

Recent GTA NSW Events

Susan Caldis, GTA NSW President

GTA NSW Annual Conference Report

The *GTA NSW Annual Conference* was held at Novotel Central on Thursday 5 November. The conference theme was focused on sustainability, not only as a key concept in the new K–10 Geography syllabus but also how ways in which we can integrate more contemporary case studies in to our teaching and learning programs and improve our teaching practice in order to sustain our subject in to the senior years. We were pleased to welcome over 150 educators from across NSW to our conference from primary and secondary stages of schooling as well as those involved in higher education. The *twitter feed* #gtansw provided plenty of ‘a-ha moments’ and snapshots of learning throughout the day to both conference delegates in the room and geography educators who were virtually following the conference sessions.

We were delighted to have *Associate Professor Deirdre Dragovich* from the faculty of GeoSciences at the University of Sydney deliver the opening keynote about sustaining environments through the lens of geomorphology. Throughout her presentation emphasis was given to the importance of soils and how changes in the surrounding biophysical environment, occurring as a result of human and natural processes, affect the quality of soils and their ability to sustain environments in to the future. There was much to consider in this keynote for the effective teaching and learning in *Landscapes and Landforms* for Stage 4. As geographers we were challenged to continually be mindful of the interconnection between people, place and environment.

One of the most anticipated sessions was delivered by Brooke Prideaux and Darren Tayler from *BOSTES* about interpretation and implementation of the new *K–10 Geography syllabus*. Key messages from this presentation included

- discussion about areas of flexibility and intended learning within the syllabus
- the role and use of inquiry questions to frame teaching and learning programs
- the intended emphasis on inquiry based learning and fieldwork which has been exemplified through the use of ‘investigate’ throughout the syllabus and finally



GTA NSW President Susan Caldis, Vice President Lorraine Chaffer and Councillor Louise Swanson seeing the hard work of conference organisation come to fruition at the Annual Conference.

- the contemporary nature of this syllabus which draws significantly from the knowledge, understanding and skills articulated in the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography.

Further information can be found on the BOSTES website.

It was a privilege to have *Dr Christine Evans*, of the Wiradjuri People, open our Conference with an Acknowledgement of Country and present an inspiring and thought provoking session about the knowledge and understanding related to *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures* in the new *K–10 Geography syllabus*. We learnt about correct terminology and terms of reference, protocols, teaching and learning resources for both the classroom and our own professional learning, but most importantly were encouraged to stop and consider concepts such as place, environment, sustainability and change from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective to enrich our ‘usual’ point of view.

Dr. Grant Kleeman provided an interesting session about the importance of the underpinning *concepts* in effective interpretation and implementation of the new *K–10 Geography syllabus*: place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale, change. Through discussion of contemporary changes to places around Sydney, such as Barangaroo and Darling Harbour, we were taken through ways in which we could identify separate concepts but also see the connection between them.

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A question that geography teachers are often asked by their students in the junior and senior years is 'what type of career can I have using Geography?' or queries to that effect. In addition to exploring the GeoCareers website it is often helpful to speak to a 'geographer' who has been able to utilise key understandings and skills associated with this subject in employment other than teaching. Liveability and the changing nature of places is an investigative focus in the new syllabus, and learning associated with this content would lead students nicely in to a career related to urban planning. We were fortunate to have **Associate Professor Simon Pinnegar** from the University of NSW join us to present an informative and entertaining session about the pathways, building blocks and stopping off points leading from school-based geography in to a degree focused on Urban Planning.

Developing an improved connection with primary educators and being able to provide professional learning opportunities specific to the needs of teaching geography in a primary education context is important to the GTA NSW Council, and to kick-start the profiling of geography across Stages 1–3, we were delighted to have **Kaylene Kritharides** and **Julie Carr** present a session about teaching sustainability through inquiry based learning. Kaylene teaches the Primary HSIE methodology at Western Sydney University and Julie teaches at Wahroonga Public School. Utilising key messages from the effective use of technology in the High Possibility Classrooms project by Dr Jane Hunter and connecting this with inquiry based learning in HSIE, Kaylene and Julie spoke passionately about the ways in which they had been able to engage their primary students in exploring sustainability through the lens of fieldwork and geographical concepts.

The afternoon sessions focused on exploring teaching and learning resources available to support the new K–10 Geography syllabus such as those produced by World Vision and Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

Our twitter feed for the conference (#gtansw) was well supported throughout the conference and I encourage you to connect with @gtansw if you are on Twitter.

Thank you very much to all the presenters for their willingness to share their expertise and deliver a session; to all GTA NSW Councillors for their support of and involvement with the conference; and to all educators who attended and contributed to the day. We look forward to your continued participation in our teacher professional learning events during 2016.



Representative from GTA NSW attended the Geographical Society of NSW Awards evening

Geographical Society of NSW Awards Evening

The **Macdonald Holmes Medal** is named after James Macdonald Holmes who was McCaughey Professor of Geography at the University of Sydney during the period 1929 to 1961. To commemorate his achievements over these years, the Geographical Society together with the Geography Teachers' Association, awards biennially, a medal bearing his portrait and name, to a person deemed to have made a distinguished contribution in the field of geographical education in Australia.

The Macdonald Holmes Medal for 2015 was awarded to **Professor Phillip O'Neill** from the Urban Research Centre, Western Sydney University for his outstanding contribution to the discipline of Geography in both university and school-based sectors. The Geographical Society NSW generously supported the attendance of GTA NSW representatives at their awards night on Monday 30 November and invited Susan Caldis and Grant Kleeman to announce the Medal. GTA NSW was also represented at the event by GTA NSW councillors Nick Hutchinson, Steve Weingarth, Martin Pluss and Louise Swanson.



Right: Professor Phillip O'Neill being presented with the Macdonald Holmes Award by Professor Phil McManus

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Award citation – Professor O'Neill

Professor Phillip O'Neill's outstanding contribution to the discipline of Geography spans both academia and school education.

Prior to embarking on an academic career Phillip taught Geography in NSW public schools and played a leading role in the development of Geography syllabuses as Chair of the NSW Geography Syllabus Committee. The syllabuses developed under Phillip's leadership in the early 1990's are still in use a quarter of a century later. Their longevity highlights the quality of the curriculum developed and the extent to which is reflected, and indeed anticipated, developments within the discipline.

Phillip continues to be an advocate for school Geography and has always been willing to contribute to conferences organised by the Geography Teachers Association of NSW.

Phillip's academic background is the foundation upon which highly successful career has been based. His qualifications include a BA(Hons), MA(Hons) and a PhDGeo. All completed a Sydney's Macquarie University.

Phillip is currently Director, Centre for Western Sydney (2014–present) and a Professorial Research Fellow, Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney (2012–present).

Prior to these appointments Phillip was the Foundation Director, Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney (2006–2012) and Director Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, The University of Newcastle, NSW (2000–2006).

International appointments include the position of Research Fellow at University of Bristol (1994), University of Massachusetts (1999), National University of Singapore (2003), University of Oxford (2010), and the University College London (2015). Phillip has also served as a member of Editorial Boards of *Transactions of Institute of British Geographers* (Wiley Blackwell); *Progress in Human Geography* (Arnold).

Phillip was the Editor-in-Chief, *Geographical Research* (2009 to 2013).

Current appointments include Member of Member of the Editorial Boards of *Environment and Planning A* (Pion); *Journal of Economic Geography* (OUP); *Compass* (Wiley Blackwell); *Regional Studies, Regional Science* (Taylor and Francis); *Human Geography*. Phillip is also a Member International Expert Advisory Board, Build, U.K. (2013 to current) and a Member International Advisory Board, Fourth

Global Conference in Economic Geography, Oxford, August 19-22, 2015 (current). He is also a Columnist with *Newcastle Herald* (2003-present).

Phillip's research interests include urban infrastructure, regional labour markets, urban food supply chains and state theory and practice. He has authored or co-authored four books, eleven book chapters, and more than 25 research articles and reports.

Phillip's awards include Fellow of the Institute of Australian Geographers (awarded 2008).

Phillip is a very worth recipient of the Macdonald Holmes Medal.

AGTA Roadshow

The AGTA Roadshow was hosted by GTA NSW in Canberra, Sydney and Newcastle between 26-28 November 2015. We had just over 40 educators attend each event in Canberra and Newcastle, and over 125 educators attend in Sydney. This is a professional learning initiative designed by the AGTA Board to specifically support the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum: Geography and its amended versions where appropriate in each state and territory. Earlier in 2015 the AGTA Roadshow was successfully delivered in Brisbane and Perth, and dates are booked for 2016 in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart.

The focus of the AGTA Roadshow is to present sessions that emphasise best-practice geographical teaching methodology for both a primary and secondary education context in relation to: the identification and use of underpinning concepts; how to recognise and develop 'geographical thinking'; why inquiry based learning and fieldwork is important in Geography; and how to effectively utilise spatial technologies. Dr Grant Kleeman, Susan Caldis, Malcolm McInerney, John Butler OAM and Mick Law presented the sessions. We were particularly delighted to welcome primary educators to this AGTA event and would like to encourage them to maintain their contact with GTA NSW.



Right: Malcolm McInerney presenting his session on the seven underpinning concepts of the Geography Curriculum