

## OBITUARY FOR JOCK GILFILLAN (1935 - 2025)



It is with great sadness that we share the news that the eminent Australian geologist and long-time SMEDG Committee member, Jock Gilfillan, has passed away.

Jock's enduring contribution to our industry was his leadership and passion for best-practice approaches to the estimation of mineral resources and ore reserves, which contributed to the establishment of the JORC Code in 1989. Although a proud Australian from Melbourne, Jock's Scottish heritage was evident in his stubborn insistence on high-quality, thoroughly verified data for resource estimation. Jock's contribution to the establishment and ongoing success of the JORC Code (particularly his role in developing Table 1), cannot be overstated, as it has been the model for similar codes around the world.

A long career in exploration and mine geology took Jock to many corners of the world and spanned most commodities. He worked for both Australian and international mining companies and later established his own Sydney-based consultancy – John F. Gilfillan & Associates.

Jock graduated with Honours from Melbourne University in 1953, inspired by economic geology lecturers AB Edwards and Frank Stillwell. To quote Jock – *"My interest was totally focused on the application of geology to the mining industry"*. After Jock's first job as a mine geologist at the Emperor gold mine in Fiji, he spent the next five years at the Renison Bell tin mine in Tasmania, initially as the only geologist. There he rapidly expanded his skill set through routine mine geology duties, drilling programs, mine surveying, ore reserve estimation, and liaising with the mine foreman to optimize ore extraction. Jock said .... *"I loved my time at Renison Bell"*, which not only provided him with an insight into the importance of data quality in underpinning best-practice resource estimation, but it was also while living in Zeehan that Jock met his future wife Margaret, who was a nurse at the local hospital.

In 1964, Jock's career took a new direction when international mining companies began investing in the Australian mining industry. He filled increasingly senior roles with AMAX, Union Miniere, and Falconbridge/Noranda. As Resident Geologist (i.e. Exploration Manager) at Falconbridge, Jock led exploration teams active in Eastern Australia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Philippines, guided by in-house conceptual metallogenic studies. This period of robust exploration ended in 1975 when the Whitlam government's policy of effectively nationalising

the mining industry led to international companies winding-back their Australian exploration programs.

Typically, Jock took this setback as an opportunity by establishing John F. Gillfillan & Associates. His firm operated with the ethos that only best-practice data quality and resource estimation methods were acceptable – concepts initially developed during his time at Renison Bell. At his consultancy, Jock established a reputation as “the best in the business”, consulting in 17 countries and providing project management and resource estimation services to the mining industry. Jock also used his expertise to audit clients’ databases and resource estimates – and he was unrelenting if they were not up to the standard he expected!

These values have continued to guide and inspire many geologists working in resource estimation, particularly those who worked for him or with him, who also benefited from the training and mentoring which Jock provided so readily.

Outside his direct work commitments, Jock contributed his time and expertise to professional associations through contributing to publications and fulfilling roles on various committees. These included the AusIMM, MICA (Mineral Industry Consultants Association), and SMEDG (Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group), as well as being a founding Director of Sydney-based junior explorer Malachite Resources. Jock was a long-serving member of the SMEDG Committee, 15 years in all. SMEDG was established in 1972, and in 1974 Jock joined another of the early starters (Garry Lowder) and was soon joined by other new members (including John Dow and Mike Turbot) as the committee evolved and some of the founding members retired.

In summary, Jock had a very distinguished career at a time when new opportunities for geologists were emerging. His legacy will be the standards he set for best-practice management of data quality and resource estimation, as well as the uncompromising application of intellectual rigour to the practice of the geological profession.

Those who knew Jock will remember him for his integrity, his diligence, and his wry sense of humour, tempered by a healthy cynicism that kept his peers well and truly on track. Jock was a true mining industry champion, and he will be sorely missed.

We pass on our condolences to Jock’s family.

*Jock’s funeral will be held at 11am on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May at Canobolas Gardens Crematorium, 220 Lone Pine Avenue, Orange. All supporters of SMEDG, AIG, CWEDG and the AusIMM are invited to attend the funeral to farewell Jock.*

*Live streaming of the funeral is available at*  
[https://orangefunerals.com.au/current\\_funerals/john-fraser-gillfillan/](https://orangefunerals.com.au/current_funerals/john-fraser-gillfillan/)

*Contributed by Russell Meares and Garry Lowder*