

Chair of Director's Annual Report 2011

Malcolm McInerney
AGTA Limited, Chair of Directors

Australian Curriculum: Geography continues to develop, as does AGTA as the peak body for geography teachers in Australia

In 2011 AGTA's work has continued to be dominated with the development of the Australian Curriculum: Geography. The curriculum has reached the draft scope and sequence stage of development and all augurs well for the planned launch of the curriculum in September 2012. The imminent launch of the curriculum has meant that 2011 has been an exciting and unparalleled year for geographical education in Australia. October 2008 seems a long time ago when AGTA in collaboration with the Institute of Australian Geographers and the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland established the 'Towards a National Geography Curriculum in Australia' (TNGC) project as a pro-active initiative to prepare the stage for the development of the Australian Curriculum for geography. AGTA is confident, as the curriculum becomes a reality, that the time, money and personal investment involved with this initiative was well worthwhile and put us in a favourable position to ensure that the curriculum to be developed will be a 21st Century geography. It is worth noting at the beginning of this annual report that ACARA has comprehensively used our TNGC work to guide the process and that some of our members (AGTA Board Directors and AGTA affiliate members) have played a crucial and significant role in the development of the Curriculum for geography as members of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Advisory bodies and writing panels. Whilst this work has created an increased workload and investment from AGTA and its officers, this report will show that we have also been able to maintain our regular activities to promote geographical education in Australia.

Promoting Geography in Australia: Tim Costello as AGTA Patron

As support AGTA's goal to promote Geography in the Australian community and media, in January 2011 Tim Costello, CEO of World Vision and well recognized humanitarian was formally appointed as AGTA Patron. In his Keynote address at the AGTA conference, Tim said in regards to geography:

Geography gives students ... "a framework that will enable them to always be mapping their terrain, a primary life skill."

Tim's keynote can be viewed on the AGTA website at
http://www.agta.asn.au/conf2011/presentations/costello_t.htm

Tim brings a humane and humanitarian edge to the worth of geography as illustrated in his recent articles in major Australian newspapers:

"We need young Australians who can learn from the past and be critically aware of the issues facing the world in the present and the future. Geography challenges students to investigate, question, evaluate and apply their learning to the world in which they live. It involves hard, critical thinking, the development of important knowledge and skills and an engaged, involved outlook; a desire not merely to observe the world but to change it for the better."

We look forward to working with Tim over coming years to promote geography in the Australia community.

AGTA's representative work

AGTA has an important role in representing geography teachers on a variety of national committees to ensure that the voice of geography educators is heard. Such roles are increasingly important in terms of the national focus and the national curriculum developments.

Portfolios for the purpose of representation were allocated as follows:

Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and the Environment: Emmy Terry (voting representative) and Margaret McIvor (AGTA representative).

Institute of Australian Geographers: Malcolm McInerney

Australian Academy of Science's National Committee of Geography: Grant Kleeman

National Education Forum: Malcolm McInerney (Executive member of the NEF)

National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition: Margaret McIvor

Spatial Education Advisory Committee: Malcolm McInerney

ACARA Advisory Panel for Geography: Malcolm McInerney, Rebecca Nicholas and Nick Hutchinson.

I am happy to report that AGTA is considered as an important member of these groups and is considered as one of the associations with a 'Big picture' view of the need for representation via national umbrella organisations and is prepared to invest in members of its board to always be represented at meetings and to participate in required activities

AGTA's continued involvement in ACARA's curriculum development process

In January 2011 ACARA released the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography*. Since then ACARA has been developing the scope and sequence for geography which is planned to be released in October 2011 for consultation. The process continues to be a challenging but critical task for geography teachers across Australia. AGTA continues to be heartened by ACARA's commitment to involve geography teachers and in particular AGTA in the process of curriculum development. To this end, several AGTA Board members and numerous members of AGTA affiliates have been closely involved as members of the evolving ACARA Advisory Panels for geography over the past two years.

The following ACARA timeline will give an idea of the 2011-2012 curriculum development process for the Australian Curriculum: Geography. Naturally, the timeline may change but at this stage these are the dates, events and milestones ACARA has mapped out for the process:

October 2011 – February 2012: Consultation on the draft scope and sequence

February - May 2012: Curriculum revision

June - August 2012: National consultation and final revisions

September 2012: Proposed publication

AGTA encourages all Australian geography teachers to keep informed of the ACARA process via their website at <http://www.acara.edu.au> and take advantage of the opportunities provided by ACARA and geography teachers' associations to feed comments and ideas into the process. The first of these will be the on-line consultation for the draft scope and sequence planned for October 2011 – February 2012.

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) exemplar project

In June 2011 AGTA was contracted by AITSL to undertake the development of annotated illustrations of practice (exemplars) to support the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. Rob Berry and Roger Smith will be the managers of the project and will be responsible during 2012 for developing four exemplars of good practice (three static and one dynamic) in geography teaching aligned to the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. AGTA considers that this AITSL project is an excellent opportunity to build on the *Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of School Geography* project AGTA was involved in from 2007-2010. AGTA looks forward to this being a useful resource for the implementation of Australian Curriculum: Geography in coming years.

AGTA 2011 Geography Going National Conference in Adelaide

As promised by the Geography Teachers Association of South Australian (GTASA), AGTA 2011 *Geography Going National* was one of the most successful conferences held by AGTA. The conference, at Scotch College in Adelaide attracted over 250 geography teachers from all over Australia (and beyond) and provided the perfect venue for four days of exciting and worthwhile professional learning. Thanks must go to Mark Manuel, Rob Berry and the executive of the GTASA for their hard work and professional approach to the design, organisation and implementation of this outstanding conference. As expected, the keynote speakers of Dr Peter Hill (ACARA) CEO), Dr Rita Gardner (Director, RGS), Rev. Tim Costello (AGTA Patron) and Duncan Chessel (Adventurer) were extremely well received and provided a wonderful stimulus for the geographical thinking which was to take place during the 45 workshops, 12 fieldtrips and the many social activities (formal and informal) conducted during the week. Edited videos on the keynote speakers and a selection of workshop presentations are available on the AGTA site at http://www.agta.asn.au/conf_presentations/index.htm

Thanks to the Geographical Association of Western Australia (GAWA) for stepping forward to conduct the next conference in Perth in January 2013. It should be another fantastic conference and most importantly be the perfect opportunity for geographers around Australia to become familiar with the September 2012 (hopefully) published Australian Curriculum: Geography

Exploring 21st Century Geography: A new resource on-line

In May AGTA released for sale its new product titled *Exploring 21st Century Geography*. The DVD containing spatial technology resources, technology in the classroom links and 21st Century geography materials has been developed by AGTA to support the thinking and resource requirements for the implementation of the Australian Curriculum: Geography. Thanks to Rob Berry as our webmaster, the product is available on-line and can be purchased via PayPal. This is a new marketing strategy and capacity by AGTA and will provide the model for Australian Curriculum orientated initiatives which I am sure AGTA will be exploring in future months. The response from schools across Australia has been extremely positive to the availability of the product and shows that schools are looking for support with 21st Century technology and approaches as they begin to engage with the Australian Curriculum: Geography. AGTA sees much of its future work is to provide such resources to support schools during the implementation stage. The *Exploring 21st Century Geography* DVD and its availability to schools is the first step along this path. If interested in viewing information on the resource go to <http://www.agta.asn.au/products/index.htm>

Keys to Geography 2nd Edition

AGTA's financial position continues to be healthy as a result of the sales of the 2011 second edition of its highly successful *Keys to Geography* publication. As well as being an important source of cash flow for AGTA, the *Keys to Geography* publications have provided a much needed Australian orientated resource for schools across Australia. This is particularly important when one considers the future needs of the Australian Curriculum: Geography to provide resources in the Australian context and support teachers to develop programs which reflect the 21st Century

approaches and learning which will be an essential ingredient of the new curriculum. Watch this space for more on this thought.

The Don Biddle: Friends of AGTA Award

In 2011 AGTA inaugurated the Don Biddle Friends of Geography Awards. We thank Don for being so generous to allow us to name the award after him in recognition of the wonderful work he did with AGTA for many years. The award has been developed by AGTA to recognise individuals, groups or institutions which have made a significant contribution over an extended period of time to the work of AGTA in promoting geographical education in Australia.

The 2011 Don Biddle Friends of AGTA Awards were presented to Mark Manual, Roger Smith and Kath Berg at the AGTA 2011 conference in Adelaide. AGTA thanks these three individuals for their outstanding work for geography in Australian schools for many years and wish them all the best for the future. The next Don Biddle Friends of AGTA Awards will be awarded at AGTA 2013 in Perth.

AGTA 2010 Awards

AGTA presents biennial awards to producers of materials used in the teaching of geography. The following AGTA Awards were presented at the AGTA 2011 Conference in January.

- Primary school resource: Get Connected Publisher, World Vision Australia
- Junior secondary school textbook: Oxford Big Ideas Geography Level 6, Oxford University Press
- Senior secondary school textbook: Our Global Future: the Geography of Planning Cities and Climate Change, GAWA
- Broadsheet, chart, wall map: Oxford Big Atlas 2, Oxford University Press
- Atlas: The Jacaranda Atlas Edition
- Website: DataGenie, Education Services Australia
- Non-commercial, teacher produced resource: Building Global Awareness, Global Education Centre of South Australia
- Geography teaching resource material: Keys to Geography Essential Skills and Tools, Macmillan Education Australia in collaboration with AGTA
- Geographical education publication: Interaction Global Geography Volume 38 No 2 June 2010, GTAV

AGTA thanks all these publishers for submitting their high quality work and looks forward to future opportunities to support publishers in developing the very best products and resources for the teaching of geography in Australian schools.

Geocareers Website

One of AGTA's promotional activities is the Geocareers website at www.geocareers.net.au. The site, developed by Rob Berry, is proving to be an outstanding resource for educators and students, linking our discipline with potential careers. At present the major sections include Meet a Geographer, Studying Geography, Using Geography and Resources.

Student Geography competitions/activities

For many years AGTA has been involved in conducting in liaison with the GTAQ a range of geographical competitions and activities. These initiatives are extremely important in providing an important goal for students to engage with geography in their school and to raise the profile of geography in the community. I would like to thank Kath Berg (RGSQ) and the dedicated geographical educators from the GTAQ and GAWA for all their hard work with the following activities.

The National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition is a joint initiative of AGTA and the RGSQ and is proudly sponsored by National Geographic Channel. This competition continues to grow and be a great success in promoting geography in schools around Australia. In 2011, over 80 000 students participated in the competition Australia wide.

In 2011 the school prizes were awarded to:

- Territories: Canberra Grammar School
- New South Wales: Sydney Boys High School
- Queensland: Brisbane Grammar School
- South Australia: Pembroke School
- Tasmania: Launceston Church Grammar School
- Victoria: Melbourne Grammar School
- Western Australia: Shenton College

The final for the under 16's was held at the Fox Studios in Sydney on 6 June 2011. The results of the Final were:

- First: Michael Gu, Melbourne Grammar School
- Second: Jesse Tong, Brisbane Grammar School
- Third: Liam Kearney, Christ Church Grammar School, Perth

The International Geography Olympiad was held in Taipei, Taiwan, from 29 July to 4 August 2010. The team was chosen from students who participated in the senior level of the National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition via Geography's Big Week Out. The team had an outstanding Olympiad, coming second in the team scores and winning Australia's first ever gold medal (won by Samuel Buttenshaw from All Saints College St Mary's, Maitland, NSW). Congratulations to the team on this outstanding effort.

Geography's Big Week Out was held in Perth and Rottnest Island from 5 to 10 December, 2011. The event was highly successful and if the report on the RGSQ website at <http://www.rgsq.org.au/rgsqsite/gbwo.htm> is any indication, the teachers and students involved had a great time and did some exciting geography in the field. Thanks to Mike Fazio and his GAWA team for their great work with this outstanding and important student focused initiative. Also thanks to GTAV for putting their hand up to do this years Big Week Out from 2-7 October on the Mornington Peninsula, Vic.

As this report shows, the world of geography in Australian schools continues to be a dynamic and exciting one for teachers and students. We continue to be tested by the challenges of being closely involved in the development of an Australian Curriculum for geography, promoting the 'brand' of geography in the community, integrating modern technologies into our teaching, whilst continuing our normal role as an association supporting teachers. I consider that AGTA continues to meet these challenges with confidence and continues to be seen by others in the education community as an association of high standards and professionalism. Such a reputation is only possible through the support and hard work of all Directors on the AGTA Board and teacher members of affiliates for making AGTA a pivotal organisation in the promotion of geographical education in Australia.