

Ken Hall

Ken started at the CRB in about 1972 and left VicRoads in 2011. He mainly worked in Traffic Engineering, R&L and Road Safety. He then worked as a contractor to VicRoads and others. This is a collection of articles and photos of Ken. Awaiting his autobiography.

Ken's on the run

Ken Hall is on the run!

He's a wanted man in Australia, England, Scandinavia and even Kenya.

Ken, an engineer with Traffic Engineering, is one of Australia's top amateur runners, and is in constant demand from international athletic organisations.

Last July, at the invitation of the International Athletics Federation, he ran in the Oslo-Dubai Golden Mile in Norway, an event aimed specifically for recognized runners.

Out of twelve contestants, Ken came in tenth — which in theory means he is the tenth best runner in the world.

Ken started running when he was a schoolboy.

"I wasn't much at sprinting, but as soon as I started entering longer races, I realized I was quite good at it," he reflects.

And he's been running ever since, with quite an impressive record to testify.

He won the Under 19 Australian Championships at Adelaide in 1970.

Flushed with victory he started taking running more seriously and in 1975 he won the 1500 metres event in the Senior Australian Championships.

A trip to Europe followed and in Sweden he was narrowly beaten by John Walker, who just happened to break the world record for the mile.

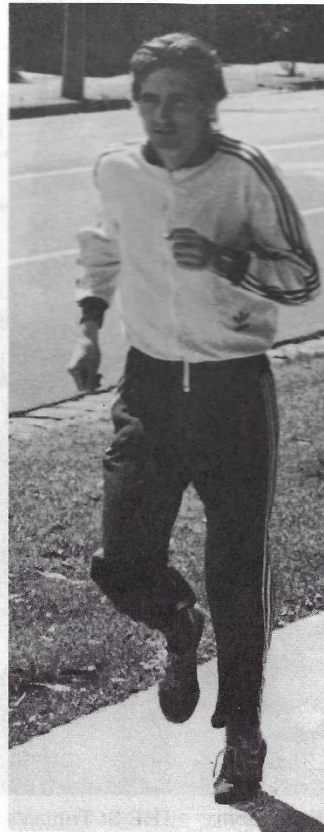
In 1976 an injury scotched his hopes for the Montreal Olympics.

But triumph came a year later at the Senior Australian Championships in Hobart, and the International Track Series in New Zealand when he ran exceptionally well.

Now he has set his sights for the glory of Moscow, 1980.

The Olympic selection trials are at Sydney in March and Ken gives himself a modest "45% chance".

In the meantime he is running more than 180 kilometres a week to stay in shape.



Ken shows his form.

In for the long haul

Ken Hall is one Olympic torch-bearer who won't need special training to speed the flame on its way to Sydney.

Ken is a long distance runner from way back. He first took to the track at school, quickly abandoning sprints for the 800 m, 1500 m and mile races.

"It emerged that I was quite good at it," said Ken, who's not one to boast.

"I entered the State school competitions and usually gained a place in the finals of the 800 m, so I went national, but had limited success there.

"When I was 23 I moved to the 1500 m and found this much more successful. I won the Australian championship in 1975, and then went to compete in Europe."

Conquering the four-minute mile

"I came second in a race where John Walker of New Zealand broke the world record for the mile. He was the first to run the mile in under 3 minutes 50 seconds, and I ran 3 minutes 55 seconds," said Ken.

In 1975 Ken was the fifth fastest 1500 m runner in world but in 1976, he strained an adductor muscle before the Australian Olympic trials. He was relegated to fourth place, which was not good enough for selection for the Montreal Games, although he had often beaten the runner chosen.

In 1977 he was the Australian champion again, and in 1978 he took second place. Then came the selection trials for the 1978 Commonwealth Games, where bad advice from the selectors resulted in Australia having no representative in the event at all.

"The selectors told us we needed to run fast in the selection trial, even though I had previously run qualifying times," Ken explained. "I did what they said but I tired and was beaten in the last few strides by someone who had not qualified — and none of us was selected.

"One thing I find interesting is that the qualifying time for 1500 m in the Sydney 2000 Olympics is slower than I was running in 1975!"

A highlight of 1979 was running the mile against the legendary Sebastian Coe in Europe, with Coe breaking the world record to win, and Ken again clocking up 3 minutes 55 seconds, this time in tenth place. (During the 1970s, Ken ran a total of ten sub-four minute miles.)

More than double the distance

When the 1980s came along, Ken switched his allegiance to the 5000 m, still feeling he could achieve more through endurance rather than through speed. His goal at that stage was the 1980 Olympics in Moscow.

"Selection was very hard — you had to get very good times and there really wasn't enough competition in Australia to push you along," Ken said.

"In January 1980 I had the opportunity to race against good competition in New Zealand. I came fourth behind the top three world runners over that distance, but the time still wasn't as fast as the qualifying time required at home.

"In the meantime, another guy in Melbourne ran the qualifying time, so obviously I should have stayed at home and competed against him!

"The selection trials were in Sydney in March, but conditions were not suitable for fast times and I didn't do well enough to get selected.

"I did eventually get to represent Australia, in the 1981 Pacific Conference Games in New Zealand, where I finished fifth in the 1500 metres."

Ken had been working with VicRoads since 1973, and in 1981 took leave to attend the Australian Institute of Sport.

"I stayed for 18 months, but I didn't run as well as I'd have liked, so I came back home. Since then I've kept running in club races and been involved in coaching."

Back at the clubhouse

"I joined the East Melbourne Harriers when I was 15 years old, and they became part of Athletics Essendon when three clubs merged. I'm currently president of Athletics Essendon, trying to put something back into the sport that has given me so much.

"It's been great for learning about management, and both our men's and women's teams are doing well — our men's team has won in the State league over the past two years.

"I've coached about 30 athletes, including one who came second in the steeplechase in the Australian Championships. I like helping other athletes and seeing their development, although there's a lot of pressure because you need to live up to their expectations. They're also always trying to beat you!

"Overall I've really enjoyed my running career. It's given me the chance to travel round the world and it's great to be involved in sport at that level. I don't think I'd like to have been exclusively a professional athlete though — I like a more balanced life, although I do think it's important to keep fit.

"You need a lot of concentration for long distance running — you need to work out what is the most efficient pace from a mechanical and physiological point of view, and to run just below the level where you're pushing too hard.

"These days I run mainly cross country in winter and track races in summer. I think I'll keep running until I drop."

Proud to carry the flame

One thing Ken is not planning to drop is the Olympic torch — he's delighted to have been nominated to carry the flame for VicRoads.

"I didn't expect it — I was actually home on leave and picked up a call from the answering machine asking me to ring Peter Balfe urgently.

"I think it's great of VicRoads to offer me this chance. It's great to be involved in the Olympic Games in this way.

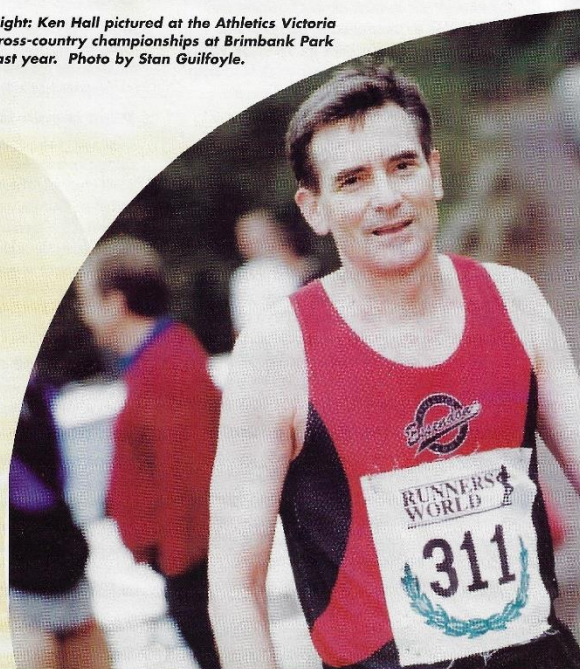
"There's another guy from Athletics Essendon who has a spot in the torch relay, too. He's a coach and team manager, and he's 92 years old.

"That's what running does for you."

Ken will be running in Malvern some time on Sunday 30 July.

Background image: Ken Hall is pictured winning the 1500 m Australian Championship in 1975.

Right: Ken Hall pictured at the Athletics Victoria cross-country championships at Brimbank Park last year. Photo by Stan Guilfoyle.



Ken celebrating his birthday in 2011.



Ken at his retirement function.





Ken is a member of a number of ex-VicRoads groups who continue to meet socially.





Ken has suffered from a number of health issue over the past several years and is currently looking to move into supported accommodation. Nick Feb 2025