



November 2021 – October 2022 Annual Report

Presented by Dr Susan Caldis (President)

Introduction

I am delighted to present the 2021 - 2022 Annual Report for the Geography Teachers Association of NSW and ACT (GTANSW&ACT). In another year full of extraordinary and challenging circumstances, I am proud to say that Council continued to work in an agile, adaptive and responsive ways to meet unexpected and ongoing changes.

Let me start by Acknowledging Country. In our work as geographers and geography educators it is crucial to understand our connections to place and people across time – and to share such understanding with our students and colleagues. I would like to respectfully acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Countries/Places that we join from today and acknowledge lands and waterways are not ceded; I also acknowledge the enduring traditional custodianship of Country. For me, I would like to acknowledge the lands and their waterways of Eora nation and Darug Country - Country to which I am connected through work, study and residence. I write this report from the lands upon which I am fortunate to reside and work: of the Cammeraygal People of Eora nation and of Wallumattagal People of Darug Country respectively. Today I am joining you from Ikara- Flinders Rangers, Adnyamathanha Country (South Australia). I invite all who join the meeting today to acknowledge Country in the chat facility. I would also like to pay my respect to all Elders and knowledge-holders who have and continue to pass on their wisdom for the sustainability of our environments, our education and our communities. I extend my respect to Elders past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples joining the meeting today.

Throughout 2022, the GTANSW&ACT Council have met monthly via zoom and maintained regular correspondence in between meetings through group emails. We acknowledge the many Countries from which we come together, and from those upon which we reside, work, enjoy our leisure activities, and we notice the features of place and time.

Whilst the 2022 Annual Report is a requirement of GTANSW&ACT operation, it is also an important mechanism to formally share and reflect on key items of influence and interest for geography education in our state and territory. The Annual Report addresses key activities and items of particular interest in 2022.

Before presenting the activities of the Association enacted by Council between November 2021 – October 2022, I would like to thank Council for their endless support together with their tireless work and enthusiasm for what it is we stand for as an Association, leading geography education in NSW and ACT. I would also like to thank Lorraine Chaffer, Katerina Stojanovski and Dr Paul Batten for their assistance in developing key sections of this report. Additionally, I extend my thanks and appreciation to colleagues from the Professional Teachers Council of NSW who continue to provide wonderful support with our administrative workload.

Whilst there are honorariums available for selected projects and activities, we are a volunteer Council. All projects we design, deliver, evaluate and refine occur beyond the demands of our 'day-job'. Whilst 2022 was coined as 'Covid recovery' or 'Covid emerging', the year continued to present circumstances that forced an adjustment to our hoped-for practice.

Leadership in turbulent times is particularly demanding and often presents contentious conversations, however, with clear vision and care for each other, what seems daunting and perhaps impossible can become achievable and actioned.

The Annual Report covers key items and is structured in the following way

1. Implications arising from pandemic related restrictions
2. Membership and recognition of Council including Awards
3. Finances
4. Advocacy (Geography as a subject; Geography syllabus/curriculum at a state and national scale)
5. Membership engagement (Open Learning / Anytime e-learning; Geography Bulletin; HSC Support; Young Geographer)
6. Engagement with the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)
7. Reflection on tenure as President
8. Conclusion

1. Implications arising from pandemic related restrictions

As a Council we commenced 2022 with hope and anticipation. Pandemic related restrictions were easing in the public domain and results from the GTANSW&ACT membership survey, distributed at the end of 2021, revealed an appetite for in-person events to return to our professional learning calendar. However, as the process of 'opening-up' occurred, we had to be increasingly mindful of and responsive to the varied restrictions in place within and across the various settings that Council work. We also needed to be mindful of our capacity as volunteers and our ability to contribute in a productive and meaningful way during times of high stress and uncertainty. At the planning day in January 2022, we agreed that protection of family-time and work-life-balance was to be a priority, and that we would not organise professional learning events or meetings on weekends or during school holidays.

The ongoing prevalence and contraction of the virus with 7 day and then 5 day isolation requirements resulted in spiralling teacher shortages in schools which contributed to leadership teams being hesitant to release teachers for in-person professional learning. Those on Council who work in school and university settings could not guarantee approval to attend in-person events and many on Council contracted the virus during 2022. Our work requires us to respond to the policy and guidelines of our relevant system, sector, and institution within which we are employed, particularly in response to working, attending and travelling to in-person events which are both within and beyond school settings. Ultimately this affected what GTANSW&ACT could provide for 2022 and so we agreed to pursue fully-online events for Term 1 and 2, and look towards blended and in-person events for Terms 3 and 4, should circumstances allow.

In 2022, Council decided, after much debate, not to host an Annual Conference due to ongoing Covid uncertainties. We agreed to continue to strengthen our online offerings through webinars, short anytime courses through the open learning portal, and events such as the STEM symposium. By not holding a state conference, the door was opened to offering an increased number of scholarships to assist others in attending the national AGTA Conference in Hobart held between 28 – 30 September <https://agta.asn.au/conf2022/program.php>

During Term 3, it became obvious that the toll of illness, teacher shortages and associated overwhelming workload were compromising the capacity of Council and our ability to implement hoped for plans of implementing as much of our 'usual' program. Consequently, a motion was put forward and voted on about pausing certain activities, whilst acknowledging the continuation of other activities. Membership were informed of this circumstance via email as outlined below

I am writing to you with information about a recent vote and majority decision by GTANSW&ACT Council to pause two items for the remainder of 2022. The two items are (i) the 'From the classroom' webinar program

and (ii) the Awards (Brock Rowe for excellence in teaching geography, and Geoff Connolly for outstanding contribution to the Geography Bulletin journal). We envisage these items will return to the GTANSW&ACT program in 2023.

As you already know, the work of GTANSW&ACT Council is voluntary and occurs beyond and around our workplace hours and commitments. As a Council we work relentlessly to adapt and adjust our program of events to suit the changing needs of membership, the changing pandemic-related circumstances, and the broader demands of education. Unfortunately, during 2022, we have found ourselves to be enormously stretched and often to be working at and beyond capacity, which is not sustainable for an individual or for an Association. After navigating ongoing pandemic restrictions and uncertainty's the GTANSW&ACT took a vote to decide on our next steps for the remainder of 2022, which will ensure we can still provide for members but also protect wellbeing and professionalism.

Whilst two items will be paused, the following items have either occurred or will continue to occur for the remainder of 2022

- * e-learning anytime short courses
- * Showcasing Geography in STEM symposium
- * HSC Digital Preparation package
- * Geography Bulletin, journal of the Association
- * 'From the Academy' webinars, co-badged with the Geographical Society of NSW
- * Young Geographer
- * development of Careers in Geography posters
- * NESA accreditation of professional learning where appropriate and possible
- * advocacy for geography and geography education through representation on external stakeholder committees, provision of submissions on curriculum development and review, and the fostering of networks and alliances within the discipline of geography and across the scope of education.

In response to feedback from PTCNSW about GTANSW&ACT application for 'Association of the Year' Award, we were advised to commission a business analyst to work with us in clarifying our mission and streamlining our practice to maximise efficiency and effect. As a Council we agreed to enact this advice and started working through this process with Catherine Gray, acknowledging this is a 18 month – 2 year process. During 2022 we have been using some of our Council meeting time to identify, review, assess, and confirm our priority areas. Discussion is ensuing about the potential for rotation of events to enhance manageability.

2. Membership and recognition of Council including Awards

An outline of membership structure as of October 2022 is below and recognition of Council since the 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) follows. A tribute to Dr Don Biddle, founder of GTANSW&ACT and AGTA concludes this section. In recognising Council, there is coverage of departing members at the end of 2021, the 2021 - 2022 Council, Life Membership awarded at the end of 2021, Professional Teachers Council of NSW (PTCNSW) Outstanding Service to the Profession Award (OPSA), and the Macdonald Holmes Medal awarded by the Geographical Society of NSW.

2a. Membership

At the time of reporting, membership of the Association was 576 and fees for 2022 were raised by motion and agreement at the 2021 AGM. As a reminder, membership fees increased by \$10 for personal membership to \$100 +GST and \$20 for corporate members to \$220 +GST, of which six colleagues can be listed. It is anticipated such fees will remain for 2023. Membership categories are identified in Table 1.

Table 1: Membership categories for GTA NSW&ACT as of October 2022

Category	Fee	Number of members in category
Concessional	\$40	18
Personal / Individual	\$100	96
Corporate	\$220	364
Primary	No charge	36
Teacher Education Student	No charge	54
Life member	No charge	8

2b. Recognition of Council

At each AGM, existing members of Council have an opportunity to renominate. Due to changing circumstances in family, work and other life domains, sometimes continued service with Council is not always possible. Throughout each year there are opportunities to recognise the work of Council broadly and to acknowledge outstanding service as appropriate.

2b i. Council for 2021 – 2022 and departing Councillors from 2021

The 2021 – 2022 Council are identified below. At the end of 2021 we farewelled the following Councillors and thanked them for their service: Paul Alger, Catherine Donnelly, Adrian Harrison and John Petts.

Name	Role
Dr Susan Caldis	President
Dr Paul Batten	Vice President
Lorraine Chaffer	Vice President / Immediate Past President and Journal Editor
Katerina Stojanovski	Vice President and Minutes Secretary
Alexandria Warnock	Vice President
Dr Grant Kleeman	Honorary Treasurer
Michael Da Roza	ACT Representative / Councillor
Kieran Bonin	Councillor
Stephanie Boden	Councillor
James Harte	Councillor
Christopher Jenkins	Councillor
Grace Larobina	Councillor
John Lewis	Councillor
Alexandra Pentz	Councillor
Martin Pluss	Councillor
Rebecca Sutcliffe	Councillor

Karen Bowden Co-opted
Drew Collins
Amy Freshwater
Keith Hopkins
David Latimer
Sharon McLean
Katherine Simpson

2b ii. Awards

It is important to recognise the work of Council when points of outstanding and/or sustained service to GTA NSW&ACT Council and geography education are evident. When appropriate, not necessarily each year, a member of GTA NSW&ACT Council, typically from the Executive team, will nominate an exceptional past or present Councillor for the award of Life Membership. Each year, PTCNSW invite peer nominations for OPSA. Every two years, the Geographical Society of NSW (GSNSW) invite peer nominations and conduct a merit-based peer-reviewed selection process for the Macdonald Holmes Medal.

At the November 2021 AGM, the President was delighted to award Life Membership to Lorraine Chaffer and Sharon McLean. Citations are available in the *Geography Bulletin*, Volume 54, Number 1, pp 8 –11.

In February 2022, members of Council celebrated Catherine Donnelly (departing Councillor) as the GTA NSW&ACT recipient of the 2021 PTC NSW OPSA. The citation is available in the *Geography Bulletin*, Volume 54, Number 1, p 12.

In August 2022, GSNSW announced Dr Susan Caldis and Lorraine Chaffer as recipients of the 2022 Macdonald Holmes Medal for their distinguished and sustained contribution to the field of geographical education in Australia. The Medal will be presented on 10 November at a ceremony at Macquarie University. Further information is available at <https://www.geogsoc.org.au/site/index.cfm?display=288314> and citations will be included in an upcoming edition of the *Geography Bulletin*.

2c Dr Don Biddle

It was with great sadness we learned of the passing of Dr Don Biddle on Friday, 21 January 2022 at the age of 98 years old. Don's service to both GTA NSW&ACT, the Geographical Society of NSW (GSNSW) and geography education overall has been significant. As a humble but highly talented educator, Don's teaching changed the lives of thousands of students at all levels – primary, secondary and tertiary – as well as teachers as an author, an external examiner, and of course, as the founding President of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA).

Don's funeral was held Monday, 31 January 2022. Dr Susan Caldis, Dr Stephen Codrington and Professor Kevin Dunn were invited to attend the funeral as representatives of the associations significant to Don Biddle. An excerpt from the eulogy shared by Susan is below

Don was the founding President of the Australian Geography Teachers Association and although his leadership term went from 1967 – 1969 on paper, his influence remains to this day. It is widely known that Don's mantra of 'Geography is a living subject' shaped his actions within and beyond the geography classroom. We continue to learn from Don's sustained, active, and varied service to education through the lens of geography – participating on and Chairing School Boards, and syllabus and examination committees at state and sector levels to name a few. Additionally, we remain inspired by Don's conviction about the importance and role of collaboration demonstrated through his boundary-crossing and distinguished service to the professional associations for geography, of which

the Australian Geography Teachers Association is one. The legacy of Don's contribution to professional associations continues to provide the glue which keeps us all connected across school, initial teacher education, and academic geography research contexts. (Dr Susan Caldis)

If you would like to read more about the immense contribution of Dr Don Biddle to the professional associations for geography, and to geography education in Australia, please follow the links below:

<https://www.agta.asn.au/Awards/Don%20Biddle%20Award/index.php>

https://www.agta.asn.au/files/Don_Biddle_Awards/Don_Biddle_Geog_Soc_Award.pdf

<https://www.agta.asn.au/files/Geographical%20Education/2017/Supplement/Geog%20Ed%20Vol%2030,%202017%20Supplement%20-%20AGTA's%20FIRST%20FIFTY%20YEARS%20-%205.%20Don%20Biddle%20by%20Susan%20Bliss.pdf>

3. Finances

An overview of finances for GTANSW&ACT is presented by the Honorary Treasurer at the AGM in a separate report. Note: key points will be written up in this report ready for publication.

4. Advocacy

Advocacy for geography as a subject, and advocacy for geography in curriculum or syllabus provide main frames of reference for the work of Council. In this section, advocacy for geography as a subject is contextualised around the recommendations for geography in Australian schools via *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*. In addition to *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*, our work in advocacy for geography as a subject and within curriculum can also be connected to the GEOGStandards for personal reflective practice and as a tool for developing shared understanding amongst colleagues about effective, impactful geography teaching.

I speak often with Council about the importance of explicitly grounding our planning and activity around an evidence base and make no apologies for ensuring there is an academic and policy base to our work. We need clear reasoning and evidence to empower us and to be embedded in our thinking, planning and practice.

Advocacy for geography in curriculum and syllabus are contextualised around activities such as representative roles on syllabus committees and within the scope of Association developed professional learning activities and our social media presence.

Throughout 2022 (and since 2020), GTANSW&ACT have conducted initial mapping of Association activities to recommendations in *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future* – a Decadal Plan for the discipline (NCGS, 2018). The recommendations are there guide our planning and practice, to prompt thinking, and encourage action around five designated areas, of which GTANSW&ACT have carriage of three: promoting awareness about out-of-field teaching; developing recognition in theory and practice of geography as a STEM subject; and fostering and strengthening connections between academic geography/ers and geography teachers.

Such mapping will continue throughout 2023 and form the foundation of a report to be submitted to the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA) and on to the National Committee for Geographical Sciences. The mapping identifies areas where our work is having impact along with areas which will require greater attention in time to come.

As a Council, we have made good progress this year in advancing dialogue around geography as a STEM subject through the symposium and associated e-learning portal; promoting awareness about, responses to, and implications of out-of-field teaching in geography through the provision of scholarly readings, careful responses on social media platforms and offering conference scholarships targeted at out-of-field teachers; strengthening collaboration with academic geographers and the Geographical Society of

NSW through the co-badged webinars and in-person social networking events; developing clarity around connections with geography-centric careers through the careers posters initiative, and having input into the nationally focused GoWithGeo <https://www.gowithgeo.com.au/> careers website; and advocating overall for quality geography education in school settings through writing submissions to NESA, having a range of representative roles on various stakeholder committees, gaining NESA accreditation for e-learning, and being willing to share practice in the *Geography Bulletin*.

5. Membership engagement

There are multiple activities which comprise membership engagement. Due to constraints of space and time, there are four key activities presented: Open Learning / Anytime e-learning; Geography Bulletin; HSC Support; Young Geographer.

5a. Open Learning initiatives / Anytime e-learning courses

Dr Paul Batten (Vice President) and Katerina Stojanovski (Vice President) lead the development of Open Learning initiatives / Anytime e-learning courses. During 2022, James Harte (Councillor) also joined the course development team. James has worked on *Unpacking the HSC*, including creating a version of the course for students.

As of October 2022, there are a total of 12 courses (most are NESA accredited PD) developed for GTANSW&ACT, with an additional two courses developed for a national audience with AGTA. One of the new nationally-focused courses is a one hour duration and free of charge: *Primary Geography in Australia: Directions and Discussions*. The second nationally focused course has a fee attached: *Integrating Maps Effectively into Geography Lessons*.

A highlight of the year was a new initiative for hybrid live events run through the Open Learning platform which means an 'anytime course' can then be created. *Unpacking the HSC Geo Exam* was targeted at a Stage 6 geography teacher audience. Feedback and attendance in real time indicate this initiative was highly successful. Presenters included representatives from NESA, a senior HSC marker, and President, Dr Susan Caldis who talked about directions in senior geography. The next iteration of this course 'HSC Live...!' will cover new materials based on the 2022 HSC Geography exam. In late October, a survey was distributed to Association members seeking feedback on the 2022 HSC Geography exam and the analysed feedback will inform the development of, and be presented at, the 'HSC Live – Unpacking the HSC Geo Exam'. This event has just been opened for registration and is set to run in February and March 2023.

Based on the success of the hybrid live-anytime course structure, a two-day online symposium was held in both May and June 2022: *Showcasing Geography in STEM*. The symposium was conceptualised and organised by Dr Susan Caldis, and Susan was supported by co-chairs Katerina Stojanovski, James Harte and Stephanie Boden. Presenters included a range of international and national geo-STEM practitioners and researchers. Attendees registered from NSW, ACT, WA and QLD. Each attendee received pre and post professional readings, access to recordings, and an ongoing discussion forum to reflect on key questions posed in each presentation. Participants had the option of attending on the day or accessing a recording of each session at their leisure.

In September 2022, at the AGTA Conference in Hobart, a suite of Open Learning / Anytime e-learning courses were winners in the Geographical Education Resource category of the AGTA Awards.

5b. Geography Bulletin, journal of GTANSW&ACT

Lorraine Chaffer (Vice President/Immediate Past President) is journal editor. During 2022, Katerina Stojanovski (Vice President) took on a guest-editor role. Since 2020, the focus of the editor and guest editors have been to ensure there is appropriate support for classroom teachers due to the impact of Covid-19 shutdowns and related implications arising for classroom practice due to the need for online learning combined with increasing staff shortages, workloads and the incidence of out-of-field teaching.

Each edition takes on average 20 weeks to produce to a standard that we are proud to provide to our members. The content of each edition is dependent on contributions by classroom teachers, GTANSW&ACT Councillors and authors who write new material for us or allow the republication of material already published. All members receive a notification email when the *Geography Bulletin* is published on the website and personal and life members are sent an email with the edition PDF attached.

In 2022, there were four editions of the *Geography Bulletin*. Lorraine Chaffer edited Editions 1, 2 and 4. Katerina Stojanovski edited Edition 3. Edition 4 veers from previous editions with professional reading under the themes Hopeful Geography, Geospatial technologies, and Careers linked to studies of geography. After three years of focus on classroom resources, it is time for a reset to give teachers time to focus on classroom practice and provide material to stimulate reflection.

Each edition provides a mix of articles to:

- support classroom teachers with ready to use resources
- provide professional reading that includes reports on issues surrounding the teaching of geography and responses by GTANSW & ACT (Advocacy).
- report Association and Council news about events and successes including competitions and awards

5c. HSC Supporting Stage 6 Geography teachers and students

A digital package was produced to support teachers and students in their preparation for the 2022 HSC Examination. The format for 2022 changed slightly from 2021 to provide a different experience for teachers and students. In 2022, presentations were shortened from 1 hour lectures for each topic, to presentations which have a 20 - 40 minute duration and cover targeted syllabus content and skills. Teachers could use the HSC support package for their own professional development and enrichment, or use it with students to guide revision. During the last month of the pre-exam period, a link to resources were sent to students for independent revision as an added level of support following another difficult year for many HSC students. In total **90 schools** from all sectors across the state purchased the package. Presenters were given free access as a thank you for their contribution to the package and two flood affected schools were also given free access through a collaboration with NESAs.

5d. Young Geographer

The Young Geographer Awards invites students in NSW and the ACT to demonstrate engagement with geography, the discipline and with the tools and skills of geography through the creation and conduct of an inquiry-based research project. Although it is not essential, teachers are encouraged to incorporate the research and construction of the project into their teaching programs to help support students. Prior to 2022, the Young Geographer Awards was led by David Latimer (Councillor).

The 2021 winners were announced during 2022: There were two overall winners:

- Millie Ferguson, Roseville College – A Study of the Implementation of Environmentally Sustainable Practices in the Frenchs Forest Region. Teacher: James Harte. Prize \$500.
- Sunae Park, Meriden – An investigation into the liveability of Beecroft for Older Residents 65 or over. Teacher: Bree Moore. Prize \$500

Prizes are available for winning entries. All entries are assessed by a combination of markers who are from Council and who are externally commissioned. The Young Geographer Award prizes are as follows: First Prize in any category \$500; Second Prize in any category \$250; Third Prize in any category \$100. Further information about the Young Geographer Award, assessment criteria and 2021 prize winners are available in the *Geography Bulletin* Volume 54, Number 2, pp 14 - 16.

In mid-2022, a new team comprising James Harte (Councillor), Keiran Bonin (Councillor) took on co-ordination of this program under the mentorship of Lorraine Chaffer. The due-date structure was revised to have two submission dates - one for senior entries in early Term 4 and another for junior entries in

late Term 4. The aim is to spread the judging of entries over a longer timeframe to ensure the process is completed by February 2023 and awards announced and delivered during Term 1 2023. In 2023, James and Kieran will lead the Young Geographer Awards process.

6. Engagement with the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)

The President of GTA NSW & ACT (Dr Susan Caldis) is also the current Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA). To that end there was clear and sustained alignment between national and state-focused work in developing the profile of geography and emphasising the importance of geography education. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the explicit connection of GTA NSW & ACT initiatives to recommendations in *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future* are part of this important work.

Also as previously mentioned, other areas where GTA NSW & ACT contributed greatly at a national scale was through the design and development of two Open Learning / Anytime e-learning courses; clarity of a careers focus; and support for a national conference demonstrated by co-ordination of the AGTA Awards process, and payment of five conference scholarships from GTA NSW & ACT for teachers across career-stages to attend the AGTA Conference in Hobart during September 2022.

6a. Careers focus by GTA NSW & ACT

GTA NSW & ACT has long seen the need to support teachers with information and resources linked to careers. In July 2022 a new careers website 'Go With Geo' was completed, and the AGTA Board were delighted to proceed with a soft launch occurring amongst affiliates and then conduct a formal launch at the AGTA Conference <https://www.gowithgeo.com.au/>. Thank you to Dr Grant Kleeman for ensuring the project was completed during 2022 and in a financially viable way.

Go with Geo provides information on career pathways, geography resources, study and news in geography. Career pathways includes environmental and economic change, natural hazards, human wellbeing, urban places, regional and rural Australia, coastal and marine environments, Asia-Pacific region and university courses. Geography resources includes geographer profiles, video resources, digibook, presentations, handouts, posters and career brochures.

After the soft launch of the GoWithGeo website <https://www.gowithgeo.com.au/>, Lorraine Chaffer saw an opportunity to actively support a geo-careers initiative at a state and national scale by developing additional classroom posters with a careers focus and link to the new website via #GOWITHGEO and use of a QR code. Teachers are encouraged to use these resources to stimulate career discussions with students by identifying links with the topics they are studying.

Careers have become a regular feature in the *Geography Bulletin* through articles written by professional geographers who are employed in careers such as planning, surveying and environmental science; also from sharing biographies of workers who identify the contribution of geography to their current employment. Links to careers websites and other supporting resources such as those created by She Maps and Forest Learning on careers using geospatial technologies, provide a student-relevant context for studying geography within and beyond the school gates.

In September 2022, at the AGTA Conference in Hobart, the Geography Careers Classroom Poster series were winners in the Not-For-Profit Generated Resource category of the AGTA Awards.

6b. Supporting the AGTA Conference – AGTA Awards and GTANSW&ACT conference scholarships

6b i. AGTA Awards

The primary aim of the AGTA Awards is to recognise resources which either have made or are likely to make a significant contribution to the teaching of geography in primary and secondary schools. In 2022, a team from GTA NSW & ACT led by Alexandria Warnock (Vice President) convened the AGTA Awards process and facilitated a judging panel. Due to COVID19 restrictions preventing the AGTA conference from occurring

in 2021, published materials were allowed to be first published or produced in Australia in the three years prior (normally two years) to the closing date for entries. All resources entered had to be suitable for use by geography teachers.

The judging team took into account the following criteria:

- significance of the contribution in each category that the products have made or are likely to make to the quality of geography teaching in Australia;
- quality of the product in terms of its geographical content, design and presentation and/or production;
- usefulness and appropriateness of the product in terms of its application in geographical education; and
- originality of the concept or approach on which the product is based.

In 2022, judges placed emphasis on resources equally meeting all criteria. The originality of the concept/approach did prevent 'revised edition' textbooks from meeting all four criteria equally, when the original version and the revised edition only differed in updated content.

The AGTA awards attracted entrants in all 7 award categories, with a total of 29 entries. Winning entries were awarded in all seven categories, with a further 4 entries awarded highly commended certificates. All resources gaining an AGTA Award were recognised for their currency, authenticity, application of contemporary understandings about how students learn, the use of cutting-edge production, and displaying a contemporary, innovative style in the support of geographical education in Australian schools. Further information is available at <https://agta.au/Awards/AGTA%20Awards/index.php>

6b ii. GTANSW & ACT Conference scholarships

The scholarship process was led by Dr Susan Caldis and Dr Grant Kleeman who are both Directors on the AGTA Board. Five representatives from GTA NSW&ACT Council formed the committee to assess each de-identified application. A written rationale accompanied each decision to award / not award and a discussion amongst the group ensued.

GTANSW&ACT Council would like to extend their congratulations to awardees of a scholarship to attend the AGTA Conference in Hobart between 28–30 September 2022:

- Gaby Barford, Chatswood High School
- Enya Shaefer, Ravenswood School
- Alison Wheatley, Covenant Christian School
- Sarah Blades, St John the Evangelist
- Hugh Walsh, Coffs Harbour Community Christian School
- Jessica Skinner-Crowe, Riverside Girls High School

Each awarded applicant demonstrated critical engagement with the AGTA Conference program in connection with personal professional learning and networking needs and demonstrated possibilities of benefit and action for future practice because of attending the conference. The expectations associated with attending the AGTA Conference on a GTA NSW&ACT scholarship are: active participation in a chosen workshop for each session; active participation in the plenary sessions; being present at the keynote sessions; writing a 750 word reflective report for the *Geography Bulletin* during 2023.

7. Reflection on my tenure as President

As President it was particularly important to me to ensure GTA NSW&ACT continued to make progress during my final year of tenure, from the work started in 2020 in grounding our activities in key evidence-based recommendations from the Decadal Plan for the discipline, *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future* (National Committee for Geographical Sciences, 2018) <https://www.science.org.au/files/userfiles/support/reports-and-plans/2018/geography-decadal-plan.pdf>. The recommendations are found in Chapter 13, Geography in Australian Schools and our focus as a Council was on three recommendations. I look back on 2022 and the past 3 years of Presidency and am delighted to realise the progress made on actioning three recommendations across a range of Association initiatives. My hope is for these recommendations to remain part of our thinking and practice, and for GTANSW&ACT to continue to lead and demonstrate success in STEM, academic collaboration and promoting awareness about out-of-field teaching at both state and national scales.

1. Geography being recognised as a partial STEM subject in policy and practice. Between 2020–2022, GTANSW&ACT have been national leaders in providing a specific presence for Geography as a STEM subject. The journey towards recognition of geography as a STEM subject occurring in policy, curriculum and practice requires an informed, consistent approach. In the first instance, it is important for such recognition to occur in geography classrooms and for geography teachers to make clear to their students where geography becomes visible and contributes to what is known as the 'STEM field' and 'STEM education'. purpose being to prompt dialogue and encourage evidence-informed practice in classrooms and syllabus development; and to retain the integrity of geography through harnessing its known interdisciplinary reach across the sciences, humanities and social sciences.

Within the last 3 years, GTANSW&ACT have actively sought to lead and strengthen the presence of Geography as a STEM subject through conference workshops, an online symposium developed through the e-learning portal, syllabus feedback to NESAs, establishment of a STEM category in the Young Geographer Award, and through the development of articles for the *Geography Bulletin*.

In 2021, Dr Grant Kleeman and Dr Susan Caldis ran a plenary session at the Annual Conference to discuss with teachers and invite their response about the visibility of geography as a STEM subject. In 2022, Dr Susan Caldis conceptualised and chaired a two day online symposium, supported by co-chairs and session respondents: Katerina Stojanovski, James Harte and Stephanie Boden; and also supported by Amy Freshwater and Lorraine Chaffer who presented responses to sessions. The purpose of the symposium was to strengthen understanding about the interdisciplinary nature of geography, foster collaboration between academic geographers who research and teach in the STEM space for geography, and prompt thinking about the way in which geography is taught and presented to students, colleagues and the school community. Clear and sustained connection to content descriptions from Landscapes and Landforms, Water in the World, Sustainable Biomes, Environmental Management and Change, and Human Wellbeing occurred.

Showcasing STEM in geography brought together the academic and education communities, from within and beyond Australia over two non-consecutive days, with the purpose of exploring how STEM can be emphasised in geographical teaching, learning and assessment in alignment with the syllabus. Pre-reading material was provided to attendees. Presenters included Associate Professor Hannah Power (University of Newcastle), Professor Stephen Turton (James Cook University), Dr Ann Hill (University of Canberra), Associate Professor Natascha Klocker (University of Wollongong), Professor Lynne Moorman (Mount Royal University, Canada), Kathy Jones (Fieldwork Connections), and the education team from Cool Australia and The Crawford Fund.

2. Increase collaboration between school and university geographers. Between 2020–2022, GTANSW&ACT have continued to strengthen an existing relationship with the Geographical Society of NSW and the academic geography community. The purpose being to make explicit connections between syllabus content areas and emerging research in the field to support the

development of geographical content knowledge by using real-world examples not readily found in textbook and similar classroom resources; to provide opportunities for advocacy, collaboration and build a co-operative sharing culture between the Association and Society through the establishment of co-badged, mutually beneficial low-cost events. Within the last 3 years, a 'From the academy' webinar stream was introduced to support content development and foster opportunities for discussion about geo-careers and geo-research between researchers and teachers. From the co-badged webinars we have been fortunate to engage with and learn from scholars including Dr Jessica McLean about understanding the Anthropocene; Dr Alanna Kamp about decolonising practice; and Dr Lana Hartwig and Professor Sue Jackson about Indigenous water cultures and water management. Co-badged social networking events, such as the Griffith Taylor Lecture are another important way to foster dialogue and connection.

3. **Promote awareness about the incidence and implications of out-of-field teaching**

The incidence of teachers being asked to regularly teach subjects they are not qualified to teach as part of their timetabled teaching load remains an increasingly critical issue in Australian schools, particularly in Geography. Often, teaching out-of-field can become an administrative and timetabling solution to teacher shortages; in a HSIE or Social Sciences faculty it can also become 'the norm' for geography because specialist geography teachers tend to be dispersed rather than concentrated. However, as geography educators and as a Council we continue to make it clear to our membership and interested stakeholders that out-of-field teaching in geography is not an appropriate or accepted strategy due to the spiralling implications for student learning outcomes, teacher confidence and wellbeing, and the integrity and rigour of our subject. The needs of out-of-field teachers are at the forefront of our thinking for resource development, anytime / e-learning courses, and awareness raising through the shaping of articles in the *Geography Bulletin* and through sharing emerging research and national reports such as *Australian National Summit on Teaching Out-of-Field: Synthesis and Recommendations for Policy, Practice* where contributions from the geography education community are evident <https://ooftas-collective.squarespace.com/s/TOOF-National-Summit-Report.doc>

It was not my intention to take on the President role again after having first served as President between October 2013–October 2016. However, in volunteer associations, it is important to step up when the need arises and when you have capacity to do so. Such circumstances arose in November 2019 and whilst at the time none of us could have predicted the pandemic, I do believe my arrival with a clear vision from an evidence base together albeit with ensuing difficult conversations about crystallising our operational procedures and priority areas – deciding whether and how to 'press-pause or press-play' – not only pushed us into a place of discomfort but in so doing, served us well for being able to move forward and act with clarity during these uncertain, complex and challenging times.

As a collective, through dedicating our own time to the work of the Association and through our willingness to share expertise for the greater good of geography education in NSW and ACT, we did achieve our goals. Also, we did continue to serve our membership, albeit in a slightly adjusted way to what was considered 'usual' or 'normal', and feedback from membership indicates our efforts are admired and appreciated.

8. Conclusion

In closing I would like to thank again each member of Council for their contribution to the Association and for their enthusiasm about geography education. I extend particular thanks and appreciation to the 2021 - 2022 Executive team for their wise counsel, support and willingness to take on additional responsibilities at short notice (in alphabetical order): Dr Paul Batten, Lorraine Chaffer, Dr Grant Kleeman, Katerina Stojanovski and Alexandria Warnock

I would also like to extend my appreciation to Council(s) during my tenure for responding to my leadership.

GTA NSW&ACT are successful at both state and national scales for meeting key enduring goals:

- advocacy for, and recommendations about, issues and policies affecting education for Geography;
- connecting the work of the Association to an evidence base and current developments in education for Geography;
- designing and delivering evidence-informed, timely, accredited professional learning events and materials

I end by commending to you the Annual Report for 2021–2022. I look forward to what lies ahead for the Association in 2023 and extend in advance my heartfelt congratulations to the incoming President, Executive Team and Council.

Dr Susan Caldis

President, GTA NSW&ACT