakow, Poland, in 2014. The Australian team was placed second. Kath Berg's continued involvement in the Competition is greatly valued and appreciated.

AGTA Patron

The Rev. Tom Costello, head of World Vision Australia, has been invited to act as the Association's president for another three years. AGTA greatly appreciates Tim's ongoing commitment to the study of Geography in Australian schools.

Finally, I would like to thank the AGTA Board for its support throughout 2013–2014.

Dr Grant Kleeman
Chairperson, ACTA