

Dear Award Selection Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I nominate Russell C. Frith for the Syd S. Peng Ground Control in Mining Award. I have known Russell for about three decades, during which time he has been a tremendous supporter and promoter of the International Conference on Ground Control in Mining, and of the Syd Peng Award itself. In fact, Russell recently completed over 5 years of service to the Award Selection Committee, during which time he was ineligible to be nominated for this award. I am nominating Russell now, in part, because I truly believe that he has gone above and beyond in supporting the ICGCM Conference, Dr. Syd Peng, and Dr. Peng's namesake Award.

Russell is also a renowned 36-year veteran of his profession, having already worked underground in South Africa prior to his formal education. He received his BS from the University of Nottingham in 1985 and followed that with his PhD in Coal Mine Rock Mechanics, also from Nottingham, the title of his dissertation being "Design of Tunnels in Carboniferous Rock".

Following schooling, Russell continued as a research fellow at the University of Nottingham, before heading down under to work for ACIRL (Australian Coal Industry Research Laboratories) in 1990 where he undertook funded research and related consulting activities. While with ACIRL, Russell used several grants to examine longwall face behavior and ground control issues in English and Polish coal mines. "He also travelled extensively in the US and South Africa, recording his observations, analyzing data, and developing theories and applications to better control ground during longwall mining. The culmination of these studies was readily observed when the re-design of longwall panel layouts at Newstan and West Wallsend Collieries was undertaken by him to minimize catastrophic overburden weightings – where he was credited by these companies as having contributed significantly to helping keep their operations in business while making it safer for the mine workers".

Following his time with ACIRL, Russell helped cofound the internationally renowned consulting firm, Strata Engineering. While working at Strata, he helped establish and publish an empirical overburden weighting classification system that is still used to examine interactions with longwall mining operations and gateroad conditions. He also completed joint work with the then US Bureau of Mines to help establish a world-wide database for pre-driven longwall recovery roadways, and which still serves as a basis for prudent and risk-based longwall recovery within Australian coal mines.

In 2004 Russell stepped away from Strata and started Frith Consulting Services, providing a range of services to the mining industry in the areas of ground control research, training, product development and information technology. He also joined the University of New South Wales (UNSW) as adjunct professor, and as I recall was more than happy to talk to whomever would listen about the need, as well as his desire, to help educate and train the next generation of ground control professionals. He remained with UNSW until 2011.

Since 2011, Russell has served as Principle and Senior Geotechnical Engineer and Managing Director of Mine Advice Pty Ltd, and currently serves as CEO of Connec Operations, a technology startup company working to commercialize a unique high-voltage couple system for underground mines.

Russell is truly a friend, participant, and promoter of ICGCM. In addition to serving on the Syd Peng Award Committee, for over 5 years, he also authored, coauthored, or made presentations at the conference 18 times between 1986 and 2022. Stop and think. This is no small feat for someone from across the pond to maintain such a relationship for almost 36 years, sometimes at his own expense, and especially since having now lived halfway around the world for the last 32 years.

Above and beyond ICGCM, Russell has also been a prolific researcher, author, and contributor to the ground control profession and community, having authored or coauthored over 50 ground control related papers, contributed to segments of 5 books related to ground control and geomechanics, and participated in at least 18 funded geotechnical research projects. Over the course of his career, he has also been involved in more than 600 major commercial consulting assignments. Furthermore, he remains heavily involved internationally, and is currently a member of 6 professional mining societies including the Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration (SME).

Finally, I find Russell to be a dynamic speaker, often challenging the conventional wisdom and group think that occasionally prevails in all professions, including ours. While uncomfortable for some, in my opinion, having the ability and confidence to present alternative concepts and approaches to difficult, complex, and sometimes misunderstood ground control issues should be celebrated and encouraged. It not only helps bring new concepts and ideas to our profession, but also provides a QA/QC measure. And I find that Russell does this in a professional thought-provoking manner. I specifically recall one instance more than a decade ago, where Russell described cutter roof failure as being more of a buckling than a shearing mechanism. At first taken aback, it quickly dawned on me that his explanation exactly matched my own observations and empirical understanding. Furthermore, the implications were not insignificant, as buckling of the roof is a bottom-up progression failure mechanism which provides significant insight for how to control cutter development.

I greatly appreciate your time and effort in reviewing this nomination and Russell's qualifications, and I hope you will agree that he is certainly worthy of the prestigious Syd Peng Ground Control in Mining Award.

Best regards,

*Greg Hasenfus*

P.S. If awarded, Russell's citation would read, "For his longstanding support of the international ground control community, challenging the conventional wisdom, and mentoring of the next generation."