

## BROCK ROWE AWARD WINNER 2018

The Brock Rowe Award, an award for excellence in teaching geography in schools, is granted jointly by the Councils of the Geography Teachers' Association of New South Wales Inc. (GTANSW) and the Geographical Society of New South Wales Inc. (GSNSW), biennially, to persons who have demonstrated consistently, over a period, excellence in the teaching of geography in schools.

Our congratulations to Susan Summerfield from Menai High School, a worthy recipient of the 2018 Brock Rowe Award.



Martin Pluss, council member of GTA NSW and the Geographical Society of NSW presents Susan Summerfield with her award.

### Award Citation

*Susan has demonstrated a passion for teaching across many NSW schools and promoted the study of Geography through authentic learning experiences and 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies.*

*Susan sets rigorous standards in promoting Geography in practical fieldwork as well as academic pursuits. This is evidenced by students in her Stage 6 courses having meaningful understanding of local and wider environments leading to post-school studies in a range of areas including: urban planning; environmental management and government policy.*

*In the classroom, Susan's caring approach to teaching students of all abilities is inclusive and supportive. Over many years, she has successfully promoted Geography studies and added value to student achievement in HSC Geography. Additionally, Susan works collaboratively with her colleagues and actively promotes Geography methodologies. Through mentoring opportunity, she generously shares an ability to demonstrate a depth of knowledge and an ability to capture student interest. Susan's peers have appreciated her 'down to earth' attitude and the way she integrates real-world application of knowledge to drive student engagement.*

## HSC HIGH ACHIEVERS

Each year the top 10 Achievers in the previous year HSC Geography Examination and their teachers are recognised at the annual Conference Awards ceremony.

Award recipients from 2017 were:

First Place	Owen Small Merewether High School Teacher: Rachael Tonks	Sixth Place	James Wu Sydney Grammar School Teacher: Catherine Naghten
Second Place	Jessica Francis Wenona School Teacher: Sue Kerr	Seventh Place	Stephanie Hennings Macarthur Anglican School Teacher: Rebecca Fitzpatrick
Third Place	Isabella Morris Wenona School Teacher: Sue Kerr	Eighth Place	Elizabeth Mee Merewether High School Teacher: Rachael Tonks
Fourth Place	Jacqueline Henville Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College Teacher: Marnie Butler	Ninth Place	Anita Geokjian Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College Teacher: Marnie Butler
Fifth Place	Meagan Davis Bellingen High School Teacher: Amber Hill	Tenth Place	Izac Carracher Sydney Grammar School Teacher: Shona Newall

## SUBMISSION TO STAGE 6 GEOGRAPHY REVIEW

The following submission by the Geography Teachers Association of New South Wales, attempts to represent the viewpoint of 21 Councillors who are experienced Geography teachers having taught or are currently teaching Stage 6 Geography. Furthermore, the Councillors teach across Sydney, Canberra and in regional centres such as Wagga Wagga and Tweed Heads across all education sectors. The following comments reflect GTANSW Councillor viewpoints about the current Stage 6 Geography and Life Skills Syllabuses and future directions the syllabus document might take.

The aim of this submission is to comment on perceived areas of strength and weakness of the current Stage 6 Syllabus, where there is a degree of consensus among Councillors. It is hoped the following viewpoints may assist in the development of a document addressing the future directions for Stage 6 Geography.

The overall feeling is that components of the current syllabuses are liked by teachers and it is hoped the areas identified would remain or be incorporated into a future syllabus document. There is also a recognition that in many areas the current Syllabus is out of date, particularly when consideration is given to the nature of modern society and education, features of the new K-10 Geography Syllabus and the Australian Curriculum for senior students. Views on the HSC examination follow a similar thread with a change of focus to the application of knowledge, understanding and skills recommended.

### Syllabus strengths, weaknesses and suggestions

- The **structure and requirements** are clearly presented.
- In most part, the course is **manageable and appropriate** although this is an area of **concern** given the content of the new Geography Syllabus K-10, global changes since the current syllabus was written and the demand for workplace skills that include collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.
- There is scope for **flexibility** in the delivery of content, choice of case studies, illustrative examples and the integration of contemporary issues within the syllabus.
- Requirements for the integration of **fieldwork, tools and skills** are clearly stated and linked to topics. This could be enhanced with the inclusion of new technologies and a clearer integration of content and skills within topics. Modern tools like augmented reality, GPS, remote sensing, are not explicit in the Stage 6 Syllabus, clearly illustrating that the current skills and tools have become outdated.
- There is a **balance** of both physical and human geography across both years and the opportunity for teachers to integrate local studies.
- Whilst the **course outcomes** for both preliminary and HSC are clear, the appropriateness of some is questioned including P1 and H1 - given that student achievement of these is difficult to assess.
- The syllabus **no longer builds on the knowledge and skills developed in the K-10 syllabus**. There should be a rethink of the transition from Stage 5 to Stage 6 taking into consideration both content coverage and concepts to modernise and remove overlap.
- The inclusion of Aboriginal students is explicit and achievable however there is a lack of **inclusiveness** in relation to Special Education, Gifted and Talented students, EAL/D and Torres Strait Islander students. More direction is needed to ensure these students can better access Stage 6 Geography. Some suggestions on enhancing **inclusiveness** include an Extension Course, a lower level course and an enhanced Life skills Course. There is an opportunity to apply Gagne's model for **Gifted and Talented** as well the Maker Model, as suggested in policies for these students.
- There is ample opportunity to incorporate the **Cross-Curriculum Priorities, General Capabilities** and other **Learning Across the Curriculum** Areas in a revised geography syllabus through an inquiry such as the SGP, choice of case studies, topic content, studies of contemporary issues, fieldwork and inquiry learning - as occurs with the current syllabus. If the Syllabus is carefully composed these can be represented explicitly (as in the case of traditional management of ecosystems), implied (as in the numeracy skills built into studying topographic maps) or as an integral component of what is being studied (as in personal and social capability and work and enterprise skills developed when completing the SGP)

## Topics

### Preliminary

- **Biophysical interactions** content is considered relevant and appropriate with room for a focus on contemporary issues. The foundation studies based on the four spheres provide a good conceptual basis for further biophysical studies. This topic structure could be integrated into a topic selected from the Australian Curriculum.
- **Global Challenges.** Population studies are highly relevant and appropriate. The other challenges investigated through topics such as: Cultural Integration, Development, Political Geography and Natural Resource Use are still relevant but need a new approach, possibly through the lens of a case study or issue. There is considerable overlap between Human Wellbeing in Stage 5 and Development.
- The **Senior Geography Project** is considered a key component of the preliminary course for the development of geographical inquiry skills and engagement with the subject. It is both relevant and appropriate but could be updated with improved guidance for teachers, a new name (Senior Geography Inquiry/ Investigation and greater emphasis on critical and creative thinking; and citizenship (Local problems, Local solutions).

### HSC

- **Urban places** – relevant but content no longer appropriate. Too content heavy and concepts are outdated. The overlap with stage 5 Changing Places needs to be considered.
- **Ecosystems at Risk** – highly relevant and appropriate but the content could be restructured to a more user-friendly format. For example, two separate references to biophysical interactions in the core and case studies confuses students.
- **People and Economic Activity** – considered mostly relevant and appropriate. This unit needs a general introductory section about the nature of economic activity to cover some types of questions in the HSC examination. There is some feeling that the enterprise study could be replaced by a fieldwork or investigation based on the economic activity. This could broaden options for investigating an element of the topic at a local scale. Other subjects contain studies of enterprises / businesses such as Business Studies and Food Technology.

Note: There was worthwhile discussion about how climate change might be dealt with in a new Senior Syllabus. A range of options were suggested from a separate topic or component to integration where relevant. Current studies in climate change across the curriculum 7 – 10 was also a consideration.

### Life skills

The Life Skills Syllabus (outcomes and content) is neither relevant nor appropriate to the needs of NSW Senior Life Skills students. It fails to develop solid geography knowledge and skills while at the same time building the Life Skills needed to transition from school to future studies or work.

A format similar the Life Skills component of the new 7-10 Geography Syllabus would be appropriate and build on the geography they are now experiencing in Stage 5.

Comments made regarding the diversity of learners, Cross-Curriculum Priorities, LAC's and others also apply to consideration of a new Life Skills Syllabus.

### HSC Examination

#### Likes

- General structure 60 / 40 Short answer and extended responses and gives enough scope for all students.
- Stimulus booklet – 4 pages
- Internal choice in extended response questions
- All year 12 topics are examined

## **Dislikes** (This is a summary of concerns rather than a consensus)

- Questions encourage rote learning rather than critical thinking and application of knowledge and understanding.
- Not enough reference to the integration of fieldwork within the wording of questions
- Little specific reference to the stimulus booklet outside the skills and some short answer questions
- Inconsistency in the number of time consuming skills calculation questions from year to year, particularly those involving multiple steps (There may be six one year and two the next).
- Questions becoming too obtuse or narrow in recent years due to the age of the current Syllabus – there is nothing left to ask.
- Short answer questions that are too broad and could be answered as an extended response.

## **Suggestions (Consensus)**

- Retain the stimulus booklet and make greater use of it in questions that require the application of knowledge and understanding as well as skills.
- Inclusion of a formula sheet for numeracy based skills questions as occurs in Mathematics, Sciences and Business studies.
- Provide clear exam guidelines and specimen paper to ensure clarity and consistency in teacher approaches to preparing students for the HSC exams such as how different skills are to be taught and marked.

## **Australian Curriculum**

Any new Syllabus should be based on what is best for NSW and reflect the best features of the current Syllabus while drawing on the Australian Curriculum. This may be best achieved with new topics that integrate the best of both documents to create a contemporary study of geography relevant to C21st learners and workers.

The Geography Teachers Association of New South Wales looks forward to further consultation with NESA and participation in the process to develop Stage 6 Geography and Geography Life skills.

Lorraine Chaffer

President GTANSW

On behalf of the Geography Teachers Association of NSW



**GTANSW Facebook Page is used for major events and the general promotion of Geography at <https://www.facebook.com/GTA.NSW/>**

### **GTANSW has two specific support groups:**

- **GTANSW Teachers of Senior Geography Group**  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/841307156040600/>
- **GTANSW Primary Geography Teachers Group**  
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=gtansw%20primary%20geography%20teachers%20group>

**Admission to these groups is on request and requires questions to be answered before approval is given.**

## CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

### 2018 GTA NSW ANNUAL CONFERENCE: My Challenging Geography Classroom

I am happy to report on the success of the GTANSW 2018 Annual Conference. This is the largest event in the GTA calendar each year made possible through many hours of hard work by the volunteers that comprise the GTA NSW council. The focus away from content towards pedagogy, literacy, tools and skills in 2018 was widely appreciated. The plan for 2019 is a more even mix of content, skills and tools and pedagogy.

A range of comments and responses from GTA are provided in this report.

GTA thanks our three conference sponsors for their generous financial support as well as their contribution to the trade display and conference presentations.

#### GOLD sponsor: LANDCOM



#### BRONZE sponsor: Sydney Olympic Park



#### BRONZE sponsor: Education Perfect



The Novotel at Sydney Olympic Park hosted the annual conference for the third year and provided outstanding support to the conference organisers over the two days.

#### Some Statistics

- 40 presentations and workshops
- 40 presenters
- 24 exhibitors (18 on each day)
- 200 to 220 teachers registered for each day

#### Participant Feedback

Online evaluation: 158 teachers responded to the evaluation survey

The overall evaluation was 4.3 (out of 5) stars.



This indicates a lot of positive feelings but with room for improvement. There are huge variations in satisfaction that clearly illustrate that there will always be differences in expectations and perceptions.



## CONFERENCE FEEDBACK

### A Selection of quotes: Happy and Unhappy Responses

#### HAPPY

*'The presentations and workshops were excellent and rewarding. The encouragement of presenters towards teachers and the availability of their resources and assistance is exemplary. Thank you so much for a great conference.'*

*'Most sessions were not just informative but had practical resources, strategies etc. Hard to pick between my favourites.'*

*'Great variety and different from the previous year. Loved the change of focus away from content to skill development.'*

*'Excellent array of workshops that teachers could choose to suit their interests. Glad there wasn't any keynote speakers - made it 100% useful and relevant for the classroom.'*

*'It was an excellent time, great incentives with the prizes to be won, very helpful and informative stalls, relevant seminars. I came away feeling better equipped and inspired to try new technologies rather than overwhelmed with unrealistic and unattainable ideas that would take more effort/time to recreate than I actually have available. Thank you for running it!'*

*'The presentations and workshops were fantastic. They were presented by experienced colleagues and allowed me to develop my pedagogy and teaching skills across a number of stages and content areas. It was great to understand what teachers are doing and how they implementing different teaching and learning strategies'*

*'Found most of the workshops I attended very productive. Presentations were good, but preferred the 'how to' aspect of the workshops.'*

*'Being actively engaged in relevant workshops and presentations in every session! I love having the spatial tech stuff regularly as it changes quite quickly.'*

*'I love having it at Olympic park as the food and coffee is seamless making it easy to network in breaks and around workshops.'*

*'Great to have the stage 6 marking workshop and the academic literacy lecture was great to hear - both delivered the right mix of information and practical skills you can take back to the classroom and implement.'*

*'Great location and venue, very accessible for most of us (I am regional), but good that it is not in city centre. Great to see the stalls and great to have the time to talk to the people and put some systems in place.'*

*'Great variety on offer across Stages, as well as, applications (fieldwork, fieldtrips, content integration, use of technology, exam assessment).'*

*'The presentations were very practical. I liked the classroom focus of the conference, in particular, the skills for marking/feedback and pedagogy (flipped).'*

*'Very well organised - a logistical nightmare but it all flowed seamlessly'*

#### NO SO HAPPY

*'The presentations I attended were incredibly boring and hardly relevant to a classroom teacher. Given some of the presenters were once teachers/deputies/principals it was shocking to see how little of an effort was made to interact and provide an engaging presentation. In particular, the presentations on academic literacy and instructional leadership. It was a whole lot of academic talk with very little applicable strategies for the classroom, which should be the focus of the PDI'*

*'Some sessions are not useful e.g. the first session about literacy (1.1) was suitable for students but not teachers. The whole session was about 1 example - 1 sentence about climate change. Need to provide a variety of examples and text types. This was very disappointing.'*

In contrast

- *'Brian Miller (1.1. Academic literacy) was excellent.'*
- *'1.1 Literacy masterclass was extremely beneficial for writing skills in Geography.'*
- *'The literacy presentation was crucial in defining the struggles students tend to face when accessing Geography'*
- *'Session 1 academic literacy was excellent. It was useful for both junior and senior high school lessons in a range of subjects'*

*'Format a bit confusing. Not enough resources on offer.'*

*'Have presenters who provide interesting, engaging and useful advice to educators. It's expensive and difficult to get time out to these days, so it needs to be more useful to teachers. There really isn't a difference between workshops and presentations as far I could see.'*

## ISSUES

Participant comments	GTA Response
Internet access and parking was not clearly communicated in terms of discount options.	Emails were sent with this information to all registrants. GTA will look at the wording of these for next year.
If tying in with Novotel again then on-site accommodation deals for those from out of town.	There was a conference package deal with a booking code sent with the email to all participants after registration. Other accommodation options will be investigated as well.
Too much focus on non-geographers and primary school teacher's PD, need to focus on 'geographers' PD.	The focus was on pedagogy and relevant across all stages and Geography classes. Most of the content based workshops were for 7–10 for Geographers. There were only three dedicated workshops for primary on Monday and limited reference to non-geographers.
An easier way to register for workshops. It was an expensive conference and <b>to be told that I could not attend 5 of the workshops I intended to go to AFTER I enrolled</b> was difficult to justify the payment the school made for me to come here. <b>I missed out on a lot of the sessions and probably wouldn't have attended if I had realised that would be the case.</b>	<b>Selection of workshops is done with registration – it is clear in that process if workshops are full. A decision to continue with registration can be made at that point.</b> Maybe you are confusing school approval to attend with actual registration. The later you register the fewer workshops are available and you have the choice not to register by not submitting the form.
Workshops need to be in rooms that are wide, not long. Slow down steps.	GTA has looked at many venues and unfortunately to allow a variety to presentations big rooms need to be divided up this way. 5 minutes between sessions was to allow travel time. The downstairs room is 1 minute walk.
Even though I value the achievements, <b>I didn't want to sit for an hour through the award presentations.</b> As selfish as it sounds, I really wanted that time to learn for my own students. The presentation of awards, is irrelevant to anyone not involved – waste of time. Have the presentation after the conference – not part of PD and <b>most of the schools that succeed are private schools or selective schools so for the average school this is just not obtainable and irrelevant.</b>	The Award ceremony was <b>30 minutes only</b> . The aim is to present students and teachers in front of an authentic audience. It is relevant because it is Geography and Fieldwork Many teachers love hearing about the topics student investigate to get ideas for their own class investigations. This is PL. Many public schools enter and succeed. This varies year to year. GTA encourages all schools to participate. Participation is more important than winning. Non participation on these grounds sends the wrong message.
Allow for more spaces in selected workshops. I was <b>forced to attend</b> some sessions because others were booked out.	Sizes of workshops are determined by spaces available. In 2019 some sessions will be offered twice. No-one is forced to attend. There is a choice in the registration process not to continue.
If ALL presenters can provide the PowerPoints they use (and other resources) on the google drive after the conference. Making resources from these presentations and conferences more available perhaps an email could be sent out to each person in the presentation.	An advantage of membership of GTA is that many conference presentations are available on the GTA website after the conference. Presenters are asked for a copy of their presentations. Sadly this does not always happen even after follow-up requests. Emailing all attendees is a big task and many PPTs are too large to send this way, even as PDF's.

Have all the presenter materials available before their session so you could focus on what they were saying rather than trying to get all the notes down. Resource bank available at the start of the conference?	A reasonable request. This is being investigated by GTA for the future, however it would necessitate getting presentations at least a week ahead and for many teacher presenters, this is a big ask.
I know there was a detailed description of the sessions, however, at least one didn't match up with the content that was delivered 100%. More detailed descriptions of workshops/presentations before choosing them.	GTA will look at the guidelines given when Expressions of Interest to present are called for. Presenters are given an opportunity to revise their abstracts before the choices are published however, this does not guarantee presentations match descriptions. Revised guidelines may help.
Human Geography topics e.g. human wellbeing not addressed this year I would like to see more specific workshops/ lectures for stage specific content.	The 2017 Conference was all about content and skills with sessions on all 7–10 Syllabus topics. These were videotaped and are on the GTA website for members. 2018 was an opportunity to explore pedagogies that are innovative and relevant to inquiry learning. 2019 will go back to a larger proportion of content especially the newer content areas such as wellbeing and biomes.
Maybe a day focused on senior geo and a day of junior geo (stages 4–5), so that we can choose and manage time out of school more effectively? <b>Senior Geo focus conference</b>	Usually the Annual Conference does not cover Stage 6. This year, some sessions were included on the Tuesday, following feedback from the Senior Conference in November 2018. At this stage the separate senior conference will continue each year. Planning is occurring now for early November. 7–10 will continue to be spread across two days of the AC.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE CONFERENCES

Participant suggestions	GTA Response
Possible <b>repetition of some presentations</b> or workshops during other sessions to make the choice a bit easier. Was very hard to choose which sessions I wanted to go to (or what I was missing out on in place of that choice).	This will be a part of the programming for 2019. Some presentations will repeat on the same day and others on different days depending on availability of presenters.
Would be good to dedicate some time if people are interested in a <b>meet and greet at the end of the first day</b> in one of the larger rooms for people to make some more connections.	There will be something organised for 2019. A Day 1 informal 'drinks' meet-up is also being considered for those staying in and around the venue.
It would be nice to have a larger area to sit during lunch time. I sat in the conference room so I could have a chair while eating but wasn't sure if this was okay to do. More tables and chairs during break times	This has been discussed with Novotel at SOP and if we use the same venue there are options available. Similar issues occur at other venues. Rooms not being reconfigured can be used. This message will be reinforced in the opening address in the future.
Is there more representation available for <b>Indigenous perspectives</b> ? How to get their voices into the classroom, through resources or people?	There was a significant aboriginal perspective in 2017 sessions so not a priority in 2018. There will be more in 2019.
There could be a bit more on literacy in Geography, visual literacy and perhaps a bit more on differentiation for mixed ability classes.	GTA had hoped for differentiation workshop(s) this year but did not eventuate. It can be easily incorporated into most presentations with a bit of thought. This will be considered in the revised guidelines for presenters.

<p>Maybe <b>a session on promoting the subject</b>. I have noticed a lot of people asking recently how others promote the subject and the importance of studying Geography.</p> <p><b>Post school Geography options</b></p>	<p>These two ideas are already on the agenda for the 2019 conference.</p> <p>There is so much we can do in a limited time frame.</p>
<p>Three sessions per day with time allocated for Q &amp; A. All sessions involved using apps, technology tools etc should be treated as one presentation</p>	<p>GTA will look at whether the Technology sessions can be more holistic. This would need collaboration between different presenters, which could be problematic.</p>
<p>More teachers presenting on critical areas like <b>formative assessment</b> and creating high challenge with high support.</p>	<p>Assessment is definitely a consideration for 2019 as people move from the content focus of implementing a new syllabus to review and develop formative and summative assessments.</p>
<p>Many workshops very Sydney centric.</p> <p>There is a strong focus on Sydney in a lot of presentations and workshops. Many of us are coming from regional and rural NSW. I know there are regional conferences but the ideas and tools presented in the workshops need to be easily accessible for everyone. Eg. 'This is how you could use this in a regional area such as....'</p> <p>Have some <b>workshops and presentations dedicated to teaching Geography in rural schools</b>.</p> <p>Fieldwork relevant to country areas</p>	<p>GTA would love this to happen but our challenge is getting rural school teachers to offer to present.</p> <p>Asking presenters to incorporate reference to rural schools is a reasonable request that will be followed through. GTA will look at the guidelines given when Expressions of Interest to present are called for.</p> <p>Most fieldwork techniques are adaptable to country areas .... presenters will be asked to make suggestions where possible.</p>

**Great venue, wonderful food, teachers networking and a variety of exhibitors and presenters.... a great two days of teacher professional learning.**





## Pilot empowering teachers in Geography

Launched in December 2017, the Education Perfect Geography pilot is providing **all** Australian schools the opportunity to access a wealth of content for **free** throughout 2018. The pilot program is helping shape the development of future Geography content and areas for refinement, and providing schools with over 100 lessons across Stages 4 and 5, including:

- Geography Skills
- Geography core concepts
- Stage 4
  - Water in the World
  - Place and Liveability
  - Landforms and Landscapes
  - Changing Nations
- Stage 5
  - Biomes and Food Security
  - Geographies of Interconnections
  - Environmental Change and Management, and
  - Geographies of Human Wellbeing modules

The appetite for quality Geography resources in schools is considerable, with teachers across the country innovatively engaging with the content. Here are just a few stories from teachers involved in the pilot.



“The Geography lessons in Education Perfect are succinct, well-pitched and engaging for the students. They enjoy the opportunity to learn at their own pace and to review presentations as needed. They also love the DASH challenges!

Being able to assign and time tasks is great, as is the capability to track student progress live. All round - a great experience for students and teachers!

— Alison Weller, Shenton College (Level 2)



“It has been exciting to be a part of the pilot for EP NSW curriculum for Geography. The students are well versed in using the EP platform in other subjects, so the focus has been more on being able to practice skills in tandem with content acquisition. I am excited for the opportunities for future development.

— Phillip Pain, St. Andrew's Cathedral School (Level 2)

Education Perfect would love to offer the resources to more schools. **To gain access, go to [www.educationperfect.com](http://www.educationperfect.com)**