

Engineering Heritage Australia

*National Engineering Oral History Program
Biographical Notes*

Ralph RALLINGS (1939 -)

Geotechnical Engineer

- Birth & Family** Born 6 August 1939 in Brisbane. Third of eight children of Ralph Alfred Rallings, Auctioneer. Mother was a teacher.
- Education:** Attended Manly Primary School (Q'ld) and Wynnum High School (Q'ld), Matriculation Certificate. Engineering at University of Queensland.
- Qualifications:** BE (Civil), University of Queensland, 1962
ME (Civil), University of Queensland, 1966
- Memberships:** FIE (Aust)
Member, Australian Geomechanics Society
Member, International Society of Rock Mechanics
Member, The International Association of Engineering Geology
Has been both Secretary and Chairman of Australian Geomechanics Society, Tasmanian Branch
- Work History:** After obtaining his BE degree in 1962 Rallings joined the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, Queensland, in the Farm Advisory Service where he was engaged in the design of small dams and irrigation systems. In 1963 he was seconded to the University of Queensland as Water Research Foundation Fellow, investigating the phenomenon of piping failures in earth dams in Central Queensland.
- In 1966 he became Australian Road Research Board Fellow at the same University to investigate the effect of moisture content, compaction and soil fabric on the properties of lime and cement-stabilised clay soils.
- In 1969 Rallings joined the Geotechnical Consulting firm of Coffey & Hollingsworth at their Brisbane office, as Engineer. He carried out geotechnical consulting work throughout Queensland and the Northern Territory. This included road and railway route studies, slope stability investigations, foundation investigations for buildings and industrial complexes, container terminals and harbour facilities.
- In 1971 he transferred to the Adelaide office of Coffey & Hollingsworth and in early 1972 he was seconded to the Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) office of Vallentine, Laurie and Davies, Consulting Engineers, in charge of geotechnical investigations for approximately 100 km of intercity highway. This assignment lasted to mid-1973, when he rejoined Coffey & Hollingsworth's Adelaide office. Consulting tasks included investigation of foundation behaviour on expansive

soils in the Adelaide region, dewatering analysis of 140 m deep open cut mine and construction control of an oil refinery.

From early 1975 until 1976 Rallings was engaged by the Monarto Development Commission, SA, doing pedological mapping, subsurface hydrological studies to find the impact of a new town on the river Murray.

He joined the Department of Road Transport of Tasmania in 1976, as Technical and Administrative Manager of the Materials Branch, where he was responsible for the geotechnical investigations and geotechnical aspects of design for all State road and bridge works.

His work covered management of the Materials laboratory for testing soils, aggregates, bitumen and asphalt, stabilised materials and concrete. The field laboratory covered roughness of road surfaces, pavement deflection, skid resistance, compaction and penetrometer testing.

Rallings was Principal Technical Advisor to the Department in pavement matters and represented the Department on Austroads Technical Committees. He was a major contributor to Austroads Publication and Convenor of the "Guide to the Visual Description of Pavement Condition".

In 1997 the Public Service in Tasmania underwent a major reorganisation and the work of the Materials Laboratory was outsourced. Rallings then joined the Consulting Engineering firm of Pitt & Sherry, where he became Technical Advisor to the Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources and its Technical Representative on pavement and pavement materials at various forums and Austroads Working Groups.

He has been the Author or Technical Convenor of some fifteen papers and practice guides.

Prepared by JL van der Molen, 27 October 2004, from Oral History Information