

The Australian Geoscience Council in 2015



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This report is based on the President's and Chairman's Reports to the Annual General Meeting of the AGC on 4 June 2015.

Knowing who we are

The Australian Geoscience Council has eight major Australian geoscientific societies as its Members. These organisations are considered to collectively represent most of Australia's geoscientists, a number we believe to be around 7000 individuals, after considering that many are members of more than one organisation. As the peak body for these individuals we have interests in representing industry, government and academic professionals in the fields of geology, geophysics, geochemistry, minerals, petroleum, hydrogeology, environmental and all other aspects of geoscience.

Our Member Organisations have particular interests, summarised here from their websites (in alphabetical order). Details are on the AGC website at <http://www.agc.org.au>. We note that there is significant overlap between those organisations that focus on the geoscientists, on the geoscience and/or on both:

- The Association of Applied Geochemists (AAG) is an international organisation founded in 1970 and specialising in the field of applied geochemistry. Its purpose is primarily to advance the science of geochemistry as it relates to exploration and the environment.
- The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM) has a Geoscience Society that supports geoscientists working in the mining industry. Including the disciplines of mining engineering, metallurgy and others, AusIMM represents 14 000 individuals working in the global minerals industry and provides leadership and opportunities for minerals industry professionals.
- The Australian Geoscience Information Association (AGIA) is a national group made up of people and organisations working in any area of the geosciences at the professional level, and acts as a medium of communication for all those interested in geoscience information.

- The Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG) is a professional institute representing geoscientists employed in all sectors of industry, education, research and government throughout Australia.
- The Australian Society of Exploration Geophysicists (ASEG) is a learned society of professional earth scientists specialising in the practical application of the principles of physics and mathematics to solve problems in a broad range of geological situations.
- The Geological Society of Australia (GSA) was established as a non-profit organisation in 1952 to promote, advance and support earth sciences in Australia.
- The International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) is a professional association for those within disciplines related to groundwater, its occurrence, utilisation, testing and management. The Executive Presidency position of the Australian National Chapter is rotated annually through the State Branches.
- The Petroleum Exploration Society of Australia (PESA) is a national organisation representing the interests of all professionals and practitioners in the upstream petroleum industry.

Knowing where we are going

At this time last year, the AGC was just at the inception of the process of building our Strategic Plan. Through the good work of many we now have this completed and it provides a coherent framework to guide the activities and priorities of the AGC through the coming years. This plan has been succinctly summarised in a flyer that we recommend as a tool to communicate widely with all those interested in advancing the cause of geoscience in Australia. It is attached to this report and can be accessed on the AGC web site (<http://bit.ly/1MsNy4y>).

This Strategic Plan is particularly important because the AGC is in the fortunate position of currently being well-resourced through the results of the very successful International Geological Congress in Brisbane (the 34th IGC). With this however comes the obligation to proactively and responsibly use these resources to support Australian geoscience. We have been given a great opportunity to make a difference and we must make sure we take advantage of it. We felt that the most important way to start this process was to ensure we could see all of the issues and needs so that we can prioritise our efforts in a balanced and objective way.

Given that our Mission is defined in our Constitution we started with our Vision. This maps our path forward and gives us guidance at each step in making decisions. The Vision we agreed on is appropriately challenging: We will raise the profile of Geoscience to be pre-eminent in Australia and to be recognised as one of the great fields of general science with Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

To maintain our focus on this Vision we have developed three Strategic Pillars: Geoscience Education, Geoscience Advocacy and Geoscience Sustainability. We consider these almost self-explanatory, the third pillar focusing on actions that enable us to ensure the first two continue to be developed long into the future. For each of the Strategic Pillars we have defined Strategies and within each of the Strategies we have defined Targets. Full details of our Strategic Plan are on our website.

The most important challenge now is to effectively implement our Strategic Plan. We need to translate the aspirations in the plan into concrete actions and outcomes. This is being done through the development of a Business Plan and Budget that guides us for the current year. We also need to recognise that implementation of this plan cannot rest solely on the shoulders of our hard-working Executive. To this end, we have initiated committees to drive the plan forward in our key strategic areas such as Geoscience Education and Geoscience Advocacy. These committees will play an increasingly important role. We have also recognised the need for an Administration Officer to support the implementation process, and this is now in place.

An interesting outcome of our Strategic Plan is that the AGC has been invited to participate in the Australian Academy of Science subcommittee that is developing a 10 year plan for geoscience in Australia. The last such decadal plan was extremely successful in helping provide coordinated funding for government, academia and organisations such as Geoscience Australia, the CSIRO, university departments and Centres of Excellence. We have already been asked to specifically help with the Education aspects of the new plan, which fits well with our first Strategic Pillar of Geoscience Education.

Our achievements

During the past 12 months our focus has been on the following strategies:

- In Geoscience Education we have focused on supporting the excellent online publication *GeoEdLink*, which was issued in September and December 2014 and April this year.
- In Geoscience Advocacy we have focused on supporting the UNCOVER initiative. We made this a major issue in a recent mission to Canberra, at the Science Meets Parliament event that Bill Shaw attended with Brad Pillans. We also see this as a focus for Science and Technology Australia (STA) where we have emphasised that this is an issue of singular economic importance to all Australians.
- In Geoscience Sustainability we have found common ground amongst our Member Organisations, and clarified the role that the AGC can play for them and that they must play for us if we are all to achieve our Vision.

- We would also like to report the successful completion of negotiations with the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) to set up a travel fund for young geoscientists. This fund will be administered jointly by the AGC and AAS and will represent a long term positive legacy arising from the 34th IGC.

Our concerns

We would be remiss not to mention that the collapse of the mining boom and commodity prices has put many of our geoscience colleagues under pressure. This is one of the hardest times we have seen in the boom and bust cycle, as it affects not just one or two commodities but all of the mining and the hydrocarbon industries.

We must all ensure at every opportunity that we argue for a rational long-term approach to supporting the people and the technologies that enable us to do good geoscience, irrespective of the drivers behind economic rationalism. Cutting costs should not mean cutting capabilities. Our industries continue to fail to learn this lesson.

Acknowledgements

We thank our Secretary Dr Ron Hackney and our Treasurer Mrs Miriam Way, who is assisted by Mr Brad Clements of the AusIMM. These are important roles that take up a lot of voluntary time.

We also thank the representatives of our Member Organisations who have provided constant support, encouragement and clarity in guiding the AGC towards making a difference for geoscience in Australia. We consider that we now have a strong team that understands and whole-heartedly supports what we are all trying to achieve.

Editor's note: The official ASEG AGC representative is Kim Frankcombe. The Secretary of the AGC, Dr Ron Hackney, is also a Member of the ASEG and Preview Associate Editor: Book Reviews.



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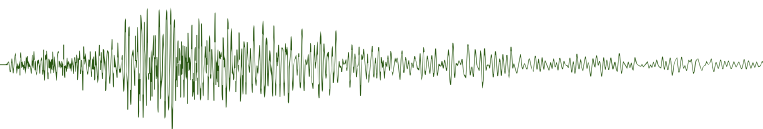
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Australian Geoscience Council Inc.
 The Council of Earth Science Societies in Australia



STRATEGIC PLAN
2015 – 2020

with
Examples of Specific Initiatives

www.agc.org.au

The Australian Geoscience Council comprises the following Australian Geoscience societies:



VISION

We will raise the profile of Geoscience to be pre-eminent in Australia and to be recognised as one of the great fields of general science with Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

MISSION

The role of the AGC is to foster close relations between Geoscience learned societies and professional associations in Australia and to take concerted action for promoting Earth Sciences and their applications in the best interests of both our constituent organisations and the nation as a whole.



THE STRATEGIC PILLARS OF THE AGC

1. GEOSCIENCE EDUCATION

1.1 Support Public Education about Geoscience

- Initiate "Mawson Day" to recognise geoscience achievements
- Support the National Rock Garden
- Identify and promote geoscience champions as National Treasures

1.2 Support Primary School Education

- Identify and support outstanding programs and their champions

1.3 Support Secondary School Geoscience

- Australian Earth & Environmental Science Olympiad
- Teacher Earth Science Education Program and Earth Science Western Australia
- GeoEdLink newsletter for teachers
- Support the use of the Geoscience Australia Education Centre as a resource

1.4 Support Tertiary Geoscience Education

- Manage the AGC/AAS Travel Fund for Young Geoscientists
- Support Australasian University Geoscience Educators Network

1.5 Support continuing Education in Geoscience

- Encourage communication, consistency and mutual support between member organisations

1.6 Policy Framework for Geoscience Education

- Collect and promote survey data on the status of geoscience education

2. GEOSCIENCE ADVOCACY

2.1 Proactive advocacy on key issues

- Endorse and promote the UNCOVER initiative
- Raise awareness at State and Federal level regarding geoscience training, employment and research funding issues. Gain leverage from member surveys
- Initiate touring speaker series for public lectures

2.2 Assist member organisations to communicate with the broader community

- Retain a media advisor who can be used by the AGC on behalf of membership groups
- Develop a policy for communication of issues that considers:
 - Apolitical representation
 - Advocacy to governments
 - Raising public awareness
 - Facilitation, coordination, leadership
 - Social media
- Identify spokespersons with relevant expertise who can provide objective commentary on issues such as:
 - Climate change
 - Long-term water security
 - Dry-land salinity and soil loss
 - Geotourism
 - Fracking and coal-seam gas
 - Long-term resource security



3. GEOSCIENCE SUSTAINABILITY

3.1 Facilitate synergy between member organisations

- Provide a forum for sharing of issues and information between member organisations
- Identify and develop leverage points for member organisations
- Explore and facilitate opportunities for resource sharing between member organisations
- Provide leadership, opportunities and forums to further the interests of Geoscience in Australia
- Improve connections and support between AGC, member organisations and academia
- Coordinate communication about third-party funding requests

3.2 Governance of the AGC

- Review AGC operations (roles, constitution, etc.)
- Website content and social media presence

3.3 Ensure the viability of the AGC

- Maintain financial resources above a sustainable level and develop a regular income stream

3.4 Promote alignment with key stakeholder groups

- Young professionals, women in geoscience, other special interest groups (e.g. indigenous)
- Geoscience projects in developing countries; e.g. IUGS Resourcing Future Generations
- Collaboration with other overseas volunteer schemes; e.g. Engineers Without Borders