



# RGSQ Bulletin

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## From the President

What a tumultuous few weeks! There are so many themes that I could take up that it is hard to know where to start. There has been the Federal election campaign with all of its promises and 'policies'; the Dick Smith 'population puzzle' documentary and debate; and the outcome of the election itself with all of its ongoing uncertainties. In each of these major headline events I have been dismayed by the abysmal lack of geographic knowledge demonstrated by the protagonists and/or the media. It does not matter whether the issues canvassed brought into play economic geography, transport geography, political geography, physical geography, human geography, social geography, climatology, demography or any other branch of the discipline the results were the same – reality-free spininformation!

Throughout both the election and the Dick Smith debate one key word appeared with monotonous regularity – 'sustainability'. To many the term 'sustainability' relates exclusively to the environment – that is certainly the impression one gets from the campaigns of each of the political

parties in the lead up to the election. It is, however, clearly much more than that and is firmly underpinned by geographic concepts and process.

I am a fan of the approach developed by the Sustainable Community Roundtable that originated in the Puget Sound area of Washington State in the USA in the 1990s. They take an holistic view of sustainability based on thirteen indicators. They are:

**"Natural Environment:** people acknowledge the interconnectedness of all life, put the needs of the ecosystems and the human spirit above special interests, and accept responsibility for creating a healthy, sustainable environment.

**Population:** the population is stable and within the 'carrying capacity' of the land, water, and air.

**Water Consumption:** people use water no faster than it can be naturally replenished. This means that consumption can be no greater than the maximum sustainable yield of the water supply.

**Food Production:** farmland is preserved for local food production, farmers and workers earn a living wage, non-toxic and humane practices are utilized, and soil and water are protected for future generations.

**Use of Raw Materials:** people use materials efficiently, producing little or no waste that cannot be reused, reprocessed, or reabsorbed by the Earth.

**Transportation:** most daily needs can be met by foot, bicycle or public

transportation. Public and private vehicles are powered by clean, renewable fuels.

**Housing:** structures are designed and built in ways that meet human needs and support social and environmental health. Housing is safe, affordable, energy and resource efficient, and available to all.

**Economy:** a diverse local economy supports the basic needs of everyone through satisfying, productive work, while making efficient use of materials and energy.

**Social Equity and Justice:** human culture holds a high standard of equity and justice in the relationships among people and in their relationship with the natural world. People honour and uphold the well-being of the whole community.

**Governance and Participation:** everyone is involved in community affairs and there is a high level of co-operation, collaboration, and consensus at all levels of governance: neighbourhood, city and region.

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**Education:** everyone is engaged in lifelong learning – developing the self-esteem, knowledge, skills, and wisdom to live in ways that support personal, social, and environmental health.

**Health:** people take responsibility for their individual well being and co-operate to nurture social and environmental health.

**Spirituality:** people appreciate their unique potential for growth, invention becomes a daily event and random acts of kindness become the norm. It means showing by your actions what your true beliefs and values are. A safe, caring community comes about with work, interaction, communication, and planning."

Throughout the election campaign I became convinced that our policy makers, bureaucrats and journalists were so enchanted by their own spinformation that they were oblivious of the scope of sustainability. They appeared to see the world only in terms of abstract political philosophies rather than reality. I saw virtually no acknowledgement in any of the policies and promises announced during the campaign of the numerous geographic dimensions that are fundamental to sustainability.

At times I wonder just what part of geography DO these people understand. Unfortunately it will be another generation before the benefits of compulsory geographical education will begin to be reflected in policy making at all levels of government.

Ken Granger

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## Annual General Meeting

As notified in the last *Bulletin*, the Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 7 Sept 2010. The Council's annual report will be presented, as will the statement of income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of the Society. The meeting will elect the Society's Council for 2010/11 and appoint the auditor for the same period. This is your opportunity to get an overview of the work of our busy Society over the course of a year and to ask questions about it.

## Not the Ides of March

The Treks and Activities Committee have the inTENTion to mark the Tenth day of the Tenth month of the year 20TEN with a Social Evening, completely relaxing and devoid of TENSION on Sunday 10 October 2010 at Gregory House, commencing at (no, not 10pm) 6.30pm.

We won't have the TEN TENors, but we will screen an appropriate movie (rated PG), and there will be a hot supper and drinks provided. The cost? \$10 per head of course!

Please book with the office and pay by 5 October.

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## SEQ Geography Trail 4

**Pomona, Hervey Bay & Yarraman**  
The last trip on our South East Queensland Geography Trail takes place 23 - 27 October when we visit Pomona, Hervey Bay and Yarraman. We are hoping for a really large attendance to finish off our year's trekking.

### Accommodation

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 October at Happy Wanderer Village, 105 Truro St, Hervey Bay Q 4655, email [hwanderer@happywanderer.com.au](mailto:hwanderer@happywanderer.com.au) phone 07 4125 113.

Monday 25 and Tuesday 26 October at Yarraman Caravan Park, 12121 D'Aguilar Highway, Yarraman, 4614 email [yarramancp@telstra.com](mailto:yarramancp@telstra.com) phone 1800 288 560 or 4163 8185.

Please **make you own booking and arrange your own payment**, mentioning you are part of the RGSQ Group. The Happy Wanderer has units to \$95, cabins \$64, camping sites from \$30 to \$51; while Yarraman CP has cabins to \$67 and camping sites from \$23 to \$33. All prices for 2 persons, per night.

### Programme

**Sat 23 Oct.** Drive to Pomona (140 km from Brisbane); arrive by 10am for morning tea and a silent film show at the Majestic Theatre (a minimum of 15 persons is required for this to be held). Then bring or buy your lunch and stroll around some of the Pomona Heritage Walk. Leave

Pomona mid-afternoon for Hervey Bay (160 km).

**Sun 24 Oct.** Visit the Hervey Bay Aquarium in the morning and the Historical Village and Museum in the afternoon. An option is half day (morning or afternoon) Whale Watching Tour on the *Tasman Venture*.

**Mon 25 Oct.** In the morning visit the Vic Hislop Great White Shark and Whale Expo, plus beach and Urangan pier walk. After lunch, drive to Yarraman (256 km).

**Tues 26 Oct.** In early morning, one of the scenic walks around Yarraman, followed by a drive through Yarraman State Forest, with byo lunch at the picnic grounds in the park. Relax in the afternoon, or take in another of the walks around town. A group dinner will be arranged at a local venue.

**Wed 27 Oct.** Visit the Yarraman Heritage Centre and the Forestry Office in the morning and maybe purchase some goods at the Yarraman Bacon Factory. Depart Yarraman after lunch for home (166 km to Brisbane).

### Costs

The fee is \$60 per person. This will cover morning tea and the movie at Pomona, plus entry to the Aquarium, the Historical Village and the Shark Show in Hervey Bay and the Heritage Centre in Yarraman. Or, if you wish to include the half-day Whale Watching Tour, the fee is \$160.

All meals and accommodation are at your own cost.

Please send your trip booking and tours payment in early to the office.

**Bookings close on 11 October.** Any queries re details may be directed to Brian McGrath, email [brian.mcgrath@bigpond.com](mailto:brian.mcgrath@bigpond.com) or phone 3378 5960.



## New Members

We have much pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

John Allen; Carl Mikkelsen; John Petrie; Wayne Spearritt; Bill Welsh

We hope your association with your new Society is long and mutually enjoyable. We look forward to getting to know you at Society functions.



## International Geog Olympiad

Great news! Australia came second in the International Geography Olympiad held in Taipei, Taiwan, from 29 July to 4 August 2010.

Australia's team was supported by the Australian Government through the Quality Outcomes Program, administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. 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:

Samuel Buttenshaw, NSW  
Baris Dilaver, WA  
Sophie Miller, Tas  
Emily Thoday-Kennedy, SA

Sam won Australia's first ever gold medal. Baris just missed out on gold, winning a silver medal, as did Emily.

The Australian team was accompanied by teachers Margaret McIvor and Anne-Marie Gerlach. Society Administrator Kath Berg attended in her role as Secretary of the International Geographical Union Olympiad Task Force. As the senior member of the Task Force present, Kath was responsible for managing the tests.

Twenty-seven countries took part – Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Taiwan, Tunisia, United Kingdom.

The Singapore team came first with the highest combined score, winning

two gold and two silver medals. This was a great achievement as it was the first time Singapore had been to a Geography Olympiad. Other teams new this year were Croatia, Denmark and Hong Kong. In the team scores, Poland came third, Lithuania fourth and Estonia fifth.

The Australian team flew to Taipei on 28 July to allow some recovery time before the Olympiad started the next day. The venue was the Sacred Heart High School for Girls, a large well-equipped boarding school located beside the Tanshui River at Pali, on the outskirts of Taipei. The staff were incredibly supportive and many had given up a week of their holidays to help us – administration staff, IT staff, school nurse, etc.

*Lights, camera, geography! After much anticipation and excitement, the Opening Ceremony started at 6.30 pm Thursday. The opening speech was made by the president of the Geographical Society of China located in Taipei, which was done in Chinese, so it was slightly strange when all the Chinese speakers reacted and the rest of us had to wait for the translation to understand the reactions. After a few more speeches the teams were introduced with much patriotism and cheering from the masses. The best part of the night was a performance by the acclaimed Sacred Heart School Choir. Dressed in the costume of a local indigenous tribe they sang two traditional songs. The choir then taught the participants the Chinese version of "It's a small world", and a participation dance that resulted in an interesting version of organised chaos. A fitting start to the Olympiad, everyone holding hands with strangers, soon to be friends.* Emily

The next morning it was straight into the first test.

*Well, tests are tests, never the best part of the day, but always bring results. The first test, the Written Response Test was tough, as it should be, with questions on topics such as, floods, natural hazards and demographics. The last test, the Multimedia Test, was also tough, with most questions using not only general knowledge but also our skills at collecting data and relevant*

*information from sources given and analysing it to fit into one of the plausible answers given. Of course some questions were plain strange while others were simply general knowledge. The best of the three tests was the Fieldwork Test, which was done in two parts. The first part of the fieldwork day, Saturday, saw all participants collecting primary data on the vegetation and infrastructure around Guandu Wetland. This was then converted into a field-map using only observation and analysis skills. The second part involved using our analytical and geographical skills to answer questions about development issues in wetlands and in the Guandu Wetlands in particular. Emily*

The Australian students did particularly well in the Fieldwork Test, so it is not surprising that Emily liked it the most. The first of the cultural functions was on the Friday evening.

*Cultural functions were held over two nights of the iGeo featuring performances from each of the 27 participating countries. There was everything from a humorous yet clever performance of the "Princess and the Pea" from the Danes, to traditional dances and songs. These were quizzes and games – which of course brings us to the Australian performance. Our team held the first International Thong Throwing Competition, which proved a tough event and resulted in many vegemite grimaces from the losers, and a few Tim Tam smiles from the winners. I also won the Mexican's jalapeno eating contest, getting a lovely pair of green maracas. Sophie*

On the website (see end) you can read student comments on the excursions to the Earthquake Museum, Yehliu GeoPark, Taipei 101, Palace Museum, etc.

The Australian students very much appreciated the opportunity to explore another country, and one with a culture different from their own.

*Taiwan itself exceeded my expectations by far, both its physical beauty and its people. It was interesting to see that even in regional cities agricultural land uses*

such as rice paddy fields could be found alongside or within commercial and residential areas. Taipei and its surrounds were surprisingly clean and not as chaotic as I expected it to be, especially in terms of traffic. The Taiwanese people were constantly cheerful, courteous and helpful, and the volunteer Taiwanese students assigned to each country exemplified this. It was evident that most residents disliked their at times stifling climate and were often nocturnal in their activities, making for a busy nightlife. Night markets seemed the most popular attraction. I found it surprising (coming from Australia) how insignificant sport seems to be in Taiwan. The

Taiwanese food was quite an experience, and definitely an acquired taste. Sam

We'll leave it to Emily to sum up the whole experience.

Amazing, unique, immersing and challenging are only a few of the myriad of ways to describe the experience that was the 2010 International Geography Olympiad in Taipei, Taiwan. It was not until I arrived that I realised just how lucky I was to experience all the Olympiad has to offer. Not only was experiencing the unique culture of Taiwan, through the night-markets and excursions, fantastic, but so was

meeting new people from all over the world and seeing their impressions of their countries during the cultural functions. It was brilliant to see lots of people my own age with a common interest, united with a wish to learn and succeed to the fullest. The organisation and the tests were wonderful, with the fieldwork the most enjoyable. Yet it was all the people involved from teachers to students to the wonderful volunteers that made the 2010 iGeo the most wondrous experience ever. Emily

See [www.rgsq.org.au/olympiad.htm](http://www.rgsq.org.au/olympiad.htm) for more stories and photos of Australia's participation, and the 5-day fieldtrip following the Olympiad.

# RGSQ Bulletin

September 2010

**Meeting**, Tues 7 Sept 7.30pm  
What: Annual General Meeting

**Major Trek**, 13 - 27 Sept  
Where: Through Cooper Country to Haddon  
Corner

**Lecture**, Tues 5 Oct, 7.30pm  
Speaker: Em Prof Bob Fagan  
Subject: Global Food/Local Food:  
Restructuring the Global in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century

**Social Function**, Sun 10 Oct, 6.30pm  
What: 10-10-10

**SEQ Geography Trail 4**, 23 - 27 Oct  
Where: Pomona, Hervey Bay and  
Yarraman

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