

GEOGRAPHIA

Geographia is the national newsletter of the Australian Geography Teachers' Association Limited.

JULY 2008

Occasional Newsletter of The Australian Geography Teachers' Association Limited

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Birthday Celebrations – AGTA 100

The Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA) conducted its 100th meeting of the Board in Melbourne on the weekend of May 3rd and 4th. The meeting involved Geography Teachers' Association delegates from all the states and as always was a truly representative meeting of Geographers from around Australia.

AGTA is a body which seeks to:

- Foster the teaching and learning of geography in Australian schools and enhance awareness of its applications in society.
- Promote and circulate the results of research into geography education.
- Maintain a professional network through which teachers of geography in Australia may express opinions on educational matters that represent the interests of its member affiliates on national education decision making bodies.

AGTA has a combined membership of 1721, which encompasses teachers and professionals

who are members of affiliate Geography Teachers' Associations in New South Wales (476), Victoria (595), Queensland (228), Western Australia (250), South Australia (160) and Tasmania (12).

In this day of national curriculum discussions it is imperative that a body such as AGTA is in existence and most importantly healthy and active. As usual the meeting in Melbourne was full of information and pro-active plans to promote geography in Australia.

AGTA Board members have represented Australian geography teachers on a range of national bodies since the last meeting of the Board. AGTA is a member of the Australian Federation of Societies for the Studies of Society and Environment (AFSSSE at <http://www.afsese.asn.au/>), the Institute of Australian Geographers (IAG at <http://www.iag.org.au/>) the National Education Forum (NEF at <http://www.nef.edu.au/home.html>) and the Spatial Science Institute's Spatial Education Advisory Committee (SEAC at http://www.spatialsciences.org.au/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1)

From Nick Hutchinson (Chair) - Agta 100

The first meeting of AGTA was held on June 1 1967. There are a number of parallels between this gathering and AGTA 100. Both meetings took place in Melbourne, organised by GTAV.

AGTA 1 was concerned about the failure of the UNESCO Committee for Education to include geographers in a Seminar, Social Science in Secondary School; AGTA 100 was preoccupied with firmly embedding geography in the national curriculum.

AGTA 1 planned the production of Readings in Geographical Education, Vol 1, 1954-1968 generating sufficient royalties to launch AGTA's flagship journal Geographical Education ('Contributors have agreed that neither author's or editor's fees will be paid. Royalties from sales will be paid to the Geography Teachers' Association and will be kept in a Journal Fund Account with the object of promoting an Australian Journal of Geographical Education' Biddle 1968).

AGTA 100 plans to use royalties earned from Keys to Geography and the forthcoming Keys to Fieldwork to support the development of a professionally generated strategic plan for the promotion of geography; the Australian Research Council Linkages grant program to develop standards for geography teaching; the Beijing Olympics materials; and, further consolidation of the GeoCareers website.

AGTA 100 is currently responsible for the concerns and aspirations of more than 1700 geography teachers from all states and most of the larger Australian territories. The current Board mirrors the first made up of enthusiastic, knowledgeable and dedicated teachers of geography.

Nick Hutchinson, AGTA Chair

Strategic Planning

AGTA is working towards developing a strategic plan for the promotion of geography in Australian schools. In partnership with marketing professionals, AGTA aims to increase its profile and promote community awareness about geography in the 21st Century. This endeavour will endorse geography as a dynamic and critical subject within the new national curriculum.

Significant discussions were conducted at the AGTA meeting with regards to the place of geography in the national curriculum. Most importantly there was discussion about what to include in such a curriculum. AGTA should be able to advance agreed guidelines about a set of skills, knowledge and approaches acceptable to all affiliates. The recently released Erebus report is a useful starting point: <http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/8221F0DF-E962-402E-A64E-0D26B910F328/21023/geographyreport.pdf>

AGTA in partnership with the Australian Research Council Linkages grant program is developing standards for geography teaching. This innovative project involves video recording classroom teachers at work across Australia. Expert panels will review the videos and use the information to develop standards for teaching geography. Currently, volunteer teachers are being taped and panels established to carry out the process. AGTA considers that this research will provide a rich resource and delineated standards for the advancement of geography teaching in schools in Australia. Please contact Jeana Kriewaldt at <http://www.findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/researcher/person1729.html> for further information on this project.

AGTA Website

The number of unique visits per month to the AGTA website has increased by 60% since September 2007 with an overwhelming number of these visits viewing one or more of the Conference 2008 pages.

Other sections most frequently visited include Board and affiliate pages, followed by the written papers and PowerPoint presentations delivered at the AGTA conference in January 2006.

The major change to the website has been the addition of the AGTA 08 conference section. A number of revisions and updates have been made to this section of the website during the past six months. In addition, the conference website provides links to the online registration. After the AGTA 08 conference the website will include the keynote presentations and workshop papers.

Updates have been made to other sections of the website including details of affiliates and Board members. It is most important that affiliates forward details of changes when these occur so that the relevant pages can be updated. The listing of state conferences has been updated (where such details are known) with links to each state association's website. Ongoing additions are also made as required to the news section.



Geocareers Website

Rob Berry, the web manager of the AGTA website, has done an outstanding job in developing the GeoCareers website. Check out <http://www.geocareers.net.au/index.htm>. The site is 'user friendly' and an excellent resource for learning about geographical careers. The GeoCareers website contains resources links and case studies of young people who have studied geography at school and see a link between what they learnt in geography and what they do in their job. This is a great site to pass on to the career counsellor/s and subject/career selection personnel in your school.

A number of additions have been made to the GeoCareers website. In particular, new profiles have been added to the 'Meet a Geographer' section. The website now includes entries for each of the career categories. A follow-up letter has been sent to people who indicated a willingness to be included in the 'Meet a Geographer' section but have not as yet submitted their profiles. Sincere thanks to AGTA Board members who have assisted with the provision of contacts. At present the major sections include Meet a Geographer, Studying Geography, Using Geography and Resources. Each of these sections will be added to and if necessary, refined as the website extends its scope.

The number of unique visits to the GeoCareers website has increased significantly with over 200 unique visits per day throughout February, March and April 2008, an increase from less than 40 per day during September 2007.

Around the World Investigating Spatial Technology

Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship trip in 2007

by Malcolm McInerney, AGTA Vice Chair

Rarely does an individual have the opportunity to be totally indulgent and just head off to explore an area of interest with virtually none of the everyday encumbrances of daily life.

My 2007 Churchill Fellowship provided the opportunity for me to totally immerse myself in the world of spatial technology and teaching. Such an indulgence was a wonderful opportunity on a personal and professional level to learn experience and pander to an area I find intellectually stimulating, ever changing and relevant to my teaching.

My project was to investigate the use of spatial technology in education at both, the system and school level. The project involved the exploration of materials used and methodologies employed to ensure successful classroom implementation of spatial technology by teachers in Hong Kong, United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

A full account of my trip can be found on my trip blog at <http://spatialworlds.blogspot.com> and the final report to the trust will be at <http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/category.php?id=57> in the near future. The report contains conclusions, recommendations and future directions for spatial literacy and spatial technology in schools in Australia in response to my findings on the trip.

The conundrum for my Fellowship was the question; why is this all-pervasive technology in our everyday life not showing up in all Australian classrooms? I thought maybe those overseas have the answer and are doing it already? I would love to report that I found the answer in some part of the world in my travels, but I can't. However what I did find is that we are doing it as good, if not better than elsewhere and the issues we face with the introduction of the technology in schools are the same worldwide. While the affirmation of what we are doing was a positive realisation from the trip, the most valuable outcome is that my travels helped create a face to face worldwide network of passionate educators in the area of spatial education which will I am sure go towards a common approach to implementation in schools. The other major learning from the trip was the realisation that there is limited research on spatial literacy around the world. Such knowledge gives those in geographical education in particular a wonderful opportunity to take the ball and run on this very important aspect of education and provide a valid rationale for the use of spatial technology in classrooms.

The Spatialworlds website at <http://spatialworlds.blogspot.com>



When you read my 'blog' and report you will see that my interviews and visits made it clear that there are two main impediments to introducing spatial technology into schools. These are:

1. Teacher and education authorities exposure to the area of spatial literacy and the use of spatial technology in society in general and the opportunities created by the technology in a vocational and citizenship sense.
2. The area of teacher training in the technology and the associated pedagogies required for successful use in the classroom.

In short the key to the implementation of spatial technology in schools is the development of a spatial technology awareness program amongst teachers, followed by a well constructed and achievable professional development program. This program must deal with the teaching methodologies required to use spatial technology in the classroom and in turn must address the issue of 'risk taking' teacher behaviour (the teacher being comfortable at not being the expert but a facilitator of the technology) and the need to develop peer supportive classroom methods of instruction.

All my discussions affirmed my belief that what we need to tackle in a coordinated way in Australia is teacher awareness

and training re: spatial literacy and technology. Most importantly the training must address the teaching methodologies required to successfully use spatial technology in the classroom and not just the technological skills to be attained by teachers via their professional development.

It would be great to see geographers in Australia heading off around the world to investigate aspects of geography to make sure that geography continues to be an important part of the educational scene in Australia. With the push by AGTA in recent months to politically promote geography, the more people we have out and about advocating and getting ideas about geographical education would be a positive thing for the growth of geography in Australia. The Winston Churchill Trust Fellowship (<http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/>) is one way that individuals can experience and grow as geographers for the good of geographical education in Australia. Think of an area to investigate and put in an application if you see it as something you wish to do. Please contact me if you want to discuss the application process and the experiences I went through to get the Fellowship. The Fellowship was certainly a worthwhile experience for me professionally and personally and I would recommend it to anyone.





Climate Xchange

Under the leadership of Dr. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Director General of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), New Delhi, a global consortium of organisations have come together to ensure that young people around the world are fully engaged on the climate change issue. A proposal has been constructed to develop a global education program on climate change, which will provide teachers with climate change teaching resources, facilitate the sharing of knowledge and ideas on climate change between students, teachers and schools around the world, and promote the voice of young people in important arenas by providing them with a platform at key national and international events. The ideas contained within this proposal have evolved during a series of online and offline discussions between representatives from over 20 collaborating organisations, including AGTA, from nine countries. These discussions took place between October 2007 and March 2008.

The consortium has participants from Australia, India, Austria, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, Norway, Pakistan and the United States.

Phase One Pilot: June 2008 – May 2010 sets the following outcomes:

- A selection of effective existing climate change tools for teachers and educators will be compiled and regularly updated
- Existing gaps in climate change tools for teachers and educators will be identified and limited content developed to fill a number of these gaps
- The Climate Xchange online will be developed
- Monthly membership email news round-up and RSS feeds will be produced
- Physical exchange programs for teachers and students will be encouraged

Beijing Olympics

AGTA is presently producing resources in conjunction with the United Kingdom's Geographical Association to support the teaching of the geographical perspectives of the Beijing Olympics. These materials build on the successful AGTA Olympics kit developed for the Athens Olympics in 2004.



Beijing 2008 Olympic Games

An exciting set of resources has been produced by the Australian Federation of Societies for Studies of Society and Environment (AFSSSE) to support teaching about the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

With the Olympic Games to be held in China during August 2008, these resources can be used to build a better understanding of China and promote mutual understanding between Australia and China.

Four units for environment education, history and culture, economics and business, and geography are available now.

Each resource includes inquiry-based activities and support materials for students in the middle years of schooling (Years 7-10).

Available now from

www.afsse.asn.au

An AFSSSE Project funded by the Australia-China Council



Lucerne Declaration on Geographical Education for Sustainable Development

Hartwig Haubrich (Freiburg), Sibylle Reinfried (Lucerne), Yvonne Schleicher (Weingarten)

The International Geographical Union Commission on Geographical Education sees the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014 as an opportunity to confirm its commitment to education for sustainable development. Contemporary global changes challenge humankind in the 21st century. The Proceedings of the Lucerne-Symposium, Switzerland, July 29-31, 2007 reports on the proclamation of a "Declaration on Geographical Education for Sustainable Development".

The declaration extends the foundational International Charter on Geographical Education (1992) with a focus on:

- The Contribution of Geography to Education for Sustainable Development
- The Criteria for Developing Geographical Curricula for Education for Sustainable Development
- The Importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Education for Sustainable Development in Geography.

Published in: S. Reinfried, Y. Schleicher, A. Rempfler (Editors): *Geographical Views on Education for Sustainable Development. Proceedings of the Lucerne-Symposium, Switzerland, July 29-31, 2007. Geographiedidaktische Forschungen, Volume 42, p. 243—250, 2007.*

THE GEOGRAPHERS TOOLKIT

SELLING AT
\$35.00 (INC GST)

TOOLKIT

The Geographer's Toolkit provides Geography teachers and students with a complete range of Geographical thinking skills and processes.

These are supported with numerous graphs, diagrams, pictures and maps, all in full colour.

A wide variety of questions and activities provide students with the opportunity to practice and fully develop their skills in mapping, field-work, statistical investigation and spatial technology.



The addition of a comprehensive broadsheet provides additional information and opportunity to build and consolidate skills.

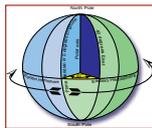
The Geographer's Toolkit has been developed by the Geographical Association of Western Australia to provide a practical and useful, high quality text to support teachers. It meets the needs of the current course and provides information suitable for the proposed Geography courses in Western Australia.

TOOLKIT

Chapter one introduces students to a range of general mapping skills. Scale, direction, location, construction and symbols are included.

Chapter two builds student expertise in different types of thematic maps. Choropleth, isopleth, flow and locational quotient mapping techniques are all covered.

Chapter three introduces a range of topographic mapping skills and processes. Landscape interpretation, contour construction and cross sections are just some of the topics in this chapter



TOOLKIT

Chapter four explains a range of photographic resources. Oblique, aerial, satellite and radar images are discussed and their usefulness to the Geographer is ably illustrated.

Chapter five introduces the rapidly emerging field of Geographic Information Systems and allows students to experience GIS through the use of online resources such as the WA Atlas.

Chapter six outlines a number of different graphing techniques used by Geographers in presenting spatial information



GEOGRAPHICAL THINKING, SKILLS AND PROCESSES

The Geographer's Toolkit



20% Discount
to GAWA Members

This new skills text has been written by Norman J Snell for the Geographical Association of WA

AGTA Conference 2008

Taking Geography Above & Beyond

In September 2008 AGTA is conducting its bi-annual conference in Queensland on the Sunshine Coast. The conference planning by the co-convenors, Rebecca Nicholas and David Lergessner is well underway and an exciting program has been developed for the week commencing September 29th.



For more information and registration procedures please check:

<http://www.agta.asn.au/conf08/index.htm>

NSW

Geography Teachers Association of New South Wales (GTANSW)

Approximately 480 members belong to GTANSW. Increased membership is due to the incentive initiated last year that members pay a reduced rate at conferences.

Professional Learning

All professional learning workshops and conferences held by GTANSW addressed the NSW Institute of Teaching Standards particularly Element 6 (Teachers continually improve their professional knowledge and practice) and Domains such as professional knowledge, professional practice and professional commitment. At the completion of conferences/workshops GTANSW provides accreditation certificates to indicate that a teacher has successfully met specific elements of Professional Teaching Standards.

Promoting Geography

The provision of quality professional learning addressing teaching standards is an essential goal of GTANSW. The distribution of geography posters to each GTA members was included in the Geography Bulletin. The web page is constantly being updated with the latest conferences, resources and Global Education news; new pictures and links; leadership blog; and papers, audio and PowerPoint presentations from conferences. Martin Pluss (web manager) constantly analyses the usage of the web page for more effective use. <http://www.gtansw.org.au/>

Curriculum Development

Concern over the declining candidature for HSC Geography was discussed extensively at meetings. David Hamper and Grant Kleeman constructed a survey of questions that was sent out to all Geography teachers in NSW.

Global Education

Global Education has been managed by GTANSW since 2001. Approximately 40,000 teachers and university students attended conferences and

workshops over the six years. The project has successfully integrated trans-disciplinary Global Education within Geography as well as primary HSIE, secondary HSIE (Economics, Business Studies, Commerce, Legal Studies, Studies of Religion, Society and Culture, former Asian Studies), English and Science.

GTANSW was awarded the Global Education NSW contract (primary and secondary) for the next three years (2007-2009). The project is managed by Dr Susan Bliss.

New Office Address
PO Box 577 Leichhardt, NSW 2040
Phone: 9564 3322 Fax: 9564 2342



SA

Geography Teachers Association of South Australia (GTASA)

Membership currently stands at 72 and is anticipated to increase significantly as conference registrations together with membership renewals are received.

Professional Learning

The 2008 GTASA Conference was held on Thursday 29th May and Friday 30th May. The Theme of the Conference was "Geographers at Work". Workshop sessions focused on both middle school and senior Geography with support being provided for teachers of the new Year 12 course. Additionally a special workshop on "Marine biodiversity featured Gavin the Leafy Sea Dragon" was been organised for primary teachers.

At the Conference several awards were presented:

- The Wilkins Prizes for student Environmental Action

- National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition, SA Winner
- DD Harris Awards for Excellence in Geography Teaching
- Special Award for raising geographical awareness to Munno Para Primary School
- Two Life Memberships

Following on the success of GIS workshops offered via Centra as a trial in Term 3 2007, a further 4 free workshops were run in Term 4. This is a busy time of the year for teachers and not all participants were able to complete all 4.

More GIS Training via Centra is planned for this year. This is a joint DECS/ GTASA venture. A survey is out presently to gauge interest in various dates during the year. Hub group workshops focussing on spatial technology in teaching have been held in schools.

Two new products for 2008 are the "Goolwa Map kit" and the Year 12 study Guide.

Promoting Geography

Malcolm McInerney participated in an interview

on ABC radio following the release of the Erebus Report. Malcolm's Spatial Worlds website has been publicised as a great resource for GIS teaching.

People who have signed onto the GTASA updates list via the website continue to be sent information every 4 days or so.

Curriculum Development

Numbers in Year 12 Geography increased by 200 in 2007 – this is attributed to the introduction of a new course.

Subject Reference Groups have been formed to mould the current Year 11 and 12 curricula to fit the requirements of the new SACE. All subjects in Year 12 must have 30% external assessment and no assessment component will be used to moderate another e.g. exam performance will no longer be used to moderate school assessed work.



VIC

Geography Teachers Association of Victoria (GTAV)

Current membership is 564, compared to 611 at the same time last year.

Planning for GTAV's 50th Anniversary focuses on: Remembering the Past: Writing and Publication of GTAV history and Celebrating the Occasion at conference time (August).

GTAV will be offering a bursary to a Geography Teacher with 5 years or less teaching experience to attend the AGTA Conference in September.

Professional Learning

The GTAV annual conference will take place from 9-11 August 2008. Keynote speakers will focus on Global Cities and Climate Change.

Other professional learning activities include VELS; inexperienced teachers workshop; meet the examiner evening; basic Geospatial Skills; 7-10 Relevant and Fun; VCE Geography; Applied GIS Humanities PD in Melbourne, Ballarat and Pakenham; student lecture on the Murray-Darling Basin.

A series of Spatial Concepts posters was launched late in 2007 followed by a revised publication that helps to underpin the teaching of Geography "Geography: it's essential".

Curriculum Development

GTAV in partnership with VCAA has been developing further Murray-Darling support material for the website.



QLD

Geography Teachers Association of Queensland (GTAQ)

Currently membership is at 180 and has remained stable over the last few years.

Professional Learning

A pre-services teacher professional learning program is being investigated for semester 2. However, the GTAQ is hosting the 2008 AGTA Conference and this will be the focus for the association. (See page 7 for further information about the Conference).

Promoting Geography

"Careers in Geography Day" will be held at the University of Queensland in July 2008.

Curriculum Development

The revised Geography Senior Syllabus has been implemented in schools this year in Year 11. QSA in particular is undertaking workshops in-servicing teachers on the changes. It is proposed that this syllabus will remain in place until 2014.

Curriculum focus for Year 8 and 9 is "Essential Learnings (ELs)". ELs identify what students should be taught and what students should have the opportunities to learn. They provide a common basis for planning and support a flexible school based curriculum incorporating the national statements of learning. ELs will become core content in the re-released KLA syllabuses. Six "big ticket" areas to be covered include: indigenous focus; content; interconnectedness of issues and topics; resource requirements; student centred learning and technology and tools.

A focus also exists on supporting middle schooling – curriculum design based on collaboration; learning fun, engaging and meaningful; learning is problem based and involve students using higher order thinking; students having considerable agency in their enquires (negotiation); students drawing on a range of knowledge and subjects to complete their enquiries; and, students and the teachers share the power within the community of learners.



WA

Geography Teachers Association of Western Australia (GAWA)

Membership remains stable at about 175 made up of both individual and institutional members.

Professional Learning

Teachers from both metropolitan and country schools attended a beginning teachers PD in March. Once again many participants were experienced teachers who were teaching geography for the first time. A variety of resources were provided to participants.

GAWA's annual conference will be held in August. The focus will be on using the town of Fremantle as a resource for teaching geography from Years 8 to 12. In addition there will also be an emphasis on planning for implementing the new Geography Course of Study.

A metropolitan location was chosen partly in the expectation that numbers will be up on last year when the conference was held in Bunbury.

Metropolitan conferences also attract teachers from some of the more remote schools.

A GIS workshop is planned for later in term 2. This will be held at a metropolitan high school.

A proposal has been put forward to hold a dinner for past GAWA Executive members to recognise the contribution made by these people to the association and to geography education. This event will probably be held in Term 3.

The Geographer's Toolkit was published last year and is selling well. An activities booklet to supplement the Toolkit is in the process of being developed (See page 3). In addition several writers are working on an amplification document/teachers guide to support teachers implementing the new Geography Course of Study. A text for the new course has been proposed but a yet nothing has eventuated.

Promoting Geography

A Geography and Earth Environmental Science day was held at Perth Zoo on 28 March in conjunction with AAEE. The a 'taster day' for year 10 students was designed to inform students of tertiary courses and careers available due to the

undertaking of subjects including Geography or Earth and Environmental Science in Years 11 and 12.

GAWA has initiated a Geography Educator of the Year award aimed at providing recognition for outstanding geography teachers. A sum of \$2000 will be provided for the winner of the award. It is hoped to attract a significant number of nominations. The application process has been deliberately kept very simple.

Curriculum Development

The new Geography Course of Study was accredited in December 2007. The course by that stage had undergone 27 revisions. Since then a number of additional changes have been made to the course mainly to clarify the language and make it easier to set an external exam. There are still problems with the course which will hopefully be fixed in the next 18 or so months.



TAS

Tasmanian Geography Teachers Association (TGTA)

Membership currently stands at 17. Members are mostly from Year 11/12 government colleges and private schools. These are the only places where Geography is still taught as a separate subject.

Two private schools are not teaching Geography this year, but this has been offset by two government colleges and one private school each having a class. Consequently, there has been a reversal of the decline in the number of students studying Geography with nearly 250 students this year.

Professional Learning

A state-wide session on the place of Geography in the new K-10 Tasmanian Curriculum Society and History will occur in August. TGTA is also exploring the possibility of a state-wide PD session with well-known demographer Natalie Jackson from the University of Tasmania on population topics and case studies relevant to the Geography syllabus.

TGTA continues to interact and liaise with the Geography and Environmental Studies Department at the University of Tasmania.

Promoting Geography

The National Geographic Australian Geography Competition was promoted in high schools and colleges in Tasmania.

Curriculum Development

A professional learning program is being organised for the new K-10 Society and History course

and Geography teachers are hoping that this course will encourage more students to enrol in Geography in Years 11 and 12.

The major re-structure of TAFE and Year 11 and 12 Colleges into Academies and Polytechnics is continuing this year ready for a trial in 2009 at some colleges, with all colleges coming on board in 2010. The place of Geography and all other subjects is to be discussed in the very near future. It could remain as a university entrance subject, as it is now, or may even combine with some aspects of the first year university course and be more of a bridging course for students between Year 12 and university.



National Geographic Channel Australian Geography Competition

2008

"a blast"

"the most amazing experience"

"thanks for giving me the chance to learn so many things"

The number of students entering the 2008 Competition is provisionally 89,645. It was good to recover from the downturn in 2007. ACT, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia all entered record numbers of students.

The 2008 school round was held later (and longer) than usual – 31 March to 11 April – because of the early Easter.

Final for under 16s

Students won a place at the Final for under 16s based on their scores in the school round. As part of the naming rights agreement, the Final for under 16s was held in Sydney on Monday 16 June at the Taronga Zoo Theatre. Sydney schools that entered the Competition have been invited.

In Nick Hutchinson's absence Malcolm McInerney officially represented AGTA. The prize weekend prior to the Final was hosted by Land's Edge, an outdoor/environmental education provider that has expanded their facilities to include one at Chowder Bay on the shores of Sydney Harbour. This had the advantage of the weekend having a much more geographical flavour, with the students undertaking fieldwork. The students also had the pleasure of attending a dance performance of Edward Scissorhands at the Opera House as the special treat.

Geography's Big Week Out

The first Geography's Big Week Out (GBWO), a 5-day geography fieldtrip in Noosa, Queensland, was held 10 - 14 December 2007. The students who won a place at GBWO were the highest-scoring male and female Year 11 students from each state and the combined territories, plus two other high-scoring students. It was a great success.

Some quotes from the students: "awesome", "a blast", "the most amazing experience", "never a boring moment", "thank you for giving me the chance to learn so many things", "very educational and also lots of fun", "it was like a guilt-free holiday, enjoying a beautiful place while learning new things each and every day", "never in my entire school life have I met such a fantastic, dedicated and driven bunch of geography teachers". The sub-committee organising GBWO was supplemented by local teachers.

Mike Fazio and Emmy Terry from GAWA also assisted during the week as GAWA has undertaken to run the 2009 GBWO.

The fieldwork focused on coastal landforms and processes and included practical activities such as beach transects, recording vegetation quadrants, field sketching, measuring weather data, etc. Students also recorded location information with GPS and completed an exercise using GIS (marred by equipment deficiencies in the computer lab of the University of the Sunshine Coast). There were also three guest speakers, including a great session with the Environment Manager of Noosa Shire Council which changed into an extended dialogue with the students rather than a presentation. The test included data manipulation questions but was mainly a decision-making task. There were also fun activities, such as an international cooking competition.

International Geography Olympiad

The next International Geography Olympiad will be held at Carthage, Tunisia from 7 to 12 August 2008. Australia's team is: Lauren Butler (Queensland); Matthew Lilley (New South Wales); Michael Mueller (Australian Capital



Geographers don't stay inside because of a little rain; finalists at Middle Head

Territory); Lawrence Ward (Western Australia) Students were selected based primarily on the test at GBWO. However, the choice of the final student to make the team was very close and students' performances during the week were also taken into account.

The Hon Julia Gillard, Minister for Education, has approved sponsorship of \$12,000 from the Australian Government to support Australia's team at the Olympiad.

2009 Competition

The extra flexibility of a 2-week time span seemed to be appreciated by teachers so we propose holding the 2009 Competition from 23 March to 3 April. (Good Friday is 10 April.) At this stage, no changes to the Competition are envisioned. Any that arise as the 2008 Competition progresses will be advised at the next AGTA meeting.