

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



The
Geography Teachers' Association
of New South Wales

ABN: 59 246 850 128

**Presented at the Annual General Meeting,
Thursday 15 October 2015**

Introduction

2014–2015 has been a busy and productive year for the Association. A range of teacher professional learning events have occurred around NSW, and will continue to occur for the remainder of 2015. We have welcomed the release of the new NSW K-10 Geography syllabus and eagerly anticipate not only its implementation but also being able to continue our close relationship with BOSTES and provide continued support to facilitate effective teaching, learning and assessment of this new syllabus across primary and secondary schools.

Membership to the Association has remained steady throughout the year, hovering around 400 members.

GTA NSW Council

Our 2014–2015 GTANSW Council had 20 members from NSW and two members from ACT.

Executive Officers:

President: Susan Caldis

Vice Presidents: Milton Brown, Lorraine Chaffer, Grant Kleeman, Martin Pluss

Honorary Treasurer: Grant Kleeman

Honorary Secretary: Martin Pluss/Susan Caldis

Minute Secretary: Paul Alger

Immediate Past President: Nick Hutchinson

Council Members:

Paula Cooper, Keith Hopkins, Gabriella Hunter (ACT), Brett Jackson, Grace Larobina, David Latimer, John Lewis, Sharon McLean, Sarah Menassa-Rose, Martin Pluss, David Proctor, Louise Swanson, Darren Tayler, Karen Tuhani (ACT), Steve Weingarth

It is with great pleasure that I announce our Council for 2015–2016, as voted at our Annual General Meeting on Thursday 15 October 2015:

Executive Officers:

President: Susan Caldis

Vice Presidents: Milton Brown, Lorraine Chaffer, Grant Kleeman, Martin Pluss

Honorary Treasurer: Grant Kleeman

Honorary Secretary: Susan Caldis

Minute Secretary: Milton Brown

Immediate Past President: Nick Hutchinson

Council Members:

Paul Alger, Paula Cooper, Catherine Donnelly, Keith Hopkins, Gabriella Hunter (ACT), Grace Larobina, David Latimer, John Lewis, Sharon McLean, Sarah Menassa-Rose, Martin Pluss, Louise Swanson, Karen Tuhani (ACT), Steve Weingarth

It was with great sadness that GTA NSW learnt about the unexpected and sudden passing of Robyn Greene in mid 2015. Robyn had been an active member of GTA NSW for over a decade and held the role of Treasurer and other leadership positions during her time on Council. Robyn's dedication to teaching, enthusiasm for making a difference on Council, and her love of all things Geography are fondly remembered by those who knew and worked with her.

The GTA NSW Council would like to extend much thanks and appreciation to Paul Alger for over two decades of service to GTA NSW Council and particularly for his willingness to fulfil the role of Minutes Secretary for almost as many years. It is with reluctance that we accept Paul's withdrawal from this role as his sense of humour, reliability and incredible attention to detail whilst writing legible minutes will be sorely missed, however, we wholeheartedly welcome his continued contribution as a Councillor and would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul very much for his extensive contribution to the Association as Minute Secretary.

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions Darren Tayler, Brett Jackson and David Proctor have made to Council over the years. Both Darren and Brett have fulfilled the roles of 'official photographer' at many GTA NSW events – sometimes unexpectedly – and all three Councillors have only ever been a request away if assistance was required for any item on our teaching and learning agenda each year. We would like to wish each one of you all the best with your current work-related pursuits and thank you very much for the time you have spent in the role of Councillor; and we look forward to welcoming you back in future years.

The support of key staff from the Professional Teacher's Council NSW office is integral to the smooth operation and distribution of communication and promotional material, general query answering and timely processing and payment of accounts. We would like to thank and sincerely acknowledge the tireless and patient work of David Browne, Bernadette Motulalo, Paul Taylor, Shreela Pradhan, Mai Mai Lin, and Jill Sillar who provide extensive support to the GTA NSW Council through their work in administrative, financial, publishing and organisational tasks.

Additionally, Rob Berry liaises closely with PTC NSW staff in maintaining and updating the GTA NSW website as required. This is a time consuming and 'attention to detail' requiring role and I would like to thank Rob for the hours spent and care taken to ensure our website continues to remain up to date and inviting to peruse.

Professional development and student engagement activities

There is no 'sub-committee' allocated to organise professional development and student engagement activities, instead, committee members volunteer to coordinate these events.

Professional development and student engagement events for 2015 included the Arthur Phillip Awards, the HSC Exam Review series; a Dubbo Mini Conference; a series of Geography Skills workshops; the AGTA Roadshow; the HSC Geography student lecture series; and the Annual Conference

The agreed focus for our professional learning and student engagement program in 2015 was around the Stage 6 Geography course and best practice geographical methodology in the classroom, particularly focusing on skills, integration of ICT, and adopting more inquiry based learning and fieldwork activities. The intention was to provide support particularly for early career teachers and those new to teaching Geography. These focus areas have also been reflected in many of the articles submitted for publication in the *Geography Bulletin* throughout 2015.

Thank you to Nick Hutchinson who represented GTANSW as Conference Convenor for the 2015 AGTA Conference in Rotorua, NZ. The conference takes approximately 2 years to organise and the tremendous amount of time Nick spent liaising with Group Events to ensure the conference catered for the professional and social needs of teachers is much appreciated and thoroughly acknowledged by Council. The 2015 AGTA conference kicked off a successful year of teacher professional learning for GTA NSW even though it was under the umbrella of AGTA. Thank you to Lorraine Chaffer, Susan Caldis, Grant Kleeman and Louise Swanson who delivered several workshops, chaired discussion panels and assisted Nick with general organisational duties during the conference. Particular congratulations are also extended to Nick whose outstanding contribution to geographical education in NSW and across Australia over many decades resulted in him becoming a recipient of the prestigious Don Biddle Award.

Thank you to David Latimer for organising the 2015 HSC Review series. These review sessions were held during Term 1 at Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. The focus was to deconstruct the 2014 HSC Geography examination questions and provide insight to the marking guidelines so that teachers could identify potential strengths and areas for improvement in their delivery of the HSC course and related assessment. Feedback received from attendees continues to be positive and reinforces the importance of this event in our professional learning agenda. The Council would like to sincerely thank David for volunteering to organise this program for the first time in 2015.

Thank you to Grace Larobina for continuing to expertly co-ordinate the Arthur Phillip Awards; to the team from Council who assisted Grace with the marking process during the January school holidays (Paul Alger, John Lewis, Lorraine Chaffer, Sharon McLean, David Latimer, Brett Jackson, Susan Caldis); and to everyone from Council who attended and participated in the ceremony. Congratulations to Keith Hopkins and Steve Weingarth who had students with winning entries. The Arthur Phillip Awards recognises outstanding achievement by students - and their teachers - in the HSC Geography exam from the previous year and in school-based fieldwork projects. There is a marking and feedback process for Year 10 and Year 11 students who submit fieldwork projects (often the Senior Geography Project or the Research Action Plan). Awards and prizes are presented at an awards evening with a guest speaker. This year, the event was again held at ACU Strathfield and we were privileged to have Professor Simon Pinnegar (UNSW) as the guest speaker.

Thank you to Sharon McLean for organising the Dubbo Mini Conference and presenting a fieldwork session along the banks of the Macquarie River; and to Lorraine Chaffer, Mick Law and Dr Grant Kleeman for delivering the mapping skills and ICT based presentations. This was held in early Term 1 at Dubbo RSL. This was one of our most popular events in 2015 and the attendees traveled from areas such as Hay, West Wyalong, Newcastle and also from Sydney. The focus of the conference was on mastering Geography skills and incorporating fieldwork activities in to teaching and learning activities. Whilst this was targeted at teachers who were new to teaching Geography, it was also well received by specialist Geography teachers.

Thank you to Lorraine Chaffer for organising the HSC Student Lecture series, and to Dr Grant Kleeman, David Hamper, Susan Caldis, Chris Tanna and Sharon McLean for delivering engaging and rigorous presentations. The lectures were held in Sydney City, Wollongong and Newcastle during Term 2 and based around Skills and each HSC topic: Ecosystems At Risk, Urban Places, and People and Economic Activity. It is pleasing to also see an increasing number of teachers attending these lectures without students as part of their own professional learning.

Thank you to Milton Brown for organising and conducting Geography's Big Week Out during the October school holidays in 2013 and 2014. This culminated in him taking the top Australian students to Russia to compete in the Olympiad during September-October 2015, where their achievements awarded them silver and bronze medals.

Thank you to Susan Caldis for organising the Annual Conference. Thanks also to John Lewis and Paul Alger for filling over 120 Conference bags with resources prior to the Conference and thank you in advance for agreeing to organise the registration table at the Conference. Thanks in advance is also extended to Dr Grant Kleeman, Lorraine Chaffer, Sharon McLean, David Latimer and Steven Weingarth for offering their time as MC's, 'meet and greeters' and for being willing to provide general assistance at the Conference. The conference will be held on Thursday 5 November at Novotel Central. The theme is focused around sustainability of our subject, our places and our environments to support the release of the new NSW K-10 Geography Syllabus. There will be a range of keynote sessions delivered by BOSTES representatives, geography academics, geography teachers, and representatives from LendLease and World Vision. An opportunity to complete a site tour of Barangaroo is available for a small group of teachers at the conclusion of the conference.

Thank you to Susan Caldis and Dr Grant Kleeman for organising the GTA NSW component of the AGTA Roadshow initiative. This professional learning opportunity will be held during November in Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle; and is designed to support the Australian Curriculum: Geography.

Conceptual understandings, the effective integration of spatial technologies, fieldwork and inquiry methodologies, an understanding of the geographical learning in primary and secondary years, and an exploration of resources are covered in workshops to be run by Susan Caldis, Grant Kleeman, Malcolm McInerney, Mick Law and John Butler.

Planning for professional development and student engagement for 2016 began in September 2015. Thank you to all Council members who have already expressed willingness to coordinate specific programs during 2016. The agreed focus will continue to be in explicitly providing support for early career teachers and those new to teaching Geography; and also to connect more directly with regional NSW teachers. Strategies such as greater provision of accredited workshops; greater incorporation of fieldwork, inquiry and skills based activities in to professional development; and an improved presence in regional NSW will be continued to help raise the profile of Geography in schools.

Publications and projects

Thank you to Dr Grant Kleeman and Lorraine Chaffer for their joint role as Editors of the *Geography Bulletin*. There are 4 issues scheduled for 2015 and the 3rd issue is currently in production. The journal is in electronic form accessed via a membership password. During 2015 the focus reflected our agreed position on continuing to encourage best practice Geography methodology for the classroom, particularly focusing on fieldwork, the use of ICT and updating case studies related to the Stage 6 course.

Thank you to Nick Hutchinson for his role as Editor of *Geographical Education* – a peer reviewed journal. *Geographical Education* will be published during the last quarter of 2015 and includes Australian and international contributions. This journal is in electronic form and the suggested theme for Volume 28, 2015 will be 'Complementary Geographies'. Examples of refereed contributions include:

- What is powerful knowledge and can it be found in the Australian Geography curriculum? Associate Professor Alaric Maude, Flinders University
- Working with students' ideas in physical geography: a model of knowledge development and application Dr Rod Lane and Associate Professor Pamela Coutts, Macquarie University

Action for the promotion of Geography

There is no 'sub-committee' to specifically organise events to promote Geography to students or teachers, instead Committee members volunteer to coordinate these activities and work closely with PTC NSW staff as appropriate.

Thank you to Susan Caldis and Martin Pluss for actively seeking to develop connections between Geography being taught university and schools. Martin has been the GTA NSW representative for many years with the Geographical Society of NSW, having a regular presence at their meetings and providing the opportunity for continued dialogue and connection between school-based and academic geography. In this representative role, Martin liaises closely with academic geographers and tertiary geographical educators. To support this connection with universities, throughout the year Susan built a strong relationship with Professor Simon Pinnegar (UNSW) and Associate Professor Deirdre Dragovich (University of Sydney). Both of these expert geographers have fulfilled the guest speaker role at the 2014 and 2015 Arthur Phillip Awards and will be presenting at the Annual Conference in November 2015. The connection with the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG) was re-established by Susan when she became a member early in 2015 and then attended and presented at their annual conference in Canberra during July. Susan will also be the AGTA Representative at IAG meetings for 2015–2016. Relationships between academic and school geography needs to be nurtured for the benefit of our educators and students.

Thank you to Lorraine Chaffer for continuing to share and prepare a collection of resources for *Scoop.It*. These resources are accessible from the GTA NSW website page under Resources, available via your membership login.

Thank you to Sharon McLean for presenting lectures at Western Sydney University HSC

Enrichment Day. This year, Sharon's focus was on guiding students through effective use and application of case studies presented by geography academics to examples of HSC questions. The enrichment day was well attended and held on Friday 21 August at UWS Parramatta Campus.

GTA NSW Council continues to be approached collectively and individually by BOSTES, schools, education offices, publishers, private and public organisations and businesses to assist with teacher professional learning and/or the development of geographical education resources.

Thank you to the many Council members who are involved in this work to ensure the delivery of quality, rigorous, user friendly geographical education resources. Of particular note has been the online Barangaroo Learning Portal, developed as a result of collaboration between LendLease and Dr Grant Kleeman. This is user-friendly, free of charge resource, able to be accessed by both students and teachers. The learning focus is directed towards the content of the Australian Curriculum (as contained in the new NSW K–10 Geography syllabus) as well as the current Stage 6 Geography course.

GTA NSW continued to have a representative capacity in the development of revisions of the new NSW K–10 Geography syllabus and associated teacher support materials.

Thank you to Lorraine Chaffer for her participation on the BOSTES syllabus writing team and to David Latimer for officially representing GTA NSW as part of the BOSTES reference group. Susan Caldis was approached by BOSTES and the *Sydney Morning Herald* to write the Geography section for the HSC Study Guide. Milton Brown has also continued his involvement with the DEC NSW HSIE Cross Curriculum committee.

Awards

There are several Awards that enable recognition of outstanding and distinguished contribution to geographical education in schools and/or universities. It is with great pleasure that GTA NSW are able to nominate the following recipients for 2015:

- **Brock Rowe Award 2015 (to be presented at the GTA NSW Annual Conference)**

The winners of this award will be:

Sally Egan, Geography teacher and BOSTES contact at Dubbo School of Distance Education. Sally will be presented with the award at the 2015 Annual Conference on Thursday 5 November.

Catherine Donnelly, Head Teacher HSIE, Irrawang High School. Catherine will be presented with the award at the 2016 Annual Conference, scheduled to be held during Term 1 2016.

- **McDonald Holmes Award 2015 (to be presented at the Geographical Society of NSW Awards Night)**

This is a biennial award coordinated by the Geographical Society of NSW. Suitable nominees will be put forward to Council during October. The most recent recipient of this award was Martin Pluss in 2013.

- **PTC NSW Outstanding Professional Service Award 2015 to Association members and PTC NSW Media Award 2015**

GTA NSW representatives will be nominated for these awards in 2015. The recipient of the Outstanding Professional Service Award for 2014 was awarded to Milton Brown.

Issues and Challenges

Fortunately, there are only a few challenges affecting the work of GTA NSW Council:

- Lack of formal meeting space equipped with items such as a projector, teleconference and/or videoconference facilities remains a challenge. Towards the end of 2014, there was a discussion about alternative meeting venues; and the decision was to hold our meetings at the PTC NSW Offices in Ashfield during 2015. It is still hoped that our meeting space for 2016 will be adequately equipped to enable us to include colleagues such as ACT Council members or regional NSW teachers in meetings, and also to invite presentations from Council members or special guests as part of the Council meeting.

- Obtaining a quorum at meetings (perhaps due in part to the above point and/or a restriction to Wednesday afternoon meeting dates) has become an increasing challenge throughout the year. Hopefully there will be greater flexibility with meeting dates during 2016 which will enable a greater proportion of Councillors to attend and participate in our monthly meetings.
- Whilst the release of the new NSW K–10 Geography syllabus in July 2015 was welcomed, NSW remains significantly behind the majority of other states and territories in terms of implementation, which will commence for NSW in 2017 with Years 7 and 9. One of the main concerns raised by teachers now is the overlap in content between the current Stage 6 syllabus and Stage 5 in the new K-10 Geography syllabus. GTA NSW will continue to initiate conversations with BOSTES about the need for a review and update of the Stage 6 Geography syllabus.

Conclusion

Personally, I would like to extend my appreciation and thanks to all Council members for their support of and participation in GTA NSW activities throughout the year. It has been a pleasure to work with all of you and I look forward to the privilege of being able work closely with you again and lead the Association for a third year during 2016. In particular, I would like to thank the Immediate Past President, Nick Hutchinson; and the Vice Presidents, Dr Grant Kleeman, Lorraine Chaffer, Milton Brown and Martin Pluss for their unwavering support and advice, generosity of time and expertise, and willingness to take on additional and/or multiple roles within the Association, often at short notice. This is something for which I remain very grateful.

Overall, 2014–2015 became another diverse and successful year for the GTA NSW, achieved through the enthusiasm and commitment from Council members; the interest and support from Association members; and the efficient, ongoing administrative support from the PTC NSW office.

To all our members, thank you for attending our events, reading our journals, making contact with us at a personal level, and for providing us with feedback about professional learning opportunities you are specifically looking for in your teaching of Geography. We look forward to your continued interest in and engagement with GTANSW and our professional learning and student engagement program during 2016.

Susan Caldis, GTA NSW President