



Tips: The New GDA Maps,

by Richard



GDA stands for Geocentric Datum Australia. Although not new, for the first time we now have some new maps of Victoria in The Wilderness Shop that are on GDA. These include the new Wilsons Promontory, Eildon, Lake Tarli Karng and Nelson mapsheets. We have had for a number of years some newer maps of NSW also on GDA.

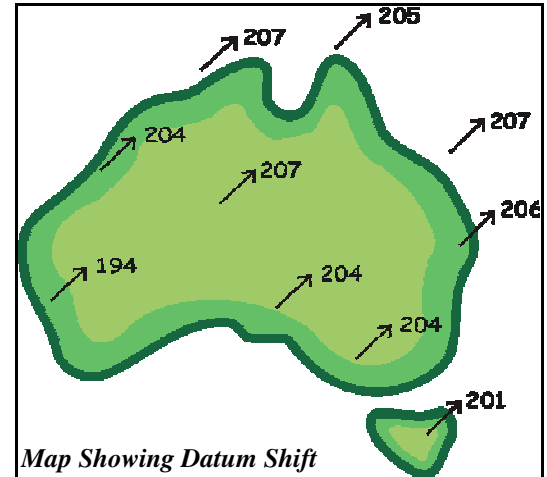
GDA is the mathematical surface that best approximates the shape of the Earth around the Earth's centre of mass. A GPS (Global Positioning System; the handheld electronic devices that bushwalkers use to tell them where they are) uses satellites that orbit the Earth around its centre of mass, and this is the reason for the change. The old datum was called AGD (Australian Geodetic Datum).

MGA94 stands for Map Grid Australia 1994. This is the new map grid, which is the square grid printed on maps, from which you read map coordinates. The old map grid was called AMG (Australian Map Grid). The difference in coordinates between GDA and AGD is approximately 200 metres.

Getting confused? Remember anything starting with an A (AGD and AMG) is old, while GDA and MGA are the new!

So why does it matter? Firstly, when giving map coordinates it is important to state whether they are GDA (new) or AGD (old) so

bushwalkers do not think they are 200 metres out of place. This may matter if you cannot find your tent in thick fog. Secondly, if using a GPS you must set the datum in the GPS to match that on the map. This is AGD for an old AGD map, or, and here is a trap, WGS84 (World Geodetic System) for new GDA maps. Happy navigating!



Richard has worked at The Wilderness Shop for 7 years and has a B. App. Sci. in Cartography, which included the study of Geodesy. He finds it just as confusing now as he did then.

For more information have a look at the government website:
www.icsm.gov.au/icsm/gda