

7th May 2018

PRESS RELEASE

Mining industry icon honored for service to the IT sector & the mining industry

Jeff Whittle AO, the founder of Whittle Consulting and an icon of the Australian mining industry was celebrated at a private dinner. Over 50 guests, many long-term participants of the Australian mining industry, gathered at the RACV Club in Melbourne to honour Jeff. The evening celebrated Jeff's recent investiture as an Officer (AO) in the General Division of the Order of Australia, for his distinguished service to the IT sector and the mining industry.

Attendees learnt about Jeff's background as a Research Physicist in the UK. In the early 1960's, whilst studying the possible catastrophic impact of a nuclear war on Britain, Jeff and his wife Ruth made the brave decision to move their young family to a safer environment in Australia. In a "closing doors" moment, this led to Jeff's future involvement in the Australian mining industry.



Jeff worked for almost 10 years in the newly-created computer centre at Monash University and then spent another decade honing his programming skills. In the early 1980's, Jeff commenced work providing software support for Newmont (now Newcrest) Mining. Jeff came to appreciate the difficulties of optimising open pit mine designs and he knew that the answer lay in the application of the famous Lerchs-Grossmann algorithm.

When Newmont determined that they were not prepared to take the financial risk to develop the software, Jeff decided to do it himself. With his wife, Ruth, he established Whittle Programming in 1984, in a spare room of his North Balwyn home. After spending the princely sum of \$13,000 on an early IBM PC, (featuring one megabyte of memory and a twenty-megabyte hard drive!), Jeff wrote the new software in Fortran. Named, Whittle Programming Lerchs-Grossmann Package for Pit Optimisation (L-G for short), this program became the first publicly available software to apply this algorithm to mine pit optimisation. In doing so, a new era for both the Australian and international mining industries began.

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Over the next 34 years, Jeff devoted his life to the further development of his mining industry software. As the years passed, further packages were released including the Milawa mine scheduling algorithm and Opti-Cut for cut-off optimisation. By 1997, the company had sold Whittle software licenses in 55 countries around the world. In the process, the term “whittling” became a verb used within the mining industry.

In 1998, Jeff, with his son Gerald, established Whittle Consulting. Since then, Jeff has continued to devise a constant stream of original developments aimed at solving complex mining optimisation problems. In conjunction with the Whittle Consulting software development team, this now includes Prober-E, a cloud-enabled strategic mine planning software program. To date this tool has been used by Whittle Consulting in over 150 mining studies, unlocking billions of dollars of value within the international mining industry.

With his special combination of sophisticated mathematical ability, high-level creative thinking, practical scientific software programming knowledge and dedication to detail, this humble 88-year-old has made an indelible mark on the international mining industry. This is evidenced as the original Fortran code Jeff wrote in 1984 was only converted a few years ago to a more modern software language. In addition, the Lerchs-Grossmann method it executed was only replaced in 2017.

In short, Jeff Whittle’s software must be one of the longest lasting software codes in history. As all in attendance at the dinner agreed, it was appropriate that his achievements were celebrated in this way.

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