



## AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF EXPLORATION GEOPHYSICISTS

### STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

#### MINUTES AND DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

ASEG FEDERAL EXECUTIVE

9:30 a.m. Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2001

AINSE Board Room,

ANSTO, New Illawarra Road, Lucas Heights

<b>Attendees:</b>	B Spies, G Butt, D Robson, B White, J Macnae, Interstate members: K Suto, K. Dodds.
<b>Apologies:</b>	T Pippett, R Shaw, M Smith, S Webster. Interstate members: A Mutton, S Greenhalgh, D Howard.
<b>Submissions Received:</b>	NSW Branch Report, QLD Branch Report, NT Branch Report, WA Branch Report, Publications Report, Membership Survey Report, Preview Editors Report, Conference Organising Committee Report, Members Comments (R. Henderson, B White, M. Smith).

### STRATEGIC PLANNING

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and brainstorm issues around the theme “what type of Society we want, and where do we want to be in 5 or 10 year's time?” The day was designed to give the Federal Executive a chance to discuss the 'big picture' without the concern of the day-to-day business matters that dominate the monthly Federal Executive meetings. It was hoped that by gaining a clear understanding of why the ASEG was founded, and what (if anything) had changed, it would be possible to develop a set of clear goals that the Society could work towards. Present and future office bearers of the Society could then develop strategies to achieve those goals.

Business planning, by way of contrast, examines current resources and constraints and looks forward from the current position. The ASEG *Business Plan* is updated annually and plans at most three years ahead. The meeting was designed to focus on strategic, rather than operational, issues.

#### Preliminary Agenda

1. What is strategic planning? Brainstorming and visioning as tools.
2. Our roots - the ASEG - why was it formed? What did the founding fathers expect it to achieve?
3. Are these goals still relevant?
4. What type of Society do we want to be in 5 or 10 year's time? What is our vision (and mission?)
5. What should our relationship be with other societies and organisations? How do we differ?
6. What balance of disciplines, applications, and stakeholders should we have?
7. What are the top 10 "must achieves" or wish list for the next 10 years?
8. What are possible strategies to implement them?

The agenda was varied as the day progressed, as follows:

1. The process of strategic planning
2. Background to formation of the ASEG
3. Review of membership survey (preliminary results)
4. Re-evaluation of redefinition of goals of the ASEG
5. Issues that affect the current running of the Society, and barriers to the advancement of the goals
6. Further refinement and implementation of Strategic Plan

### 1. The process of strategic planning

The motivation and methodology for strategic planning was discussed, with the agreement to concentrate on longer term, strategic issues and the setting of clear goals for the Society. Issues affecting the operation of the Society were listed, together with suggestions to improve immediate problems that had been identified by the Federal Executive and State Branches.

### 2. Background to formation of the ASEG

The origins of the Society were described in early issues of the *ASEG Bulletin*, and the original goals are summarised in the Appendix. These goals were used as a starting point for the discussions.

### 3. Membership Survey

Koya Suto presented preliminary results of the Membership Survey, which had sampled around 240 (20 percent) of members from a possible 1250. A summary analysis will be prepared for the next issue of Preview.

The constraints of such surveys were discussed. For instance, 80 percent of members did not feel sufficiently motivated to fill in and return the form, and those that did probably felt more strongly about ASEG operations than those that did not. Also, we had not surveyed people who had left the Society, or those who could potentially join it. However, the age distribution for replies closely matched our membership.

Given these constraints, the results were surprisingly uniform, with a median value of 7 or 8 out of 10 for member satisfaction for all questions, and a bell-shaped distribution. The conclusions drawn from this can be simply stated as ‘what we are doing, we are doing well’. Members have a high overall satisfaction of 7.7, and members value-for-money received a high score of 7.5.

The large number of individual comments will need to be analysed at a later stage, as will more detailed cross-correlations between responses.

Perhaps one of the most interesting results was that members overwhelmingly feel the Society should broaden its scope of activities into other, non-traditional areas of geophysics such as the environmental, geotechnical and groundwater areas.

For conferences, around one-quarter of members attend all our conferences, while one-quarter of members do not attend any of our conferences, mainly due to travel costs or limits imposed by employers. Clearly to the latter members the main advantage of belonging to the Society is our publications. 63% of respondents preferred the current 18-month timing of conferences, with 17% favoring annual and 13% other. 56% of delegate registrations are paid by the employer.

Other results:

Web:

- 20% of members go to the web site once per month
- 40% of members go to the web site every quarter
- Many members use the web site for links to other organisations – this has important implications in attracting new advertisers on the web site.

Secretariat

- Received a high satisfaction score
- Often the Secretariat has only limited knowledge on a subject matter.

Age

- Approx. 50% of respondents were over 40-years of age.
- The most popular age group of respondents was between 50-54 years of age - one interpretation is that members who are promoted to managers may drop their membership.

There was considerable discussion on the interpretation of these results. It could be argued that most respondents simply favored the status quo – for instance, membership dues and conference fees were “about right”, as were publication frequency and content.

Koya Suto is preparing a summary of the Member Survey for the April issue of Preview, and the full report will be sent to State Branches and posted on the ASEG web site.

#### 4. Re-evaluation of redefinition of goals of the ASEG

Starting with the original goals of the Society, as described by Robin Macqueen, President, in the ASEG Bulletin V1, No.1 (1970) and V2, No.2 (1971), the group discussed the relevance of these goals in terms of the current needs of the membership and the evolving profession of geophysics. The original goals are still largely relevant today. Minor variations in wording are suggested to reflect (a) the desire to embrace areas of geophysics beyond minerals and petroleum (incorporated into Goal 1), and an additional goal (Goal 6) reflecting the importance of workplace safety. Many items discussed were considered to be strategies, rather than goals. The suggested revised **goals** are as follows:

1. To promote the science and practise of geophysics, especially to exploration, geotechnical and environmental applications. (Science of Geophysics)
2. To promote and strengthen the profession of geophysics and it's good standing in the community. (Profession)
3. To promote fellowship and cooperation among practitioners, users, educators and researches of geophysics. (People & Links)
4. To promote cooperation and links with other professional groups (Outreach)
5. To promote and facilitate Australia wide involvement and focus in a society of international relevance. (Inclusion & Relevance)
6. Promote and encourage safe practise throughout the industry. (Safety)

Once the goals are refined and agreed to, the next task will be to develop a set of strategies to achieve these goals. It was suggested that the strategies would be best developed by the State Branches, which are close to the membership and local issues. Examples of strategies to achieve Goal 3 (People and Links) would be continuing education courses and regular conferences / workshops, and strategies for Goal 4 (Outreach) would be joint conferences with other societies. (There was some discussion as to whether Goal 6 above is a goal or strategy – this still needs to be resolved.)

#### 5. Issues that affect the current running of the Society, and barriers to the advancement of the goals

##### 1. Management and governance

- Representation -
  - FEDEX- The location and makeup of the Federal Executive is at present rotated between states. This is considered by some members and State Branches not to be truly representative of the membership as a whole, or in the best interests of the Society. A mechanism should be found for truly national representation on the Federal Executive.
  - State Branches- The role of State Branches was discussed, and the perception of poor relations between State Branches and the Federal Executive. Issues include capitation fees, the management and ownership of bank accounts, and liabilities of office bearers, and Federal support for local activities.
  - Council – Some other societies (e.g., SEG) have a “Council” composed of representatives from diverse geographic areas and interest groups, who represent the membership. The Council in these cases is the governing body of the Society. The ASEG should evaluate the pros and cons in forming a Council, with a make-up largely based on proportional representation from States.
- Secretariat
  - The Secretariat should take on more of the activities currently borne by the ASEG Federal Executive. Ideally, the Secretariat should be stable, long-term commitment to quality and service, and retain the corporate memory of the organisation. The accounting arm could be kept as a separate function to the Secretariat.
- Executive Officer
  - A strong case can be made for the need for a full-time Executive Director to be employed by the ASEG, to coordinate all activities of the Society, ensure efficient operation of Secretariat functions, and take a key role in conference organisation. The Executive Director would take a lead role in planning and coordination of annual conferences (see below), and would reduce on some of our present conference costs.

## 2. Conferences

There are compelling reasons for ASEG conferences to be held at approximately the same time each year. This would allow, for example, better forward planning for exhibitors, organisers and delegates. Meetings of the Annual General Meeting, Council, standing committees and elections could be timed to coordinate with such an annual conference.

Annual Conferences have a strong business case - conferences are the major source of revenue for the Society. Annual conferences would possibly be smaller and less profitable, but the total income over a number of years could be higher than at present. The membership survey shows that 63% of members like an 18-month cycle. However, in the present cycle, WA only hosts a conference every 6 or 7 years – this is clearly unacceptable since WA has the largest number of ASEG members, many of whom cannot travel to the eastern states to attend conferences. One possibility is for conferences to be held in Perth every 3-years with the two intervening conferences held on rotation at Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane. Some of these conferences could (should) be held as joint conferences with other Societies or organisations (e.g., PESA, ...). We also need to better understand the motivation for conference attendance, from the viewpoint of members, employers, and exhibitors

## 3. Committees

ASEG standing committees, with one or two notable exceptions, are at present not functioning well and do not tap into our volunteer workforce. Regular annual meetings of committees and close liaison with the Federal Executive would assist in this regard. Also, there needs to be better recognition and acknowledgement of the work done by Committees members and other volunteers.

## 4. Business / Financial Plan.

- The Finance Committee should investigate the business case for employing a full-time Executive Director, with some conference responsibilities, and the viability of moving to an annual conference cycle. Also need to analyse
  - Expenses – Secretariat, Honorarium
  - Revenue – conferences, member dues, workshops,
- Improved recognition of volunteers should assist in building a strongly motivated volunteer-based organisation. One suggestion is to fund a reception or dinner at the ASEG conference for editors, Committee Chairs, State Executives and Federal Committee.
- Implementation of all or part of this Plan should take into account present the evolving technologies, demographics and evolving needs of our membership.

## 5. Further refinement and implementation of Strategic Plan

- State Branch Executives are asked to comment on the Strategic Plan, with recommendations to be presented at the Council Meeting planned for Sunday afternoon August 5<sup>th</sup> at the Brisbane Conference.
- Individual members to be asked to comment via web site discussion forum.

## IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

- Office bearers for FedEx for 2001/2002 to include nominees from at least three States.
- Half-day meeting of “Council” planned for Sunday afternoon August 5<sup>th</sup> in Brisbane.
- State Branches to be asked to comment on Strategic Plan, and suggest Strategies to achieve the Society’s goals.
- Recommend to FedEx to fund appreciation dinner at Brisbane conference for key volunteers and office bearers.
- Fed Ex and State Branches to discuss mechanisms for closer involvement with improved communication and ownership.

## Appendix

### **ORIGINAL CONCEPT AND MOTIVATION IN FORMING THE ASEG (1971)** ***(ASEG Bulletin Vol 2. No.2)***

1. *To promote the science of geophysics, especially as it applies to exploration.*
2. *To promote fellowship and co-operation among those persons, firms or companies interested in the geophysical industry.*
3. *To promote the good standing of the geophysical profession.*
4. *To promote closer co-operation and understanding between geophysicists and other earth scientists.*
5. *To assist in the design and teaching of courses in geophysics.*
6. *To help in the formation and sponsorship of student sections when sufficient interest justifies such action.*
7. *To help geophysicists in other Australian cities or regions to form local geophysical societies with similar objects.*