



# RGSQ Bulletin

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Patron: H.E. Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland  
President: Dr Iraphne Childs

## From the President

Dear fellow members, I hope you are continuing to stay safe as we move into the next stage of relaxing COVID-19 restrictions in Queensland. While we wait to see how the stage 2 easing of restrictions and the mass protest gatherings over the last few weekends affect infection rates, it is hoped that RGSQ will be able to resume some activities in August. We will keep you posted on our arrangements.

### Queensland Day 2020



June 6<sup>th</sup> commemorates the day in 1859 when Queen Victoria signed Letters Patent for the State's "birth certificate" establishing Queensland's official separation from New South Wales as an independent colony.

Moves towards statehood for Queensland began with a public meeting in 1851 to consider separation from New South Wales. The state flag was first introduced in 1876 - Queensland then a self-governing British colony with its own navy. Queen Victoria also granted the Queensland Coat of Arms, the oldest State Arms in Australia in 1893 and the first Arms assigned to a British colony since 1661. The Coat of Arms symbolises the Queen's constitutional authority in the State and since 2012 used as the government's corporate logo. The brolga has featured on the Queensland Coat of Arms since 1977 and in 1986 it became the official bird emblem of Queensland. The koala was officially named the faunal emblem of Queensland in 1971 and the Cooktown orchid became Queensland's floral emblem in 1959, during celebrations to mark the state's centenary.



### Queensland Day Honours

Queensland Day on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 was celebrated in the usual way by the granting of awards by Queensland's Governor, His Excellency the Honourable Paul de Jersey. This year two people whom many members may know were recognised.

**Professor Gregory J.E. Hill:** Many of us know Greg as a Geographer. He has received an **AO in the general division** for distinguished service to education, particularly the development of tertiary facilities in regional areas. He began his career as a primary school teacher, completed a BA Honours (Geography) and a PhD (wildlife/statistical ecology) at the University of Queensland. He taught at UQ for 15 years during which time I was fortunate, in my early lecturing career to teach a couple of courses with Greg. I have always been grateful for the valuable mentoring he gave me. Greg moved to Darwin in 1995 where he was the Foundation Chair in Tropical Environmental Science at Charles Darwin University. In 2010 he became Vice-Chancellor at the University of the Sunshine Coast continuing in this position until his retirement in 2019.

**Dr Colin J. Limpus:** Those of us interested in marine science and conservation know Col and his tireless work with sea turtles in Queensland. He has received an **AO in the general division** for distinguished service to environmental science, particularly to the conservation of sea turtles and as a mentor of young scientists. In 2017 Col marked 50 continuous years of research at Australia's most important mainland loggerhead turtle rookery, Mon Repos in Bundaberg. Col's research helped convince the Queensland Government of the day to declare the waters off Mon Repos a marine park in 1990 and to make turtle exclusion devices compulsory on fishing trawlers in 2001.

With best wishes  
Dr Iraphne Childs, President

### References:

<https://www.govhouse.qld.gov.au/office-of-the-governor/news-publications/latest-news/2020/june/2020-queens-birthday-honours-list.aspx>

<https://www.qld.gov.au/about/how-government-works/flags-emojies-icons>

<https://www.news-mail.com.au/news/col-celebrates-a-huge-50-years-with-the-turtles/3269672/>

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## What's happening on Council?

On 16 June Council met online using RGSQ Microsoft Teams with ten Councillors "in attendance". Reports were received from Iraphne Childs (President), Chris Spriggs (Treasurer), Lilia Darii (Business Manager), the AGC (Kath Berg and John Tasker), Pamela Tonkin (Property) and Young Geographers (John Tasker). Matters discussed included:

- RGSQ continues to receive Job Keeper support for Lilia and Bernard.
- Draft budget for 2020-2021.
- IT maintenance support and renewal of contract for service.
- Through a grant from the Community Benefit Fund, RGSQ has acquired an automatic defibrillator which will be located in the large meeting room.
- Following Qld Health advice and staged lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, through July we will maintain limitation of members and volunteers present at any time in the premises to 5 persons (including staff). If you are intending to visit, please ring in advance as there may be no staff present.
- The June Bulletin and MemberConnect #3 newsletter have been circulated to members. MemberConnect #4 will be produced in July after which we will review continuing this extra newsletter. If you have contributions please send them through to Lilia at [info@rgsq.com.au](mailto:info@rgsq.com.au).
- Recommendation that Map Group postpone the planned visit to Boonah and Scenic Rim until August. Date to be advised.
- AGC scanning will take place at RGSQ on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Tuesday 23 June. Volunteers will be contacted by Bernard.

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## Get to know your Councillor

### *Ian Harding*

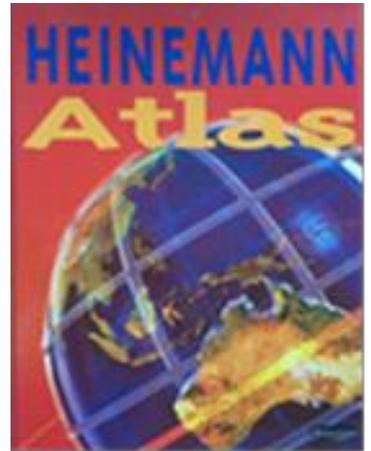
I joined RGSQ in 2018 after being invited to a couple of lectures by Margaret McIvor (former Secretary of RGSQ) whom I have known for almost 40 years through our connection with secondary school geography. My interest in geography and the desire to travel and explore the world is how I ended up living in Australia.

I was born in 1950 near Plymouth, Devon and started traveling with the Boy Scouts from the age of 15 to Europe, sailing across the English Channel in an old sailing boat. I really haven't stopped traveling until Corona Virus came along. In 1970 I left Plymouth to travel the world with my brother, first to Africa then Australia, New Zealand and overland back to England through Asia and the Middle East. The whole journey took two years and to pay for our travels we worked odd jobs, from shop assistant and wharf crane drivers in South Africa and chain-men in WA, working on the railway line between Dampier and Mount Tom Price. We hitch-hiked where we could and lived in YHAs and were very frugal with our money. Our longest lift was from Perth to Melbourne along the Nullarbor Plain. On this occasion we did open our wallets and help pay for the

petrol. While traveling around New Zealand I met my future wife, Robin, who is from Brisbane and we have been traveling together ever since. Robin and I got married in England and for our honeymoon we hitch-hiked to Scotland, then travelled around Europe, India, Bali and then back to Brisbane in 1974. Since then we have lived in different parts of Australia and the UK. We have three children and two grandchildren.

I have spent most of my professional life in educational publishing, producing a wide range of books, including geography texts and an atlas that RGSQ helped launch when their office was in Fortitude Valley.

For the last 10 years of my working life, Robin and I ran our own education publishing company producing materials for the primary and secondary Australian curriculum.



**1991/1992 - RGSQ assisted with a survey organised by former RGSQ Secretary and current member - Margaret McIvor.**



**Deirdre el-Bahrain, Valley of the Kings, Egypt**

Since retirement in 2012 we have continued our travels with one of the highlights being a trip to Antarctica. The continent leaves you with a sense of wonder and makes you realise we need this planet far more than it needs us and we better start looking after our home for future generations.

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

We have much pleasure in welcoming *Julia Loginova and Stephen Turton* as new members of The Royal Geographical Society of Queensland. We hope your association with your new Society is long and mutually enjoyable.

## Focus on Geographical Research

### **Humans coexisted with giant reptiles and megamarsupials in ancient northern Australia**

Professor Patrick Moss is Deputy Head, School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Queensland and an RGSQ Councillor.



Image source: *The Conversation* May 18, 2020

Patrick is one of a team of Australian researchers investigating the mystery of what drove Australia's ancient megafauna to extinction. When people first arrived in what is now Queensland, they would have found the land inhabited by massive animals including goannas six metres long and kangaroos twice as tall as a human. Patrick and his colleagues have studied fossil bones of these animals and their associated environments for the past decade. The first bones were found by the Barada Barna people during cultural heritage surveys on their traditional lands about 100 kilometres west of Mackay, at South Walker Creek Mine. The present research shares the first reliable glimpse of the giants that roamed the Australian tropics between 40,000 and 60,000 years ago. These megafauna were the largest land animals to live in Australia since the time of the dinosaurs and during this time, the northern megafauna were different to those from the south. Understanding the ecological role they played and the environmental impact of their loss remains their most valuable untold story.

Why did these megafauna become extinct? Hypotheses have suggested climate or human-driven scenarios. It has been argued that the extinctions were due to over-hunting by humans, and occurred shortly after people arrived in Australia. However, this theory is not supported by the current finding that a diverse collection of these ancient giants still survived 40,000 years ago, that is after humans had spread around the continent. The research presents evidence that megafauna from north-eastern Australia suffered extinction sometime after 40,000 years ago. Megafauna fossils preserved alongside leaves, seeds, pollen and insects, indicate a sclerophyllous forest with heathy understorey that was home to aquatic and terrestrial carnivorous reptiles and megaherbivores, including the world's largest kangaroo. This is contrary to expectations if extinctions followed proposed migration routes for people across the ancient Sahul shelf. The

results do not support rapid human-mediated continental-wide extinction, or the proposed timing of peak extinction events. Instead, megafauna extinctions coincide with regionally staggered spatio-temporal deterioration in hydroclimate coupled with sustained environmental change. With an overlap between people and megafauna of some 15,000–20,000 years, interesting new questions arise about co-habitation. How did people live with these giants during a period of such drastic environmental change?

### **References**

#### ***Extinction of eastern Sahul megafauna coincides with sustained environmental deterioration***

Scott A. Hocknull, Richard Lewis, Lee J. Arnold, Tim Pietsch, Renaud Joannes-Boyau, Gilbert J. Price, Patrick Moss, Rachel Wood, Anthony Dosseto, Julien Louys, Jon Olley & Rochelle A. Lawrence.

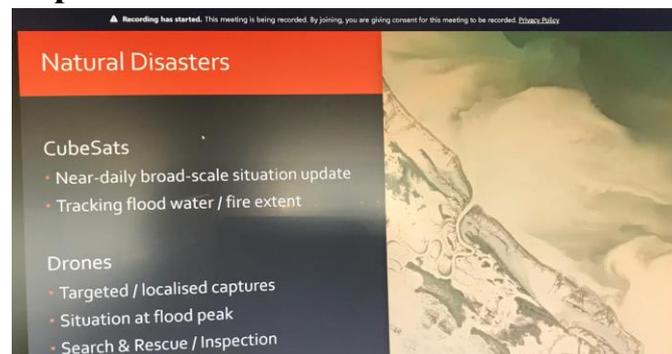
NATURE COMMUNICATIONS | (2020) 11:2250 | <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-15785>

#### ***Humans coexisted with three-tonne marsupials and lizards as long as cars in ancient Australia***

The Conversation May 18, 2020

<https://theconversation.com/humans-coexisted-with-three-tonne-marsupials-and-lizards-as-long-as-cars-in-ancient-australia-138534>

## Report: MAP GROUP



On Thursday May 14, 2020, Map Group experienced its first online webinar. The presentation went for about 40 minutes with 21 participants taking part. John Tasker (RGSQ Member) covered a range of topics on current and emerging spatial technologies. The continued development of more powerful computers and very data large storage systems has enabled increasingly sophisticated applications in the gathering of geographical data, for example, from satellites, drones and mobile devices by LiDAR, photogrammetry and other sensors. Government and industry are increasingly taking advantage of the progress in the development of autonomous vehicles, augmented reality, and mapping for agriculture and disasters in two and three dimensions. During this unusual time of lockdown, meeting in this way was successful given that a lot of our members are inexperienced using this media.

Stay safe - stay curious.

The video is available at the following link for members to watch: <https://youtu.be/0duxAjxf8> 8.

Contributed by Kay Rees, Map Group

# COVID-19 and the Australian Geography Competition

As with other Society activities, COVID-19 has had a major effect on the Competition. Thanks to our volunteers, all the question packs had been sent out to schools, ready for students to sit the Competition from 18 March to 1 April. These dates unfortunately coincided with the pandemic becoming a serious problem in Australia. Parents kept their children home and schools closed early.

With Term 2 looking as though it might be worse than Term 1 as far as school attendance was concerned, the Competition Committee decided to dramatically extend the date that students' answer sheets had to be returned – to 14 August. This was to give schools the maximum chance to schedule the Competition. All our timelines went out the window!

For senior students, two events flow from the Competition. Sixteen high-scoring Year 11 students participate in Geography's Big Week Out. This is a week of challenging geographical activities focussing on fieldwork and spatial technologies. It terminates in the test used to pick Australia's team to the International Geography Olympiad.

Four students from the 2019 Big Week Out on Kangaroo Island had been selected to represent Australia at the 2020 Olympiad in Istanbul in August. Not surprisingly, this year's Olympiad has been cancelled so the four students will miss out on this incredible international experience. They will be ineligible to participate next year as they will have already left school. Indonesia was scheduled to have hosted next year's Olympiad but has graciously postponed theirs so that Istanbul can host 2021 instead.

The four students selected for the Australian Team for the 2020 iGeo were:

*Noah Gong*, Sydney Grammar School,  
New South Wales

*Lauren Griffiths*, Northern Beaches Secondary  
College, New South Wales

*Lucy Watson*, Pembroke School,  
South Australia

*Sonia Truong*, The Mac.Robertson Girls' High  
School, Victoria

The 2020 Big Week Out was to have been held in Perth and Rottnest Island, organised by teachers from the Geographical Association of Western Australia. It has had to be cancelled. To pick our team for next year's Olympiad, the 16 students who would ordinarily have attended Big Week Out will sit a test based on the Olympiad exams. The students picked for the 2021 team will not have had the experience of a Big Week Out so we will be getting the four of them together in Brisbane early next year for some training and, importantly, team bonding!

## Enter the Australian Geography Competition

18 March – 1 April

ENTRIES CLOSE 24 FEBRUARY 2020

### Geography's Big Week Out, Kangaroo Island



"GBWO was an incredible experience to share with a group of unique and amazing people. It was also a brilliant opportunity to apply geographical skills and more broadly academic knowledge to a real-life scenario, something we might otherwise have been unable to accomplish until well into university."

Joshua Crow, 2019 Big Week Out.

All travel, accommodation and meal costs for participants of the GBWO and the Australian Team are met by the Competition organisers.

### International Geography Olympiad



"The iGeo was a fantastic opportunity not only to learn about geography, hearing from bright minds in the field and undergoing insightful fieldwork, but also to make friends from all around the globe. Being around such a wide variety of international cultures, personalities and languages is a rare event, and because of it, the experience was invaluable."

Harry Hall, 2018 Olympiad

To enter contact your Geography Teacher  
[www.geographycompetition.org.au](http://www.geographycompetition.org.au)  
@AustralianGeographyCompetition  
ResearchAGC  
email: [competition@ragsq.org.au](mailto:competition@ragsq.org.au)  
phone: 07 3330 6907



Front cover photo: The assessment of Daniela Mounthan, Guangdong Province, China. ©iStock.com/Tony Lu. Showcasing the geographical concept of environment.

### Australian Geography Competition in the classroom



- Open to students from Year 7 to Year 12
- Certificates of recognition for all participating students
- Prizes for highest scoring students
- 16 high performing Year 11 students invited to Geography's Big Week Out
- 4 chosen to represent Australia at the 2021 International Geography Olympiad in Bandung, Indonesia

Westside College Year 9 student Emma Newell's results placed her in the top 1% of the nation, courtesy of Westside College, Qld

We have a three-year grant from the Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment for Big Week Out and our participation in the Olympiad. The Department has generously agreed that we can use this year's funds for those activities over the next two years.

Lots of disruptions and working things out as we go along, but the Competition Committee and Society staff are dedicated to making sure that the Competition comes through this period as best we can.

*Contributed by Kath Berg and Bernard Fitzpatrick*

## Calling RGSQ volunteers to assist with the Australian Geography Competition

Australian Geography Competition volunteer tasks have been on hold due to COVID-19. There will be two volunteer tasks that will require your assistance in the coming months.

### SCANNING OF ANSWER SHEETS

There are 2020 Competition answer sheets ready to scan at Gregory Place, and others will continue to arrive through to the end of August. If you are interested in helping with the scanning of answer sheets, please register online or call 3330 6907.

### RESULTS MAILOUT

It is hoped that this activity will occur over four days in late September or early October. If you are interested in helping, please register online and we will keep you informed of the actual dates of the mailout.

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## ROARS FROM THE MOUNTAIN: Colonial management of the 1951 volcanic disaster at Mt Lamington

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*Book review contributed by Ken Granger*

Around 10:40 am on Sunday the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1951, Mt Lamington, in what was then the Australian Territory of Papua, erupted explosively. This catastrophic event left 35 Europeans and over 3000 Papuans dead. These fatalities were caused either by the concussion of the explosion, the scalding heat within its pyroclastic flow, or suffocation by the ash and toxic gasses contained in the “ash hurricane”. There were many more casualties, mostly terrible burns. This remains the worst natural disaster ever recorded on Australian territory.

Until just six days before the catastrophic eruption, when minor tremors were felt and steam appeared, Mt Lamington was not even known to be an active volcano. There had never been any indication of activity recorded in the 150 or more years since European explorers first sighted the mountain, nor was its reputation as a “fire mountain” contained in the oral traditions and myths of the Orokaiva people that occupy the area. As a consequence of this rapid onset and uncertainty as to its likely behaviour there were no orders to evacuate the government station at Higaturu and the nearby Anglican mission at Sangara; nor the Orokaiva villages and hamlets that were spread across the northern foothills of the mountain. These were all wiped out.



*The devastation at Higaturu (Bert Speer collection NLA)*

The Mt Lamington disaster has been an abiding personal and professional interest of Dr Wally Johnson for many years. Over several decades he has compiled a massive collection of official reports and communications, photos, mission and plantation records, as well as letters and other first person accounts of the event itself, its aftermath and its impact on the Orokaiva people. Over those years he also interviewed some of the key personnel involved or their surviving relatives, as well as anthropologists and geoscientists that conducted research in the surrounding area into the 1960s and beyond. This meticulous and forensic research has now been distilled into *Roars from the mountain: colonial management of the 1951 volcanic disaster at Mt Lamington* published by ANU Press.

This work is both strong on detail and broad in scope. That it addresses the volcanology of the hazard is no surprise given that Johnson is internationally regarded as one of Australia’s most eminent volcanologists. It also provides a detailed examination of the people, both native and expatriate, and the places that were exposed to the eruption and the degree to which they were susceptible or resilient to its impact and aftermath. It is this more comprehensive treatment that makes this study special.

It examines the response by both the colonial administration, the Anglican mission, the local European planters and the Orokaiva people to the disaster. A key feature of the response was the effort to provide refuge and sustenance for over 4000 displaced Orokaiva until it was deemed safe enough for them to be resettled. It also looks at the policy issues and jurisdictional conflicts that existed at the time as well as the parochial nature of the colonial relationship with the Papuan people generally. The differences between traditional Orokaiva, colonial European and scientific perspectives of causation of the disaster have parallels in the current debates of causation of modern weather-related disasters such as the 2019-20 bushfire season. It is a case study in the analysis of risk in a genuinely unprecedented disaster.

Johnson clearly articulates the need to comprehensively document the impacts of disaster, the responses to it and the lessons learned. He is absolutely correct when he states that: “*remembrance should perhaps, be regarded as a third ‘r’ to be added to the post-disaster phases of relief and recovery.*” Without that learning disaster managers, planners, political decision makers and the general public may well consider the next major disaster that envelopes them as being “unprecedented”. That would be a tragedy.

*Roars from the mountain* is a “must-read” for anyone with an interest in PNG, in geography, in historiography, and especially in disaster risk management. It is a great story that is very well told.

The book is available as a free download from ANU Press.

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### CONTRIBUTORS

Kath Berg, Iraphne Childs, Bernard Fitzpatrick, Ken Granger, Ian Harding, Kay Rees

### PHOTOGRAPHY

Ian Harding, Patrick Moss, Kay Rees, Australian Geography Competition, Bert Speer Collection NLA, The Conversation May 18, 2020



TAAC may resume activities in September but this will depend on guidelines and health advice of the day. We will keep members informed.

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# **RGSQ**

# **Bulletin**

July 2020

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The July Council will meet on the third Tuesday of the month.

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