



RGSQ Bulletin

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From the President

My first thoughts when sitting down to put together March's President's Page was Steven Dickinson's lecture on *Mining in a Biodiversity Sensitive Location: Madagascar*. This was a truly in-depth explanation of how multi-national companies (in this case the Ambatovy mine developer) approach sensitive areas of the world regarding minerals and energy development sites.

There was clear evidence here that many multi-national companies funded by leading banks in several countries have now developed a quite sophisticated conscience regarding conservation management in a biodiversity hotspot (in this case Madagascar). Large mining projects situated in areas rich in biodiversity and endemism are now being subjected to increasing stakeholder scrutiny of mining practices by their financial backers.

This lecture was a very firm reminder of the vast variety of life on earth and the uniqueness of the many species in various geographic locations around the globe and our careful response to development of new ventures, and our obligation to

expand scientific knowledge (including our own RGSQ Scientific Studies), communicate and share our management experience with offsite offsets, conservation zones, preservation of wetlands, corridor reconnection and mine replacement forest zones.

I was particularly interested in connectivity regarding the construction of lemur bridges. A fine example of this type of conservation and connectivity of bushland areas and habitat exists right here on Compton Road on the southside of Brisbane. Rerouting of pipelines to avoid endangered species, and horizontal directional drilling employed to avoid primary forest fragments were some other strategies employed to avoid impact during mine design and construction.

This indeed is the way of the future if we are to cause no net harm to not only our own but world biological diversity.

The Floods

It's becoming a little difficult to write anything without touching on Queensland's current sequence of disastrous floods and now the aftermath of the worst cyclone in more than a century; and our summer of rain, storm, cyclone and flood has a month or so yet to run.

Having said that I would like to once more focus on the headlines in Queensland's major daily newspaper *The Courier-Mail*: on Thursday 3 February *Give Them Strength*, Friday 4th headlined *Monster Mash*, and Monday 7th headlined *Blown Away*.

I think those three headlines pretty much sum up the whole situation.

Despite some criticism to the contrary in the media, I feel Local, State and Federal authorities have done a quite remarkable job in both preparing the general public and in the execution of a number of life-saving measures that I'm sure without which we would now be looking at further loss of precious lives. As we are continually reminded by the politicians – we live in a very pleasant physical environment but when mother nature breaks loose it's a little unpredictable. Professor Jonathan Knott from James Cook University said Yasi was the most intense and largest cyclone to hit the east coast since at least 1918.

“Almost three-quarters of Queensland is now a disaster zone after Cyclone Yasi compounded the damage left by recent widespread flooding” (C-M 7 Feb). Local Government repairs have already reached the \$2.2 billion with further damage and the cyclone's cost still to be assessed.

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There is irrefutable evidence when examining disasters both here and overseas to suggest 'climate change' can no longer be ignored after experiencing Australia's largest natural disaster, followed by an equally damaging super storm. The study of Physical Geography certainly has a large part to play in helping to understand how we might better react to and employ best practice to manage these events in our corner of the world.

While we can't control these catastrophic events, from a geographical perspective I'm certain a lot has been learnt with computer modelling of wind speed, weather station data, storm surges, tides, and damage reports of personal property, agriculture, and national parks. Add the human dimension of packed refuge centres full of dislocated humanity, broken lives, bravery, leadership, charity, and community co-operation and I'm sure those analysing the physical and the demographics have a lot to ponder.

I really can't mention everything reported in the media of late related to that discipline we refer to as 'Geography'. It's almost endless.

Leo Scanlan

Lecture – Murray-Darling

Brent Williams, Acting General Manager of the Basin Plan, Murray-Darling Basin Authority, will deliver the March lecture on "The Future of the Murray-Darling Basin".

The Murray-Darling Basin is Australia's largest river system, and one of the biggest systems in the world in area. It covers over a million square kilometres of land in south-eastern Australia. Throughout the Basin there is great variation in climatic conditions and landscapes.

The variety of environments within the Basin supports a huge range of Australia's plant and animal life. Many plant and animal species rely on the seasonal changes of water flow for their survival. The diversity of environments also allows the production of a great range of food types across the Basin, including tropical fruits in the north, dryland

cropping and livestock grazing to the west, and cooler weather produce found in the southern regions.

The Basin's waterways sustain the land and communities surrounding them. It is home to over two million people and is Australia's most important agricultural region. Producing over one third of Australia's food supply, the Basin is often described as 'Australia's food basket'.

The quality of water and surrounding river environment in the Murray-Darling Basin has been steadily declining for many years. With the increasing number of large algal blooms, high levels of salt in the water and degradation to surrounding farming land, it is clear that the long-term health of the whole system is at risk.

The Basin is under enormous stress as a result of past water-allocation decisions, prolonged drought, natural climate variability and emerging climate change. A lack of water and the absence of natural flooding are having a significant impact on many key environmental assets – rivers, streams, wetlands, forests, floodplains and billabongs.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority is developing a Basin Plan to provide an integrated approach to managing the water resources of the Basin in a way that can be sustained through time and in the national interest.

The Basin Plan will provide a framework for setting environmentally sustainable limits on the amount of surface water and groundwater that can be taken from the Basin. It will identify, and seek to protect and restore, key environmental assets which are essential to the life of the rivers, their surrounding landscapes and the cultural values of the communities which depend on those water resources. The Basin Plan will also take into account the impact of this protection and restoration on individual communities, industries, regions and the wider economy.

The Guide to the Proposed Basin Plan was released for consultation last year, and a draft Basin Plan will be published in 2011.



AUSTRALIAN GEOGRAPHY COMPETITION

Volunteers Please

We need to call on our generous members for more help with the Competition – to mail out the question sets. For those with experience, this is the mailout where you use the counting scales to weigh question booklets and answer sheets.

We'll be doing this from **Tuesday 15 March to Thursday 17 March**, with perhaps just a couple needed on Friday 18 March.

Please ring Kath in the office (3368 2066) if you can help – or see her at the March meeting.

Day Trek – Wivenhoe Dam

On **Sunday 27 March** we'll meet at the Information/Interpretive Centre at Wivenhoe Dam around 10.00 am. You'll find the Centre on the right, just after you drive across the dam wall coming from Fernvale.

After looking around the Centre, at 10.30 am we'll meet our guide from Seqwater for a talk, video and conducted tour of the dam, which will conclude about 12.30 pm. You'll also receive an information pack from Seqwater.

We'll then adjourn to the Cormorant Bay Café on the other side of the dam wall for lunch (pay your own), or you could bring your own picnic lunch or bbq.

With water a hot topic for the past many months, this is sure to be an interesting and informative visit. We planned this months ago but it's becoming more relevant every day!

There is no charge for this activity, but you must register with the office so that numbers are known. Also advise if you wish to lunch at the Café so that sufficient tables can be reserved.

Bookings close on Friday 18 March, if not already full. More information from Brian McGrath, 3378 5960, or brian.mcgrath@bigpond.com.

Social: Cathedral + Lunch

What: A guided tour of St John's Cathedral and lunch
 When: Tuesday 19 April
 Meet: outside the Cathedral in Ann Street by 9:55 am
 Wear: Comfortable walking shoes.
 Total walking distance is about 3 km (perhaps less)
 Cost: \$31.00 – includes donation to Cathedral + 2-course lunch, drink
 Book: with the office; pay by 7 April

St John's Cathedral is the mother church of the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane which was created in 1859 (the year that Queensland became Queensland). It was the vision of the third Bishop of Brisbane to build a cathedral here.

It is likely to be the last neo-Gothic building to be completed in the world. The stone-vaulted ceiling is the only one of its kind in Australia. After the foundation stone was laid in 1901 (the year that Australia became a Commonwealth) the building progressed in three stages – 1906-1910, 1964-1968 and 1989-2009. Sandstone from Pyrmont, NSW was used externally only for part of the first stage of construction. For all the internal walls and ceilings, Helidon sandstone was used, with Brisbane tuff (from the suburbs) used for external walls.

After a guided tour of an hour or so, we'll take time to revisit sections that we found interesting, and especially

admire the beautiful tapestry cushions on the pews and extensive coin collection.

By about midday we will have developed an appetite, so we will stroll a few hundred metres to 301 Ann Street, for a main course and drink. There is a very varied menu to choose from. Then another stroll to the Japanese Bakery in Adelaide Street for an exciting selection of sweets and coffee.

Students of 14 years or older may like to join us. Friends will be very welcome too.

Audrey Johnston

Haddon Corner II Cancelled

In view of the forecasts for continuing rainfall across the State making access to Haddon Corner either impossible or at least problematical over the next few months, the Treks and Activities Committee has reluctantly decided to cancel the trip back to Haddon Corner planned for April. The trip information night will also not be held.

The Committee is sorry to have to take this step, but feels that it is in members' best interests to have certainty, and that couldn't be guaranteed if the planning for the trip were to proceed.

Brian McGrath

Gold, Grampians and Great Outdoors

Please note the error in the 2011 programme included with this *Bulletin*. The dates for this trek are **13 to 29 October**.

It is a luxury trek, too – only 2 one-night stops, no tents, no airbeds!! But plenty of adventure – many goldmining remains, evidence of the Chinese influence, historic architecture, nature and scenic reserves (bring your walking shoes), much geography, much history and the beautiful Grampians, so much to see and do. Only 13 seats available. Full details in the July *Bulletin*. Bookings and deposit required by 2 September.

Audrey Johnston

New Members

We have much pleasure in welcoming the following new members:

Wendy Bolton; Leigh and Maureen Curnow; Sandy Frismanis; Robyn-Anne Lovell; Mary Waterhouse and James Lefevre

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

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2011 Membership Renewal

Membership fees for 2011 were due on 1 January. According to our records, your membership has been paid up to the year shown in the top right corner of your mailing label. (For life members this space is blank.) Please contact the office if you think there may be a mistake in our records. If you have not yet paid, please circle the appropriate fee and send this in with your payment. The mailing label on the back of this sheet gives your name and address. Please correct it if there are any errors. You may like to consider making a tax-deductible donation for the Society's environmental and educational work at the same time. Thank you.

Ordinary	\$40.00
" Pensioner rate	\$25.00
Household	\$55.00
" Pensioner rate	\$35.00
Student/Junior	\$25.00
Schools/Non-profit organizations	\$55.00
Corporate	\$150.00
Life	\$400.00
Donation	\$.....
TOTAL	\$.....

I enclose a cheque/money order payable to RGSQ; or, please debit my Visa Mastercard

Card no.: _____ Exp date: _____

Cardholder name: _____ Cardholder signature: _____

Yes, I'd like my Bulletin delivered by email. My email address is: _____

Award to Kath Berg

The Society's Council is pleased to advise members that Kathryn Berg is the recipient of the AGTA Don Biddle Friends of Geography Award. This Award has been inaugurated by the Australian Geography Teachers' Association to recognise and thank an individual for their significant contribution, over an extended period of time, to promoting geographical education in Australia. It is named to honour Dr Don Biddle, an 'elder statesman' of geographical education in Australia, and also a member of our Society. Dr Biddle made the following comments on the presentation:

"Kathryn is the chief executive of the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland, and is the energiser and coordinator of the National Geographic Channel Geography Competition; a position she has held since its inception.

Kathryn is a major driver, motivator and worker with the Towards the National Geography Curriculum for Australia Project.

Kathryn is a tireless worker for the promotion of geography in Australia at the community and school level.

Kathryn is a regular attendee of the AGTA Board and has contributed to

the work of AGTA for many years.

All of these activities, associated with geographical education, have been contributed as an addition to her responsibilities as the chief executive of the vibrant and well organised Royal Geographical Society of Queensland.

I have known Kathryn for many years and it is with gratitude I present this Award to a dedicated Royal Geographical Society chief executive, who has contributed so much, and made a difference, for so many geography students in Australia."

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March 2011

Lecture, Tues 1 Mar, 7.30pm
Speaker: Brent Williams
Subject: The Future of the Murray-Darling Basin

Volunteer Days, Tues 15 - Thurs 17 Mar
For: Australian Geography Competition

Day Trek, Sun 27 Mar, 10.00am
Where: Guided Tour of Wivenhoe Dam

Lecture, Tues 5 Apr, 7.30pm
Speaker: Jamie Shulmeister
Subject: Loitering in Timor Leste

Social, Tues 19 Apr, 9.55am
What: St John's Cathedral + lunch

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