

2021 ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORT

The Geography Learning Journey:

Shaping futures



Conference opening by Rel. President David Latimer

Lorraine Chaffer

2021 Annual Conference Convenor

The 2021 GTA NSW & ACT Annual Conference was another successful conference event held at Stadium Australia, Sydney Olympic Park on Thursday 13th and Friday 14th May.

There were 156 delegates on Thursday and 150 on the Friday. Many teachers attended both days. There were 28 different exhibitors and 40 presenters from schools and organisations across NSW and Queensland. While numbers were below those of 2019, teachers, presenters and exhibitors agree that this was a wonderful event, appreciating the opportunity for, and value of, meeting in person when many PL events are still online.

As a volunteer organisation, GTANSW & ACT relies heavily on the goodwill of GTA councillors to ensure the smooth running of the event on each day. Twelve councillors were released from their schools to support the association over the two days in roles that included bump in and out activities, registration desk, poster station, parking station and breakout rooms introducing, thanking guests and presenting. Thank you David Latimer, John Lewis, Sharon McLean, Paul Alger, Michael Da Rosa, Drew Collins, Alexandria Warnock, Rebecca Sutcliffe, Katherine Simpson, Keith Hopkins, Adrian Harrison and Martin Pluss. GTA also thanks the contribution of Rona Afenir and the Professional Teachers Council NSW for administration before, during and after the event.

The Keynote speakers, Damon Gameau and Ivan Motley gave excellent presentations, each highlighting the important role of geographical understanding and Geography as a subject in addressing global issues and making decisions for the future. Damon's Keynote was by ZOOM, a decision based on reducing travel and fitting in with Damon's busy filming schedule. Ivan also presented a popular workshop on using the tools of his business .id.



Damon Gameau Keynote



Ivan Motley in workshop mode.



Sponsor Anzuk Education with their scholarship winner Rose Gardner,



Sponsors Sydney Olympic Park with their scholarship winner Denna Purton

Sponsors

Sponsorship was provided by Mobile Muster (Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association), Sydney Olympic Park Authority, Sydney Water, Education Perfect and Anzuk Education. The diversity and quality of presentations and the attendance of four scholarship winners at the conference was made possible through sponsorship.

Awards

Teacher Awards were announced and presented at the conference. Award recipients were:

- **John Lewis:** GTA NSW & ACT Life Membership
- **Samantha Coburn:** Brock Rowe Award jointly awarded by GTA NSW & ACT and the NSW Geographical Society for excellence in teaching Geography in schools.
- **Fleur Farah** and **Sharon McLean:** Geoff Conolly Memorial Award for a meritorious contribution to the *Geography Bulletin*, the association journal.



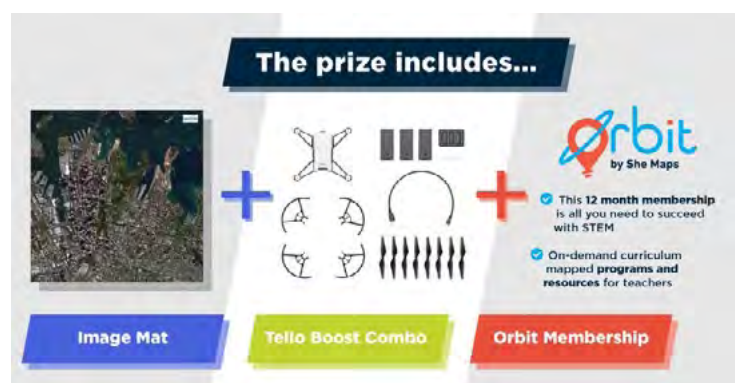
Award presentation to Sharon McLean



Katie Vidal from SheMaps presenting Kieran with his prize.

Registration Prize

Congratulations to Kieran Bonin, Orange High School, the winner of the registration prize of a Drone Kit purchased by GTA NSW & ACT from SheMaps.



Conference Feedback

A short **survey** was sent to teachers who attended the conference. A summary of positive responses, criticisms and suggestions for improvement are shown in the table below. Many thanks to those teachers who have made time to complete the survey. The survey remains OPEN and GTA encourages any conference attendees to contribute feedback to inform future conference planning. Some responses have been provided to clarify decisions made during conference planning.



THE GOOD

I thought that this conference was one of the better ones that I have ever attended across a variety of subject areas. Thank you for organising something so well!

Thank you for organising such a valuable conference. Thoroughly enjoyed it.

Overall fantastic.

I had a great experience, thank you to all of the organisers and presenters.

I think that the manner in which the two days were runs was excellent.

There is great value in meeting with other teachers and educators and seeing the resources available. The presentations were relevant and can be used in a variety of ways both directly and indirectly to feed back into teaching and learning experiences in the classroom and in fieldwork.

Thank you to the GTA Committee and volunteers who go above and beyond to create such a relevant event.

Keep doing what you are doing. I felt supported which is so important being the only trained Geography teacher at my school.

Great variety especially as this was the first time attending this conference. Fantastic ideas and resources to take back and implement within the faculty.

Keynote speakers were very good. Is important to have quality speakers. Perhaps population as a theme.

There was a variety of presentations addressing relevant topics, good intersection with technologies which showed how the various technologies can be integrated in the classroom. Sessions were a suitable length.

I thoroughly enjoyed all that I attended – 1e, 2a and 4b – all were valuable to me as teacher with only 6 years of experience, and teaching seniors fairly recently. The people running them were organised, connections to the syllabus were made clear and the resources provided were great!

Highlight – Human Wellbeing session – highly valuable, tangible resources and well explained.

Highlight- Really enjoyed David Proctor sessions, Sydney Water (was fabulous) and the Seaweed (Pia Winberg) lecture

Highlight – Discovering how using spatial technologies, social media and networking was a highlight and collaborating with staff from other schools.

CONCERNS – ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT – SUGGESTIONS

Comments taken on board ✓

More workshops with small practical changes we can implement in our classrooms.

I did not attend on day 1 but would have appreciated an update on the new stage 6 syllabus.

What's happening with the new senior course? The suggested curriculum changes that are in the works?

Could something related to these be added to the program please. ✓

There is no new information from NESA re Stage 6 or progress on the NSW Curriculum Review that will affect Geography at this point in time. GTA will share when we know more.

More workshops on skills and fieldwork for teachers who are not Geography specialists

A good mix, I feel there should there more to support new teachers, this would also benefit those teachers for whom Geography is not their major teaching subject. ✓

Syllabus specific workshops for Stages 4–6 Geography.

GTA understands the needs of non-geography trained teachers and since 2017 many conference sessions have been provided in Sydney and at regional conferences for skills and fieldwork. The GTA E-learning courses are targeted at inexperienced and non-trained geography teachers as cost effective additional PL programs. The GTA website also has past conference presentations for viewing by members that may help non trained and early career teachers – including Syllabus specific sessions for each topic.

Offer more practical options. Perhaps more of a brief about what lecture sessions will entail and what teacher it is aimed at (e.g., new teachers, experience teachers with lack of technology skills, new teachers to geography, refreshers, teachers aiming to build practical skills etc) ✓

Give indication of teaching experience or level as a number of sessions were not useful due to my experience. ✓

The Conference Abstract attempts to guide teacher choices. What is presented often does not always meet expectations or match abstracts. Efforts can be made in the future to improve this.

I did enjoy the mix of presentations, however it would be good for more double ups in presentations, as some were booked out due to limits on participants. If a fieldwork option is given, please inform participants that they will need to be adequately dressed as they will be offsite. ✓

Double ups are difficult because it is impossible to know what the most popular presentations will be. The program is set before choices are made. In exceptional cases extra sessions are added but this complicates the programming and rooming. Popular sessions are often repeated the following year when possible. Also, many presenters are only available on one day. Fieldwork option clearly stated 'in the field'.

A lot of the presentations seemed to focus on the human geography topics, a mix with more physical geography would be good (or perhaps that's the sessions that I chose?)

There were a lot of physical geography topics on the Friday in 2021. This may have been a choice issue.

Perhaps some sessions relating to the elective geography course too ✓

There have been presentations in the past on Elective Geography, however finding presenters has proven difficult due to a limited number of schools offering elective geography. Point taken.

Good length for most workshops – although some of the 'hands-on' workshops could have been longer to get a chance to action some of the ideas etc. ✓

Good, though I would have loved the separate Stage 6 day as planned for last year so that I could have had more specifics for Stages 4 and 5, as well as Stage 6 in the mix of what I went to see. ✓

Separate Stage 6 events have been run since 2017 however with Covid restrictions it was considered too risky to spread an event over 3 days when numbers were likely to be smaller. If a new Stage 6 Syllabus is released this year, there is the potential for a 1-day conference in Term 4 and again in 2022 when demand for S6 PL will be high.

More time needs to be given to look at trade shows. First day I did the fieldwork session, and we only came back for lunch. I was then planning to look at the trade shows the next day, but some were not there.

Apologies that you missed some trade displays. There were only four less exhibitors on the Friday. (28/24)

Having the PPT Presentations provided on a USB/Gdrive Folder for access during & after the day. ✓

Perhaps a feature on the website, somewhere attendees could access links from presenters on the day. Many used QR codes which was great but another step. ✓

In an ideal world GTA would love to receive presentations prior to the event. These are requested but many presenters are often finalising their work the night before. Of the 40 sessions most are now in the Google Drive that has been shared with attendees. There are also some video sessions that will be shared with those who attended each day when formatting is completed.

Having teacher's present how they teach certain units to their classes – worksheets and activities that do not need a whole year group to be taken out of school to complete. Activities that can be adapted to any stage and academic ability. ✓ *Many of our teacher presenters do this.*

Leave the app open longer if possible – I did not attempt to download 2nd day notes until I got back to school, and they had disappeared. ✓ *This we can do in the future. Apologies for closure of the APP early.*

If a keynote is going to be a virtual delivery that would be good to know in advance.

Some venue issues – some of the smaller rooms e.g., Platinum and Ambassadors) were long and skinny and the screens quite small – made it difficult to see. Lack of map to know where things were.

Lack of water refill stations.

Unfortunately, in most venues, including hotels, options for breakout rooms are limited in size and shape. It is always a consideration when visiting and selecting venues when multiple rooms are needed. There were guides on level 5 to assist with directions and rooms were labelled. There were plumbed water stations in the main conference room and water urns in all breakout rooms so lots of refill options.

More sessions that are practical, applicable classroom ideas across the syllabus.

There has always been a balance between workshop / practical class-based activities and knowledge-based presentations as both are important for PL. All sessions have syllabus links, and GTA will continue to ask presenters to draw these out.

Tips and information on running board endorsed subjects as electives e.g. the permaculture certificate

Notebook in the bag, not on the table.

Notebooks and pens are provided by venues and our volunteers do not have time to prepack conference bags on the morning of the conference. Delegates can easily pack notebooks into their bags.

Better speakers and more interactive activities

A lot of walking between session venues at times and the food and areas to eat were very spread out and hard to catch up with people.

Venue – perhaps a hotel in CBD or Parramatta where people could stay at the venue and easily accessed through public transport with parking available as well. ✓

Each venue GTA uses has been used 2 years in a row. Other venues will be considered moving forward

Keynote – prefer to have live rather via zoom as it is just not as engaging. Suggestions: Hugh Van Cuylenburg, Jimmy Halfcut, Pete Ceglinski, Mark McCrindle, Craig Reucassel, Jon Dee. ✓

Cost is an issue when getting Keynote speakers and selecting venues. Celebrity speakers can cost between \$5000 – \$10,000 for 30 minutes. Availability on dates requested is another consideration. Zoom was a Covid / travel / sustainability driven consideration in 2021.

City venues and hotels are more expensive, often have fewer breakout spaces and parking stations \$40 – \$50 a day. These are all considerations when selecting venues.

Conference Package

A NEW opportunity in 2021 for schools unable to make the 2021 Annual Conference to access recorded presentations and resources. This applies particularly to schools in rural and regional centres where travel costs and shortage of casual staff limited teacher attendance. GTA are also aware that many schools will not yet allow teachers to attend a live event. See flyer following this report.



Hands on activities with SheMaps (Map My School)



Hands on activities with Big Issue Classroom.



Presentations and trade displays by Picture You in Agriculture and the NSW Surveyor General (Surveying Task Force exhibit) focused on skill building and future careers using Geographical understanding and skills.





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