

# Bert Dennis Bio

## **ALBERT GEORGE DENNIS, OAM**

Dip CE, CE, MIEA, CPEng (Ret.)



From humble beginnings to becoming one of Australia's most respected figures in property development and home building, life has been an interesting journey for Bert Dennis.

As the second youngest of five children, Bert was raised in impoverished conditions by his mother, Coy. The family moved often and by the age of 13, Bert had lived in fifteen different houses and, by his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, had attended 19 different educational institutions.

Bert's passion for baseball and his desire to be part of the Under 18 Victorian Schoolboys side actually kept him at school. He made the Under 18 team as a pitcher and travelled to Adelaide to compete as the team's captain. To this day, Bert has maintained a lifelong interest in baseball and is a Life Member of the Coburg Baseball Club.

Following high school, Bert gained a Diploma in Civil Engineering and accepted a position at Heidelberg City Council.

Bert married Dawn Hicks in 1958 and, over the next decade, the couple's four children arrived - Adele, Grant, Natalie and Marshall.

It was Bert's dream to become a Consulting Engineer. His plan was to study at night school for a Municipal Engineer's qualification before progressing to Shire Engineer, Deputy City Engineer, hopefully achieving the position of City Engineer by 40 years of age. He was sure that, if he could make a lot of contacts, he could become a Consulting Civil Engineer.

He jumped ahead a few years when he was appointed Acting Deputy City Engineer and later Deputy City Engineer with the City of Chelsea. At just 22, the young man was in the position he had hoped to reach by 35 years of age.

The journey towards of what is today the Dennis Family Corporation began in April 1960 when Bert joined Oscar Flight, a retired City Engineer, in a civil engineering consultancy partnership.

Bert and Dawn's first foray into property development occurred in that time, involving the progressive purchase, renovation and sale of 12 houses around Melbourne.

When Oscar decided to retire in 1965, Bert and Dawn purchased the company outright and Bert found himself in the position of owning a consulting practice at just 29 - years ahead of his original plan.

It was 1968 when Bert independently embarked on his first small scale land development - a 3ha parcel in Ringwood.

In the years that followed, Bert enjoyed many successes in his professional career and personal life.

A highlight was receiving the Order of Australia Medal in January 2005 for his service to the land and housing industries, to the community through contributing to debate on urban planning and for his support of charitable organisations.

Bert has served on numerous Federal, State and Local Government committees, held the position of State and National President of the Urban Development Institute of Australia and was awarded Life Membership of both UDIA Victoria and UDIA National.

A major contributor to the Property Industry Foundation (PIF), Bert served as a Director nationally for over two years from August 2008 and Chairman of PIF (Vic) from its formation in June 2008 until October 2010. He remained on the PIF (Vic) Board of Advisers until his retirement in 2011. Additionally, Bert was Founding President of the Australian Population Institute until December 2004 and continues his involvement as a Committee member.

The Sir Phillip Lynch Award, the HIA's highest acknowledgement, was awarded to Bert in May 2003 in recognition and appreciation of outstanding service to the Australian Housing Industry.

In January 2005, Bert was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division (OAM) for service to the housing industry, to the community through contributing to the debate on urban planning and for his support of charitable organisations.

In May 2010, Bert received the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association's highest honour, the Richard J Evans Award, in recognition of outstanding service to the industry.

Independent of his substantial contribution and high standing within his professional domain, Bert has also been a Director of the Leukaemia Foundation of Victoria and Chairman of its Accommodation Committee. He was also formerly a Director of the Kooyong Tennis Foundation.

Bert continues to hold the position of Chairman of the company he founded and has been joined in the business by all four of his adult children and several of his eleven grandchildren.

