

**John Denham**  
**Honorary Membership of the ASEG**  
**Sydney February 2018**

**CITATION**

ASEG Honorary Membership has been conferred upon long-standing NSW branch member John Denham, in recognition of his distinguished service to the petroleum exploration industry in a career spanning more than five decades, and for his most valuable contributions to the ASEG over many years.

John was born in Parramatta in 1941, and after graduating with a B.Sc. in Geology and Geophysics from Sydney University in 1962, he started working for Austral Geo Prospectors (later United Geophysical) as a “Computer” on seismic field crews in Queensland. By 1965 he was Party Chief of a seismic crew in the Simpson Desert, later in Queensland and PNG, gaining experience in conventional land seismic operations, desert and jungle operations.

In 1971 he joined BHP Petroleum in Melbourne as a Senior Geophysicist, remaining there until late 1993, filling a variety of roles, including that of Chief Geophysicist, involving BHPP operations worldwide. This involved field operations, processing and interpretation of both land and marine data. He pushed and oversaw the introduction of digital technology into BHPP from the early 1970s, including one of the first interactive interpretation systems in Australia in 1983.

During this time, he published papers in APEA, ASEG, AusIMM and SEG journals on subjects as diverse as depth conversion, case histories, field techniques, interactive interpretation, processing, geophysics education, and geophysics history. John’s professional career has been characterised by an enquiring mind, and a pragmatic approach to improving seismic methodologies.

After over two decades with BHPP, John continued his career for some years as a consultant, doing a number of relatively small jobs in Australia and the USA.

During his career John has made an exceptional contribution to the ASEG, again focusing on scientific rigour and advancement. A member of ASEG since 1971, he initiated a petroleum geophysics conference in Melbourne, was technical co-chairman of the 1989 ASEG conference in Melbourne, and served as Editor of *Exploration Geophysics* from 1994 to 1999.

At the inception of the ASEG Research Foundation in 1989, John volunteered to serve on the committee, and was appointed Chair of the Petroleum sub-committee. He has retained this role to the present, each year vetting applications to ensure that supported research projects are both scientifically sound and practically worthwhile. John maintains an interest in graduates who have been supported by the Foundation, and can often be found at ASEG conferences mentoring the next generation of geophysicists.

John was awarded an ASEG Service Certificate in 2003 in recognition of his significant contributions to the society at that time. He has continued to support the society, and has been a regular attendee and contributor at almost all ASEG conferences since the inaugural meeting in 1979. John is also an important member of the History Committee due to his knowledge of the society from its early days.

John has managed to fit in many other leisure activities during his busy career. He has held a Private Pilot's licence since 1967, and has also been involved in sailing since the mid-sixties, building an 11m schooner in 1979, which he twice sailed from Melbourne to North Queensland and back. In retirement, John lives on a farm, which he has owned since 1983, at Elong Elong near Dubbo in Central West NSW. "John from Elong" is well known in his local community as a long standing radio quiz champion where his expertise ranges far from geophysics, fuelled by decades of reading. He has also served as a volunteer with the local Rural Fire Service brigade.

It is very fitting that the ASEG now recognises John's outstanding contributions over many years to the ASEG and to the geophysics profession, with the award of Honorary Membership of the ASEG.