

# GEOGRAPHIA



Geographia is the national newsletter of the Australian Geography Teachers' Association Limited.

NOVEMBER 2006

Occasional Newsletter of The Australian Geography Teachers' Association Limited



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## AGTA Conference 2006

The 2006 conference was held in Launceston in January. This conference was the first to be truly nationally coordinated with significant support, advice and assistance from South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland.

The conference attracted 106 full-time registrations, 17 day and 14 accompanying delegates. Very positive feedback was provided through formal written responses. Following

the conference, three keynote and six workshop presenters took the opportunity of publishing their papers on the AGTA website. The conference realised a profit of \$12,912.49 in addition to the return of \$5,000 that was provided by AGTA as seed funding.

Sincere congratulations are extended to Debbie Doyle (TGTA President and AGTA Secretary) and her team for the planning and coordination of the 2006 AGTA Conference. Special thanks also to Malcolm McInerney for his work and commitment.

## AGTA Conference 2008

The Geography Teachers' Association of Queensland will host the 2008 AGTA Conference on the Sunshine Coast. A suggestion is that the conference should be limited to three days with the opportunity for pre and post-conference fieldwork activities. A committee has been established and is currently investigating potential dates, sponsorship and partnerships. More information will be provided in due course.

## AGTA Website

Rob Berry has been proactive in updating and re-designing the AGTA website. The home page now includes a segment of News Items that provides opportunity to promote a number of key issues. Feedback has been greatly appreciated contributing to the dynamic nature and usefulness of the site.

Interestingly, the AGTA website is now attracting 70-80 hits per day from as far as the United Kingdom, United States, New Zealand, Singapore and Japan.

All states (affiliates) are encouraged to visit and link to the AGTA website. Affiliates are also requested to provide any relevant information in promoting Geography to Rob. Sincere thanks to Rob Berry for his work in this areas.



# AGTA Board Meeting

The 97th meeting of AGTA Limited was held in Melbourne on the weekend of 21-22 October 2006. The previous meeting was held in Brisbane and coincided with the International Geography Olympiad and the International Geographical Union Conference and its Commission on Geographical Education Symposium.

All Directors were re-appointed for 2007. AGTA is delighted that GAWA, at its recent annual conference, elected to re-affiliate with the national body. Mike Fazio (President GAWA) will assume responsibilities as an AGTA Director commencing on 1 January 2007. We welcomed Mike to the October meeting.

## AGTA Achievements

The diversity of activities over the last twelve months is highlighted through the following achievements:

- the 2006 AGTA Conference held in Launceston in conjunction with Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc (ESRI) was highly successful attracting more than 100 delegates.
- the Geography Week posters distributed at cost to affiliates, provided an opportunity for each affiliate to earn income from sales and has provided a resource that teachers can use to enliven their classrooms.
- involvement in the International Geographical Union (IGU) Conference and Olympiad held in Brisbane in July 2006 which was acclaimed to be the 'best ever yet'!
- promoting Geography nationally through involvement in the production of 'Weather Channel' documentary programs.
- encouraging delegates from all states to represent AGTA at the national level in various forums including National Education Forum, Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and Environment, human rights in education conference and Spatial Sciences Institute.
- working proactively to update and formalise AGTA standing orders - this work is now completed.
- developing a new improved website that provides a higher profile for AGTA and its board of directors - all affiliates are invited and encouraged to provide links to this site - [www.agta.asn.au](http://www.agta.asn.au)
- initiating a number of new projects, including Beijing 2008 Olympic Games publication (in conjunction with the Geographical Association in the UK), geography promotional material for 2007 (Promoting geography through cartoon literacy - things that matter), a new geography careers website and AGTA 2008 Conference. All projects have been allocated seed funding by AGTA.
- commencing the development of the new geography text 'Keys to Fieldwork'.
- investigating sources of funding for the development of professional teaching standards for Geography teachers.
- positively responding to GAWA's request to review and reduce affiliation fees - fees have now been reduced to \$12 (previously \$14). Additionally, AGTA has significantly reduced capitation fees for student teachers. AGTA will continue to be proactive in addressing this issue.
- the highly successful 'Keys to Geography' skills textbook continues to be taken up in Australian schools.
- contacting 'The Australian' journalist, Justine Ferrari, regarding the position of geography Australia-wide.
- boosting AGTA's financial position with current assets exceeding \$116,000. (Congratulations to Company Treasurer Bronwen Perry for all her work and effort in maintaining the healthy state of AGTA's finances).

**These achievements indicate the important role that AGTA has undertaken in lifting the profile and promoting Geography in Australia.**

# Promoting Geography at a National and State Level

AGTA has been pro-active in raising the profile of Geography at a National level. Board members are scheduled to meet Minister Bishop.

Discussion of Board members clearly articulated the importance of Geography as a national identity/nation building tool.

AGTA is a political body and through this avenue is an advocate for the Geography agenda to be addressed. The Australian reported on the Geography debate and asked three important questions:

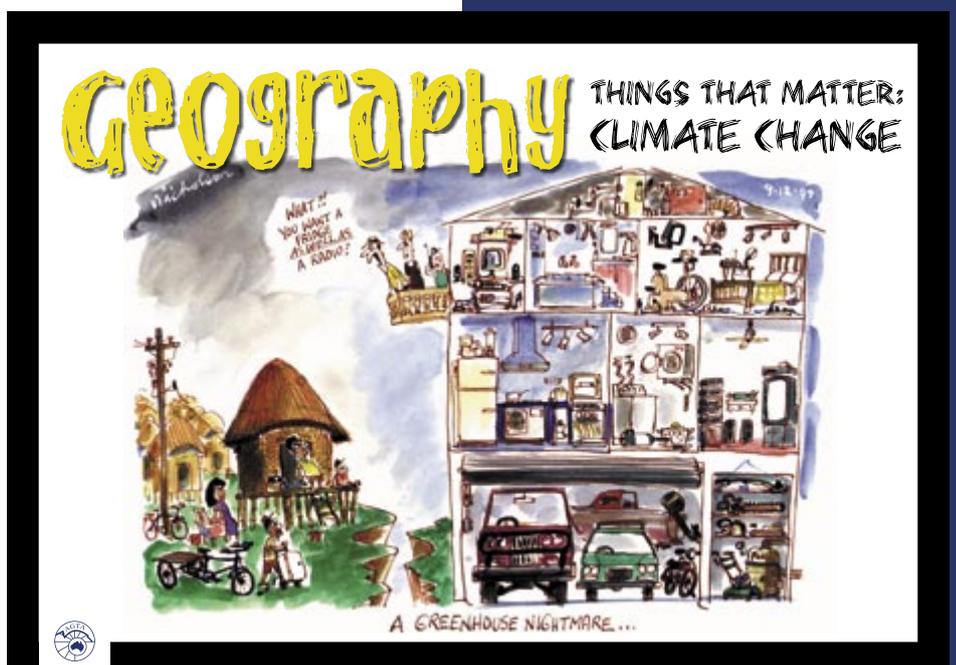
1. Is Geography declining due to lack of political support?
2. What is AGTA doing about it?
3. Why do students need to study Geography?

In addressing these issues a coordinated campaign needs to include AGTA, all affiliates and the three states with Geographical Societies. In such AGTA must access the political scene, profile and market the discipline of Geography and address the issue of professional standards and geography teachers.

The October AGTA Board meeting discussed several strategies regarding the promotion of geography including: media releases, letters from students on geographical issues, promotional brochures, meetings with politicians, working with the Board of Studies, and the possible appointment of a media officer to coordinate these activities.

## Promoting Geography - things that matter

AGTA understands the importance of continuing to promote geography across the nation. A 2006 initiative is to develop a package (for 2007) that includes a series of 4 posters (A2) that focuses on land degradation, water management, salinity, global communities and spatial inequalities in urban places. The package will also include resource stimulus materials, teacher resources and postcards (sets of 15) depicting a smaller version of the posters suitable for class/group work. Links will be provided to geography articles, cartoons, extracts and stimulus material on the AGTA website. This will prove to be an exceptional resource for Geography teachers at all levels.



### Geography Careers Web

Students often ask why we learn geography. What role does it play in their future working lives? AGTA has commissioned the development of a Geography Careers Web site which will provide a window on the relevance of geography in young people's lives. This will be a separate website within its own domain name ([www.geocareers.net.au](http://www.geocareers.net.au)). It is requested that each affiliate advise Rob Berry ([rberry@melbpc.org.au](mailto:rberry@melbpc.org.au)) of the name of a contact person who will provide suggestions about the proposed structure and content of the careers website, and assist him obtain material for publication on the website.

### Residential Proposal

The Australian Geography Competition Committee is suggesting that we introduce a residential component at the senior level along the lines of Australian students competing in other Olympiads (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Maths and Informatics). AGTA has agreed in principle to this proposal. More information will be provided as developments occur.

# International Geography Olympiad, Brisbane 2006



## Olympiad 2008

You can give your students a chance to be part of the 2008 Olympiad, probably in Tunisia, by entering them into the senior level of the National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition next year.

### Contact

Enquiries to Kathryn Berg  
email: <admin@rgsq.org.au  
Phone: (07) 3368 2066.

## Australia does it again!

The sixth International Geography Olympiad held recently in Brisbane was proclaimed to be the biggest and best ever! Operating from 28 June to 3 July, followed by optional field trips from 4–9 July the Olympiad was hosted by the Australian Geography Teachers' Association (AGTA) and the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland (RGSQ), with sponsorship from the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts and the Australian Department of Education, Science and Training. It was held under the auspices of the International Geographical Union (IGU), in conjunction with its Regional Conference and its Commission on Geographical Education Symposium.

## Committee

The National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition Committee, with a membership of Kath Berg, Iraphne Childs, Margaret McIvor and Peter Nunan, had oversight of the local organisation of the 2006 Olympiad. The Olympiads are under the overall management of the IGU Olympiad Task Force, of which Kath Berg is a member.

## An international arena

23 teams from Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, China - Beijing, China - Taipei, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia and United Kingdom participated in the Olympiad.

## The Australian team

Australia's team was chosen from a group of high-scoring students in the senior division of the 2005 and 2006 National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competitions. After further filtering, using existing school assessment, the four students selected were:

### Michael Bishop

Northern Beaches Secondary College  
Manly Campus, Sydney

### Jennifer Broadbent

St Catherine's School, Sydney

### Samuel May

Pittwater House Grammar School, Sydney

### David Smith

Marist College, Canberra

## How did we do?

The student with the highest score overall was Jacek Próchniak from Poland. Eight gold medals were awarded—three to Poland, two to Romania, two to Estonia and one to Netherlands. From Australia, Jennifer Broadbent, Samuel May and Michael Bishop received silver medals and David Smith a bronze. All the Australian students came in the top third of the results, an excellent achievement resulting in Australia coming fifth in the unofficial team rankings—following Poland, Estonia, Romania and Netherlands. Medal-winning students also received prizes, donated by Hema Maps, Steve Parish, Geoscience Australia, Darren Jew, World Wide Maps, Macmillan Publishers Australia, Fremantle Arts Centre Press and Peter Lik.

## Was it all serious testing?

The Olympiad program included formal opportunities for the students to exchange information on their home countries, including a cultural evening and presentations on a geographical aspect of their country. The program also included excursions to give the participants a feel for south-east Queensland. These were very successful. One of the rangers who led the rainforest walk at Mount Glorious commented on the students' respect for the environment. A talk from a ranger on the indigenous heritage of the region around David Fleay Wildlife Park was much appreciated and there was great excitement about being up close to koalas and emus. Many of the students got right into the spirit of supporting the Lions at the AFL game, and streamed on to the ground after the match, commenting that they would be arrested for this in their home countries.

## Just a little story to finish

'On the northern trip we had taken along a John Williamson CD which included Waltzing Matilda. As we reached Brisbane on the last day, a Belgian student came to the front of the bus and asked us to play Waltzing Matilda again, so we finished our trip with a multicultural busload all singing Australia's unofficial national anthem.'  
(Kath Berg)

## National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition

### Competition Time-line 2007

The draft timeline for the 2007 Competition is:

<b>August 06 - January 07</b>	Planning, sponsorship, document preparation
<b>December 06 - February 07</b>	Question writing
<b>24 January 07</b>	Direct mail all secondary schools
<b>mid February 07</b>	School round questions finalized
<b>28 February 07</b>	Deadline for entries
<b>February - March 07</b>	Publicity, processing entries
<b>March - May 07</b>	Further question writing and arrangements for Final
<b>13 - 16 March 07</b>	Question packs sent out
<b>26 - 30 March 07</b>	School round
<b>early April 07</b>	Answer sheets to Computer Centre
<b>early May 07</b>	Initial results, tie-breakers if needed, publicity
<b>early May 07</b>	Final's questions completed
<b>end May 07</b>	Post results and certificates
<b>28 May or 4 June 07</b>	Final for under 16s
<b>June - July 07</b>	Publicity, reports
<b>August 07</b>	National Geographic World Championship

Following feedback from teachers AGTA endorsed the recommendation that certificates are changed so that we award High Distinctions to the top 10% of students, Distinctions to the next 10% and Credits to the next 15% (currently each 10%).

### Weather Channel

The weather channel road-show commenced in Hobart in September 2006. This is viewed as an excellent vehicle for selling and promoting geography nationally.



The associated website is excellent including teachers' notes, an encyclopaedia, a dictionary, and parent's homework help.

This is a flagship project for the weather channel.

**Check out [www.weatherchannel.com.au](http://www.weatherchannel.com.au)**

### Keys to Fieldwork

This exciting, new and unique resource should be available by December 2007. Currently, the table of contents is being finalised. AGTA will call for expressions of interest from affiliates to identify potential writers (as per Keys to Geography Skills).

## GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES



### Membership

Membership is currently approximately 450 and is increasing as a consequence of the new incentive initiated this year that members pay a reduced rate at conferences.

### Professional development

During 2006 professional development has been a focus. A total of 21 sessions have been conducted with over 1000 teachers and HSC students participating in various courses including workshops in geography skills, leadership, fieldwork, ICT and examinations.

The annual conference held at Parliament House was attended by 152 delegates. GTANSW is investigating a regional conference for 2007.

### Resource development

Funding has been provided for the Quality Teacher Program and a 'Water for Life' project (focusing on the Sydney area).

Funding incorporates designing resources and associated professional development for teachers.

Global Education resource development includes Aid and Travel (Lonely Planet); Focus (AID Autumn 2006); Globalisation Me! Book and CD Rom (Stage 4/5); Art of Governance, Global Perspectives: A Statement on Global Education for Australian Schools; Focus Magazines (Pacific Islands; Water; Refugees; Sport; HIV/AIDS; Tsunami); posters (Microcredit, UN Year of Deserts and Desertification, Rice); Canberra Times (Tsunami and Deserts and Desertification); CD Rom (Microcredit (2); Poverty); and Inequality and Civics and Citizenship; Sustainable Environments and CD Rom.

### High School Certificate (HSC)

A letter forwarded to the Board of Directors to change the HSC examination paper has resulted in a forum of teachers meeting to discuss the nature of the Geography examination.

## GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND



### Membership

Membership is currently approximately 248.

### Professional development

Activities for 2006 focused on GIS, skills workshop for new teachers that included fieldwork, practical skills, mapping, report writing etc. The GTAQ state conference was held in conjunction with the IGU Symposium held in Brisbane in July.

An interesting innovation was a pre-service teacher evening promoted as "Beer and Pizza Night". This initiative emerged from a strategic planning day. As a result 45 pre-service teachers attended and participated in workshops on unit planning and field work organisation. A great outcome!

### Cyclone Larry

GTAQ is to be commended for donating books, resources and free membership to Innisfail and surrounding areas in the aftermath of Cyclone Larry.

### Curriculum Developments

The new syllabus is in its final stages of development and should be completed in early 2007. Visit the GTAQ website for further information on this.

**Visit - [www.gtaq.com.au](http://www.gtaq.com.au)**

## GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA



### Membership

Membership is currently 686. This rise may be attributable to the increased emphasis on the VELS geography strand and to the proactive work undertaken by the new Education Officer.

### Professional Development

The demand for professional development continues to be strong with a focus on recent curriculum changes at all levels of

school education and GIS. In line with the new VCE course GTAV has conducted some additional lectures which have been well received. The annual three day conference was held in August and attracted over 390 delegates. Two highly successful student lectures were coordinated – one focusing on Human Population (221 attendees) and the second focusing on the examination (903 attendees).



TASMANIAN  
GEOGRAPHY  
TEACHERS'  
ASSOCIATION



**Membership**

Membership is currently 18. These members are the remnants of Geography teachers in the state. Due to Essential Learnings teachers do not teach in discrete discipline areas.

**Professional Development**

Hydro Tasmania and the SSI have offered PD to prepare teachers and some students for the SSI National Conference mapping competition. The competition will be for Tasmanian students only and their entries will be judged and displayed at the conference in April, 2007. The first stage of this PD will take place in November with two days (one for southern teachers and another for northern/north west teachers). Further opportunities for skill development in GIS/GPS will occur in early term one of 2007.

The SSI National Conference will provide a platform for Tasmanian geography teachers to showcase students' skills.

**Curriculum Development**

The Essential Learnings curriculum (and

its 18 learning areas) is being replaced with seven more traditional subjects. The reporting system will also be overhauled. The new model will focus on English/literacy, maths/numeracy, science and technology and society and history. Of some concern for geography is the Education Minister, David Bartlett's stress on 'the continuing importance of maths, English, science and history' (The Examiner, August 30th, 2006).

Post Year 10 Curriculum Review – despite changes to the K to 10 curriculum, the post year ten review is continuing.

11/12 Geography syllabus – the second year of teaching this course is almost complete, with the balance between human and physical geography appearing to be well-accepted by teachers. Until the post year 10 review is completed, it is unclear whether changes will occur to this and other syllabuses.

**AGTA Conference**

It was pleasing that many TGTA members took part in the 2006 AGTA conference, either as delegates or as fieldtrip leaders.

GEOGRAPHICAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



It was fantastic that Mike Fazio, President of GAWA, attended this 97th AGTA meeting. Mike outlined the debate, held at the GAWA Annual Conference that resulted in GAWA's re-affiliation.

Mike, as President, will formally become an AGTA Director in January 2007.

As with all other affiliates, the place of geography in the Western Australian

curriculum is a paramount issue. Geography, as a discrete subject, is losing its place in WA schools. Interestingly, a few years ago Geography had the fourth largest examination enrolment!

Mike agrees that we must work together from two fronts – as a national body and as independent affiliates.

**Congratulations**

AGTA thanks and congratulates Debbie Doyle (President TGTA) for the planning and coordination of the 2006 AGTA Conference held in Launceston in January. Debbie's commitment ensured the success of the Conference realising a profit of \$12,912. These funds have been reinvested in a term deposit for AGTA. Congratulations Debbie!

**and More Congratulations!!**

Thank you to Debbie for all her work in TGTA. Debbie will be relocating to Coff's Harbour in 2007. AGTA is pleased that Debbie will continue as secretary – Debbie has made an outstanding contribution to AGTA within her role as Secretary. We all wish Debbie the best of luck in her new school and location.



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**Next meeting**

**Proposed: Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 May in Melbourne.**