

To celebrate and remember the legacy of Dr Don Biddle to the Australian Geography Teachers Association (AGTA)

Shared at the Celebration of Life ceremony on 31 January 2022.

My name is Susan Caldis, I am the current Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association. It is an honour to be here today to speak on behalf of the Association and pay respect to the immense contribution and legacy of Dr Don Biddle to geography education.

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.

Don's approach of service and advocacy for geography education is greatly admired and many AGTA Directors seek to emulate such practice – Don led by example and showed us possibilities that stand the test of time. His approach allowed geography, an often underappreciated and misunderstood subject, to have meaning, presence, relevance and rigour. It was Don's approach towards service and advocacy that led the Association to establish the *Dr Don Biddle Friend of Geography Award* in 2010. The Award recognises, through peer nomination, those who make a significant and sustained contribution to the work of the Association and in promoting geographical education across Australia. To date there are 19 recipients.

Although there is not enough time today to speak about the impact of publications written *by* Don, and of the citations written *about* Don, there is time to share a couple of anecdotes. The anecdotes are shared by past Chairpersons of the Australian Geography Teachers Association about Dr Don Biddle; an icon who is known to us as "a leading light in geography education" (Dr Jeana Kriewaldt, Editor Geographical Education; Recipient of the Don Biddle Award, 2015)

Don had an incredible influence on geographical education in Australia and far beyond. His contribution to AGTA and member associations was enormous and his legacy will live on for generations (Rob Berry, AGTA Chair, 1991 – 1993; Recipient of the Don Biddle Award, 2015)

A couple of Don Biddle stories. Don was a first-rate communicator, having just completed his doctorate at the Institute of Education, London he lectured teachers in Sydney's Eastern suburbs. I was perplexed about this new geographical language and what was, and, how did you spell 'paradigm'? He told me of an official visit to China in the post Whitlam years. The massive audience of teachers was unresponsive in his lecture. There were no translators and few people spoke English it transpired. Nevertheless, the acclamation was impressive at the close.

Don must have had a nose for barbecue smoke because every time he visited Pittwater High I was behind the grill cooking for ravenous students.

Fond memories, Nick

(Nick Hutchinson, AGTA Chair, 2005 – 2008; Recipient of the Don Biddle Award, 2015)

I only met Don when we approached him about the Award back in 2010. He was very pleased that we had recognised his role in making Australian geography education what it is today through the work of the Association (AGTA). He was very generous in providing AGTA with some funds to support the award into the future. What a lovely and inspirational man. I wish I had worked with or gained from his wisdom as a student or teacher colleague. (Malcolm McInerney, AGTA Chair, 2008 – 2013; Recipient of the Don Biddle Award, 2017)

Don made an outstanding contribution to geographical education in Australia. AGTA stands as a tribute to his passion for Geography and the work of teachers. His legacy will endure for decades to come (Dr Grant Kleeman, AGTA Chair, 2013 - 2016)

For you Don. Thank you for showing us how to illuminate and amplify the curiosity, awe and wonder of geography in all our classrooms, whatever their form.