

Institute of Australian Geographers Annual Conference

UNE Business School, University of New England, Armidale, NSW; 5 – 8 July, 2022

Hosted by: Department of Geography and Planning UNE

Conference theme: Landscapes of change, challenge and creativity

Session proposal: Geography Education

Session convenors: Dr Susan Caldis (MQU; susan.caldis@mq.edu.au) and Professor Jennifer Carter (USC; jcarter@usc.edu.au)

Title: Creating dialogue to challenge thinking and foster possibilities for change in geography education.

Time: 80 or 120 minutes

Type: Academic paper

Session Proposal

Geography education, as its name suggests, sits at the intersection of two disciplines: geography and education. Whilst there is specific research interest about the pedagogies associated with the teaching of geography, geography education is also about the learning, thinking and communication processes related to the dissemination of knowledge across and beyond the discipline. The landscape of geography education is vast, stretching across many physical territories – from the personal, to school, to university, to industry, and into the public domain. The landscape of geography education also has coverage of the interactions and interrelationships occurring between humans, and between humans and the non-human world. To that end, the whole landscape of geography education is considered in this session.

The Decadal Plan, *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*, identifies two (out of four) challenges facing the discipline that refer to the physical territories of geography education: to raise the level of geographical knowledge and understanding within the Australian population; and to improve the discipline's visibility and integrity. Such challenges also refer to the range of interactions occurring between and within such territories. Some specific challenges facing the discipline in connection to geography education include geography being recognised for its role in STEM, the division of the discipline across different university structures which diminish its identity, the lack of geography methodology courses available in Initial Teacher Education programs which affects the pipeline of specialist geography teachers entering schools, and a general lack of understanding by industry and the public as to the usefulness of geography in contemporary society. Several recommendations articulated in the Decadal Plan were developed to advance the discipline of geography, however, these recommendations require action from those who will and do challenge the current narrative and practice about teaching, research, learning and thinking, and communicating in and across the fields of geography.

More creative approaches to the challenges facing the teaching, organisation, and communication of our geographies will support researchers, educators and policy-makers to initiate change so the discipline continues to flourish. Therefore, this session aims to enhance the profile, role and influence of geography education in shaping the future of the discipline. Abstracts for theoretical or empirical papers are invited in response to key areas of geography education, such as the design and delivery of higher education courses that span the discipline of geography; geography and STEM within and beyond school settings; Initial Teacher Education and geography methodology courses; the implications of out-of-field teaching for geography in secondary schools; the nature and effects of policy, curriculum development and collaborative approaches in geography education more broadly.

Evidence arising from papers presented at the geography education session will assist in progressing action around several recommendations identified in *Geography: Shaping Australia's Future*. The session co-chairs believe such evidence has potential to transform perception and enactment of geography education across school, initial teacher education, and academic research contexts. At the conclusion of the geography education session, the co-chairs intend to invite presenters to prepare a paper that showcases how their research responds to areas of challenge, creativity or change in geography education with a view to curating a series of papers suitable for a themed issue in a relevant journal. Although there is no IAG Study Group specifically directed towards geography education, it is hoped such a study group will be established in the future to continue dialogue and advocacy for this important field in the discipline.

Biography: Susan Caldis, BEd (USyd); MEd (MQU); MRes (MQU); PhD (MQU)

Susan Caldis is a Lecturer in the School of Education at Macquarie University, and a member of the international Out-Of-Field-Teaching/Teaching-Across-Fields research collective. Her research and teaching focus is in the field of geography education. Susan's doctoral research adopted a reflexive theory-practice lens to explore how agency, structures, and culture of place transformed the pedagogical practice of pre-service and early-career geography teachers as they transitioned from initial teacher education into the teaching profession. In 2019, Susan received the Faculty of Human Sciences *Excellence in Higher Degree Research Award* and was hosted in Singapore by the Academy of Singapore Teachers as the Outstanding Educator In Residence for geographical education. In 2020, Susan was appointed by Science & Technology Australia as a STEM Ambassador for geography education. Outside of her university commitments, Susan is Chair of the Australian Geography Teachers Association and President of the Geography Teachers' Association of NSW and ACT.

Biography: Jennifer Carter, PhD, Professor of Geography, University of the Sunshine Coast

Jennifer Carter is Professor of Geography and Discipline Leader at the University of the Sunshine Coast (USC). She introduced geography as a stand-alone major in 2010 and has conducted research on student understanding of geographical concepts and conceptualisation, teaching pedagogies, and inclusive classrooms. Her work has been supported by a grant funded by the *Commonwealth Office for Learning and Teaching*. Jennifer received a *Certificate of Commendation for Exemplary Practice* from the *USC Advancing Quality Teaching Award Scheme* in 2017; and is on the editorial Board of *Geographical Research*.