



# Client Conversations

## Kate Robertson, President and Director of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists (ASEG)

**ASEG have been clients with TAS since 2014. In those 7 years, ASEG has gone from strength to strength. Kate Robertson shares some insights into her time with ASEG and advice on encouraging other societies and for purpose organisations to diversify their boards.**

*Volunteering for the ASEG has been an incredibly rewarding experience. There are so many benefits, but I'll name a few. Meeting lovely people, the sense of community and belonging within a society that you really connect with is a wonderful feeling- I encourage everyone to find a society that can fulfill them. Volunteering also provides great networking opportunities that can help your career as well as the skills that you learn from how to host a committee meeting, or an event to introducing a speaker, and running online meetings and webinars. Through my current role as President and as a director I have already gained a lot of leadership experience and I am very grateful to have this opportunity. And volunteering gives you a warm fuzzy feeling*



*I started my role as a senior geophysicist at the Geological Survey of South Australia (Department for Energy and Mining) four years ago, shortly after finishing my PhD at the University of Adelaide. I became involved with the Australian Society of Exploration Geophysicists (ASEG) during my honours year, where I quickly became a regular at the monthly technical talks (It's not hard to get a student to an event with free food and drink, and possibly the chance to score a job!). The ASEG is based in Australia, but has members from around 40 countries, and seven branches representing each state and territory operating within the ASEG. A few years after joining the SA/NT branch committee, I became Branch President for two years. In my second year I received an invitation to join the Federal Executive as the Chair of the Communications Committee. This was a fantastic opportunity and I enjoyed managing the social media, initiating a monthly newsletter and working on the general promotion of the society for two years. I then received a very unexpected phone call from then President David Annetts who invited me to serve as President-elect for a year, and on to President the next (this year). I have loved every minute of it.*

### How long has the society been running for?

*In 2021 the ASEG entered its 51<sup>st</sup> year. Our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations were a little dampened by Covid-19, but a few of our branches managed to have in-person celebrations and we had some Special Issues of our publications featuring our best articles. As a 50-year-old society we have a very active History Committee to ensure that we document the experiences and memories of the pioneers of the geophysical techniques we take for granted now. Despite its 50-year existence, we are showing no signs of slowing, and have a lot to look forward to in the coming years as we adapt to new technologies and opportunities for geophysicists as the world takes steps toward a net-zero future.*



**TAS have always been advocates of diversity on Boards and we were extremely pleased to hear that in 2021, ASEG has an all-female Board. Was this an organic outcome or did ASEG put some initiatives in place to encourage this?**

*Geophysics is a male-dominated industry (a 2019 survey showed ~75% men). When Marina Costelloe became the President of the ASEG in 2018 (one-year terms), she made it her mission to ensure that our Board (the Federal Executive), would be diverse in as many aspects as possible. This was the year I was invited to join the Federal Executive as the Chair of Communications & Promotions Committee.*

*Our Board members included members from almost every state and territory, from a large age range (early-career to retired), different cultural backgrounds, from a broad spread of work (from government employees to industry to academics), and with 7/12 female members. This year as I was tasked to replace our Treasurer, and invite a new President-Elect, Education chair, Communications chair and Branch Liaison officer, I wrote out a list of the names of the existing Federal Executive, along with information about them (gender, career-stage, employment type, location, etc). It then became easier to realise areas that we already had covered well, and areas with room for improvement.*

*Although I'll be honest in admitting that I had not realised that our Executive Board of directors (myself as President, Emma Brand as President-elect, Yvette Poudjom Djomani as Treasurer and Leslie Atkinson as Secretary) were all female, until our Immediate Past President pointed it out to me!*

*While there are many times in the society's history where the board was all-male, this is the first time in 51 years with an all-female board.*

**What advice would you give to other Associations/Societies to encourage diversity and inclusion at a Board level?**

*Any Board vacancy is an opportunity to consider another vantage point for the leaders of your Society/Association. Consider the perspectives that are not currently represented within your current Board make-up and use it to guide you in your choice of Board member. Of course, when identifying a new Board member their professional skills will play a large factor in your choice, but there is so much more to be gained by also using diversity in your decision-making process.*

**Is there any new initiative that the ASEG Board are going to implement in the near future that you can share with us?**

*Yes, actually! We just launched our new diversity committee, with inaugural chair President-elect Emma Brand. We decided that it was important in all of our meetings and decision-making processes to have a presence that would consider how our decisions affect all of our members, improve our gender diversity and ensure underrepresented minority groups are not overlooked. Our society already had a diversity statement that we used to guide us, but we want diversity to play a more active role in our decisions and our future, which will be enabled by our newly established diversity committee.*

