

# 2015 Australian Geography Competition

## Report to the Geography Teachers' Association of New South Wales

**2015 marked the twenty-first year of the Australian Geography Competition which is a joint initiative of the Australian Geography Teachers' Association and the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland.**

The number of students entering the 2015 Australian Geography Competition in total was 78,473 from 770 schools. This was an increase of over 7500 students and 9 schools compared to 2014, and over 3800 students and 45 schools compared to 2013. New South Wales (NSW) recorded an increase in the number of students entering with 27,841 in 2015 and 25,892 in 2014; however, a decline from the 2013 total of 29,323. There was a similar trend in school numbers: 281 in 2015, 275 in 2014, and 286 in 2013. Between 2014 and 2015, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) experienced a decline in both student and school numbers between 2014 (2,682 students and 19 schools) and 2015 (2,497 students and 16 schools), yet 2015 student numbers increased compared to 2013 (2,166 students and 16 schools):

Congratulations to the NSW and ACT students who came first in their age divisions or achieved outstanding results, and to the school winners:

### NSW Junior

Jarvis Pitcher, Normanhurst Boys' High School  
*(first in Australia)*  
Emily Zhang, James Ruse Agricultural High School  
Oliver Yau, James Ruse Agricultural High School  
Edwin Xu, James Ruse Agricultural High School  
Tom Liu, Sydney Boys High School  
*(students who achieved outstanding results)*

### NSW Intermediate

Rowan Lembit, Fort Street High School  
Tom Masters, Penrith Academic Selective High School  
Thulashigan Sreeharan, Penrith Academic Selective High School (equal first in NSW)  
Amelia Rawson, Kinross Wolaroi School  
Matthew Blyth, Merewether High School  
Aiden Ball, Merewether High School  
Sebastian, Hodge, Newington College  
Jovi Leung, Baulkham Hills High School  
Jenson Xie, James Ruse Agricultural High School  
*(students who achieved outstanding results)*

### NSW Senior

Andreas Orsmond, Sydney Grammar School *(first in Australia)*  
Robbie Arnold, Sydney Grammar School  
James Kalas, Sydney Grammar School  
Matthew Brener, Sydney Grammar School  
Natalie Maynard, Coffs Harbour Senior College  
Nicholas Jarvis, Coffs Harbour Senior College  
Jack Day, Albury High School  
*(students who achieved outstanding results)*

### NSW School

Sydney Grammar School *(Australia first)*

### ACT Junior

Tristan Miller, Lyneham High School  
Spencer Collaviti, Marist College Canberra  
*(equal first in ACT and combined Territories)*

### ACT Intermediate

Michael Nguyen-Kim, Canberra Grammar School  
*(first in ACT and combined Territories)*

### ACT Senior

Deepan Kumar, Canberra Grammar School  
*(first in ACT and combined Territories)*

### ACT School

Canberra Grammar School  
*(first in ACT and combined Territories, and second in Australia)*

A number of NSW and ACT schools ranked in the top 10 schools in Australia.

Rank	School
1	Sydney Grammar School, NSW
2	Canberra Grammar School, ACT
= 3	St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill, NSW
= 3	Shore School, NSW
5	Merewether High School, NSW
6	Sydney Boys High School, NSW
7	James Ruse Agricultural High School, NSW
=9	Kinross Wolaroi School, NSW
=9	North Sydney Boys' High School, NSW
=9	Northern Beaches Secondary College, NSW

# 2015 Australian Geography Competition



The Australian Geography Competition Committee worked to ensure that the 2015 Competition questions were guided by the Australian Curriculum: Geography. Attached to this report is the list of question numbers and relevant Curriculum Content Descriptors. This approach of matching questions to the Australian Curriculum: Geography will be used in the coming years while continuing the 2014 move to include more skills questions and fewer based on place-specific knowledge. The introduction of the Australian Curriculum: Geography based questions did impact on the average score with a decline in averages from 2014, yet an increase against 2013 averages (see following table).

Age level	2013	2014	2015
Junior (out of 30)	12.5	15.7	13.7
Intermediate (out of 40)	17.6	22.7	19.5
Senior (out of 35)	14.8	18.9	16.6



## Geography's Big Week Out

Sixteen Year 11 Geography students in each State and the combined Territories were selected from the Australian Geography Competition to take part in the Geography's Big Week Out which was held on North Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah), South East Queensland from 27 September to 2 October 2015. The Big Week Out was organised by a Geography Teachers' Association of Queensland committee under the leadership of Rebecca Nicholas, and was assisted by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland. The Geography's Big Week Out was part of the final selection process for the Australian team for the International Geography Olympiad to be held in Beijing, China in 2016.



Geography's Big Week Out is a week of geographical activities focussing on fieldwork and spatial technologies, and this year's theme was sustainable development on the island. The students stayed at Minjerribah Holiday Camp for the week and looked at the characteristics of the three settlements on the island; geographical characteristics such as vegetation, topography, beach profiles and hydrology; indigenous culture and history; current economic activities; and planning for the island's economic, environmental and social sustainability.

Aunty Joan Hendricks from the Quandamooka traditional owners welcomed the students to North Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah). Other community members working with the students were from the School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management, University of Queensland; Dunwich Museum; Straddie Camping; Sibelco; and, the Redland City Council.

The week was not all work and no play as the students also had time to kayak on Brown Lake, create sand sculptures at Cylinder Beach, and participate in a range of innovative and fun programs at night.



# 2015 Australian Geography Competition



Representing NSW and ACT at the 2015 Big Week Out were:

## NSW

Andreas Orsmond, Sydney Grammar School  
Georgia Worner, Loreto College - Kirribilli  
Isabella Croker, Mt St Benedict College  
Robert Arnold, Sydney Grammar School

## ACT (and combined Territories)

Claire Yung, Lyneham High School  
Deepan Kumar, Canberra Grammar School

## NSW and ACT student's comments on Geography's Big Week Out:

*"I knew before I arrived at Geography's Big Week Out that if you put 16 kids of similar ages and interests in the same place for a week, it is bound to be a success. But I would never have expected how much fun I would have and how much I would learn during this fantastic week. It was a perfect balance of in-the-field investigation, classroom reflection and laidback fun, in which I was not only exposed to a whole new set of complex concepts to grapple with and reflect upon, but I got to meet some of the nicest and funniest kids imaginable. I couldn't have asked for anything better."* Andreas Orsmond



*"Geography's Big Week Out was a great experience to work with other students from around Australia at North Stradbroke Island in Queensland. The week was filled with a variety of activities including guest speakers, beach profiling, working with spatial technologies as well as having fun swimming and kayaking at Brown Lake. The range of activities made the week very enjoyable and kept us all engaged throughout the trip. I enjoyed hearing the different perspectives on topical issues of North Stradbroke Island and also seeing the range of careers Geography leads to."* Georgie Worner

*"I thoroughly enjoyed GBWO. I thought it was very well thought out and took us on a process to the final exam which I enjoyed because it was something different and more creative than the normal exam. The whole experience though was one of the best I possibly could have. A week with fellow geographers staying at one of the best places in Australia, doing work but mainly having a fun and relaxed time. Couldn't really ask for more."* Robert Arnold



*"Overall I thoroughly enjoyed the Geography Big Week Out experience. I found it really interesting to engage with other like-minded students studying the subject of Geography. I also found the activities very engaging and educational, and they helped me to learn a lot more about the subject of Geography."* Isabella Croker

*"For me, Geography's Big Week Out was an exciting opportunity to learn about a subject I enjoy. I learned a lot during the week, not only content on different aspects of geography but also the skills that geographers use in the real world. I felt it was a valuable experience, and I thoroughly enjoyed the activities and the atmosphere of being with students from around Australia."* Claire Yung

*"The Big Week Out was an interesting, insightful and enjoyable experience overall. Throughout the week, we observed settlements, completed a transect, listened to guest speakers and took part in other various fieldwork exercises. I found all of these to be quite intriguing and challenging yet enjoyable at the same time as we*





*worked in groups. During the week, time was also made for going to beach, kayaking and late-night Mafia card games, all of which I found to be entertaining. Spending the trip with 15 other people my age and with a similar interest in Geography made the trip even more amusing and memorable. Overall, the Big Week Out was an experience which I will not forget and has inspired me to pursue Geography in the future.” Deepan Kumar*





# 2015 Australian Geography Competition



## 12<sup>th</sup> International Geography Olympiad (iGeo)

The 12<sup>th</sup> International Geography Olympiad (iGeo), held from 11 to 17 August, was hosted by Russia at the Computeria youth recreation and educational centre in Tver Oblast, 200 km NW from Moscow. The iGeo is an annual competition for the world's best 16 to 19 year old Geography students selected through a national Geography competition. Based on their performances at the 2014 Geography's Big Week Out (GBWO), the four students chosen to represent Australia in 2015 were:

Samantha Dixon, South Ballajura Community College, Perth W A

Canada Gavin, Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange NSW

Esrom Leaman, Pembroke School, Adelaide SA

Giselle Pickering, Wavell State High School, Brisbane Qld.

The Team Leaders were Milton Brown (Geography Teachers' Association of New South Wales, and organiser of the 2013/14 GBWOs) and Marg McIvor (Australian Geography Competition Committee member). Although Kath Berg also accompanied the team, she was mainly involved with her duties as Co-Chair of the Olympiad Task Force.

*"After spending more than 24 hours on planes and in transit, we finally arrived in Moscow... We were lucky enough to spend some time exploring Moscow before the Olympiad began, and we managed to navigate our way along the Metro lines to Red Square and the Kremlin, which provided a lot of great photo opportunities. On the next day, we travelled to Tver where we would be staying for the Olympiad and we settled into our accommodation. Meeting everyone as they arrived in groups on buses was very exciting, and talking about*

*how differently each country learned Geography was interesting"* Esrom

The iGeo programme included three tests: a written response test, a multimedia test and a substantial fieldwork exercise requiring observation, cartographic representation and geographical analysis. Students must be able to answer all test questions in the official language of the Olympiad which is English. This year, a record 41 countries participated and we are proud to announce that Esrom and Sam won silver medals and Giselle a bronze.

The programme also included poster presentations by teams, cultural exchanges, a handicraft fair and a song night. At the latter, the Australian Team decided to perform "Waltzing Matilda" As Canada commented:

*"Our performance was an interesting arrangement of the song, leaving many members of the audience singing along with us for the rest of our time in Russia."*

The Competition organisers appreciate the support of New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory teachers in entering their students in the Competition and welcome any feedback teachers may have. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries.

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