

# Kick starting the society

Dr Bill Bamford is recognised globally as a world leader in the field of specialised rock testing with a lifetime of experience and research devoted to the area. He is a founding member of the ATS and was the first Chair between 1975-1978.

"In 1957, when the Space Age dawned with Sputnik 1 going into orbit around the world, and when the first hard-rock TBM had been pioneered by Jim Robbins, only five years earlier, I first worked underground. To be precise, I worked in the Tumut 1 underground power station and its tailrace tunnel in the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme as an Engineering Geologist. Later I worked on the Geehi Dam and Murray 1 Underground Power Station investigations, and was resident geologist on the Murrumbidgee-Eucumbene Tunnel. (Interestingly, fast forward 60 years and I was back, testing the same rocks, investigating the Snowy 2.0 project.)

I worked for the Snowy until 1960, when I joined the staff of the Victorian Mines Department and started the geotechnical investigations work for the Melbourne Underground Rail Loop (MURL). I worked on this and a variety of other mining and tunnelling projects until 1967, when I joined the University of Melbourne as the first Lecturer in Rock Mechanics to be appointed in Australia. This was a real honour and a great opportunity because Australia's tunnelling industry was booming. Technical innovations were thriving and throughout the 70s and 80s we were arguably world leaders in several areas including the use of TBMs, roadheaders, rock bolting and shotcreting. Certainly, the 'Melbourne Shield,' designed locally, was a term that was known globally during this time.

Because of this momentum, the first official tunnelling event I organised, the two-day Raise and Tunnel Boring in Australia symposium at the University of Melbourne in 1970, was a great success. A total of 19 papers were presented to an audience of just over 200 and the next day participants got the opportunity to visit the South-East Trunk Sewer and the Dandenong Valley Trunk Sewer. I believe the success of this led the AusIMM to nominate me as their representative on the National Committee of the AGS from the time it was formed in 1971 onwards.

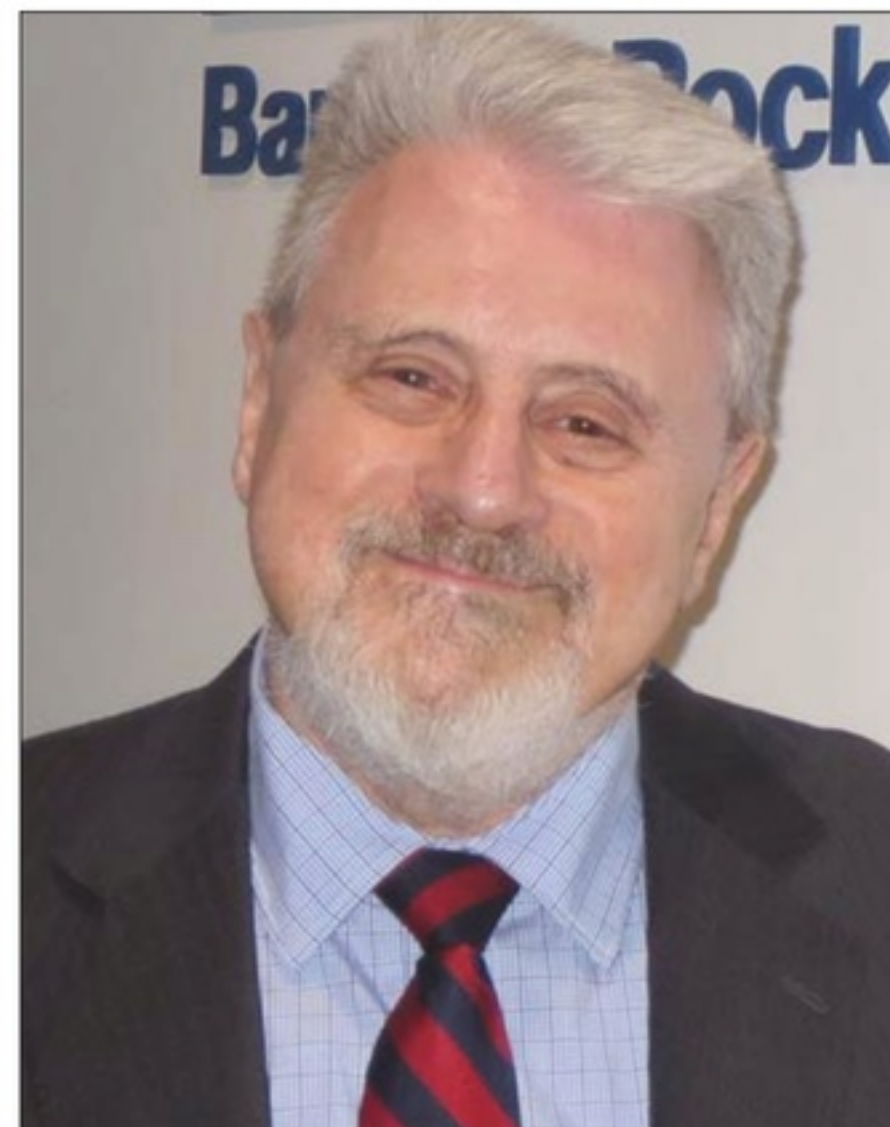
When the Australian Tunnelling Committee (ATC) was formed in 1972 it was under the auspices of the AGS, and its founding statutes stated that the chairman of the new tunnelling body

'should be the Chairman of the AGS, or his nominee.' When I assumed the position of National Chairman of the AGS in 1975, I did try to find a suitable nominee to be chairman of the ATC, but eventually took the job myself. I would say that during my three years as chairman of both societies, I spent more effort getting the ATC established than continuing the already well-established AGS.

Following the 1974, IEAust seminar in Melbourne, called Re-Shaping Cities Using Underground Construction, which attracted around 15 invited papers and was very well attended, we decided that organising a conventional tunnelling conference should be our next priority. We held this in 1976 in the National Science Centre (Clunies-Ross House) and it was called "Design and Construction of Tunnels and Shafts." There were 21 papers presented and over 200 people came along. The success of this conference established a regular series of successors, at two or three yearly intervals which has continued ever since. During this period, we also changed the name to the Australian Tunnelling Association (ATA) and opened it up to membership. By the mid-seventies we had around 100 members.

Throughout the 25 years I was actively involved with the ATS (as it eventually became known), I served as a member of the National Committee from 1975 until 2002, and on the Victorian Chapter Committee from 2011 until 2015, but I was also involved in the International Tunnelling Association (ITA) too. I was on the organising committee for the 1987 World Tunnel Congress in Melbourne. My most memorable moment of that conference wasn't so much the tunnelling content, it was sitting next to Sir David Smith at the dinner, the man who had read the Governor-General's proclamation that essentially dismissed the Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in that iconic political moment of 1974.

Between 1994 and



1999 I represented Australia at the annual meetings of the ITA and World Tunnel Congresses, and at the Oslo meeting in 1999 I presented Australia's successful bid to host the World Tunnel Congress in 2002. To supplement my presentation, I had brought all these little koalas to give out which everyone loved. Even the people who voted against us wanted a koala! We only defeated Singapore's rival bid that year by two votes and I've always wondered if the koalas swung it for us. In actual fact, they were the only thing I had to give out because DHL had lost the brochures the ATS had developed that detailed how wonderful a place Sydney was and why we should have the congress there!

Although it was hard work at times, I really enjoyed helping establish the ATS and then helping out at the national and international scale. I'm particularly proud that my peers thought so much of my contribution that I was made an honorary life member of the Society in 2000."

*Melbourne Underground Rail Loop - Exploratory pilot tunnel beneath Latrobe Street 1966 - Preparing in-situ testing. Bill Bamford stands in the centre, wearing a white hat, overalls and a miner's lamp battery on his belt.*

