

Training for our future

It's now more than a year since Covid-19 began demanding we take it seriously in New Zealand, and still its impacts are being felt.

While quarries are essential industries, another week's lockdown in Auckland doesn't come without its costs and consequences. One example is we've had to twice reschedule a meeting of quarry industry leaders to accommodate the reach of the pandemic. And our borders remain all but closed for the foreseeable future.

A real consequence of that, is an increasing demand for a labour and skills supply. Even when our borders begin to re-open, the Government is making it clear that inwards immigration will be a trickle not an open tap.

So, in that environment, the Workforce Development Strategy for quarrying and mining is timely and welcome, even if it provides some blunt messages. I think we all know that too many of our workforce are in the twilight of their careers and too few reflect the sunrise. We are also in an industry where fewer than one in two have any qualification – well below the average across sectors.

We discussed these issues at our recent AQA Board meeting and agreed that these issues present a lightning rod for quarrying. In an environment where there is increasing competition for staff and skills, we either adapt or decline.

Please read the article in this *Aggregate News* (page 42) which spells out the strategy for our sector, and start a conversation with your company and colleagues about how you are going to meet the challenges. Doing nothing to support training or hoping to pay a bit more to recruit someone who another company has trained, won't work anymore. The culture of your organisation and the sustainability of our wider sector are now key to recruiting and retaining the people we need.

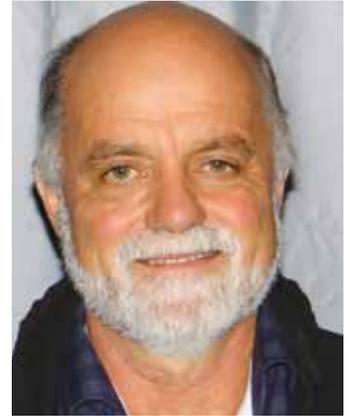
Also read the story about ACT Safety now making online training the new and

enjoyable way to build a qualification such as a B Grade CoC. We will continue to feature stories about training options in future editions of *Aggregate News*.

Another challenge we face is the depleting amount of alluvial material available to quarries in eastern New Zealand. The story on page 44 details the challenges emerging in the Wairarapa but as someone based in Bay of Plenty, I can vouch that our region is facing similar increasing needs to move to land-based operations, with all of the additional costs and community issues that emerge. We all recognise the need for high environmental standards for our rivers, but sustainable, well-managed aggregate extraction is still an option that should not be excluded from the overall river management process.

I'd also like to remind you that our AQA Technical Adviser, Mike Chilton, not only contributes his regular Technical Report (page 45) and sits on technical reference groups, he's also available to you as an AQA member if you want a chat about any technical issues you may be facing.

Finally, like many of you, I am itching



Peter Walsh.

to attend the QuarryNZ Conference 2021, especially after last year's was postponed due to Covid-19. It's great to hear registrations and sponsors are looking really good – see page 41. There is also the reassurance that if we are forced into any further delays, our registration and accommodation costs can be cancelled free of charge.

Here's hoping we may see you in July in Wellington. **AQA**

Peter Walsh,
Chair, AQA





Wellington conference set to be a boomer

Both attendees and exhibitors are keenly lining up for this July's QuarryNZ conference in Wellington after Covid-19 saw it postponed last year.

The AQA and IOQ engaged conference professional Melissa Bahler to bring together the July 2020 conference, now reset for a year later at Sky Stadium from July 14-16.

Melissa says new and returning exhibitors are still being confirmed alongside industry regulars but as of early March fewer than a third of the 59 stands were still available. Registrations were also clocking up fast.

"People are ready to meet. They've missed a whole year."

One issue where prospective attendees can feel reassured is if there is another Covid lockdown affecting the conference. Such a 'force majeure' event sees everyone offered refunds.

Melissa says hotel discounts are available as part of registration but people make and pay for their own accommodation bookings.

There are three Wellington hotels which QuarryNZ has negotiated rates with. They include Rydges and Atura (formerly Thorndon Hotel by Rydges) and both say if the Government announces a L2, L3 or L4 restriction and it falls over attendees' stay

dates, then you can cancel free of charge. The third is the IBIS Hotel which allows free cancellation for all bookings one day prior to travel up to 6pm and also if a government restriction is in place.

The organising committee is chaired by Brian Bouzaid who helped head a most successful QuarryNZ conference in Wellington in 2007. He says last year's postponement was disappointing but 2021 is emerging all the stronger for it.

"We are putting the finishing touches to the programme and I can assure every conference attendee and partner, that this will be one to remember."

The conference includes the gala TransDiesel Awards dinner at iconic Te Papa Museum and the Real Steel Happy Hour taking place after the field trip will be at Brewtown, which hosts several micro-breweries showcasing Wellington's famous craft beers. Register on the QuarryNZ website.

The MIMICO Environmental and Community Award will also be announced at conference.

Entries close on May 28 and new judge

Bernie Napp says he's particularly keen to see entries from smaller operators.

Bernie's background includes many years as a journalist and communicator. He says the quarry industry needs the awards to showcase the good job being done by quarries when they are facing a lot of spotlighted attention from communities, councils and the Government.

If you have a project that's bringing environmental or community benefits, simply provide a brief description and get your CEO or owner to sign it.

Entries and advice available from office@aqa.org.nz 0800 469 272 or go to AQA website.

Wayne Scott will be judging the third Rock our Future school competition entrants shortly after the QuarryNZ conference with winners announced in September.

This year, primary schools are being asked to visit a quarry and write a report/essay about their experiences. Schools are part of the community and their pupils are tomorrow's workers and decision-makers. Please get in touch with a local school near your quarry and support this competition.

Hello Houston, we have a problem

The quarrying industry faces significant competition and other challenges to recruit and retain labour, says the sector’s just-released Workforce Development Strategy.

AQA & MinEx Chief Executive, Wayne Scott, who has had input along with others from the sector on the strategy, says it is a wake-up call which requires an early, wide-ranging and on-going response from companies large and small.

Each sector is developing such a strategy as part of the Government’s reforms of Vocational Education. Quarrying (and mining) are part of the Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics (and Technology) or MELT Workforce Development Council. Wayne Scott is seeking a seat on the industry reference group, while noting 223 different industries are represented by MELT, some of which directly compete for staff who have skills similar to those required in quarries.

The strategy for extractives makes some blunt comments about how the sector is positioned in what is expected to be an increasingly competitive market for labour from next year onwards as Covid-19’s impacts wane.

These include:

- A workforce dominated by aging males – almost 30 percent are already 55 years or older;
- It questions how many workers are able to adapt to the increasing requirements to use technology;
- A high percentage of CoC holders are older employees in an industry where it’s critical to have sufficient people with the required certificates to be able to operate;
- Young people and women are not being attracted to the sector – only 15 percent of workers are under 30 and only 15 percent are female;
- There will be increasing competition for scarce skills, particularly for those who can operate machinery.

The strategy says despite the high-earning potential within the extractive sector (average earnings \$98,500 compared to just over \$59,000 for all jobs), it is not appealing to most people.

“The industry is generally perceived as dirty, involving long hours of manual labour, with a high health and safety risk. This perception leads to challenges in attracting talent.”

Adding to those perceptions were environmental issues

including sustainability and the need to address climate change which most people support and want to see reflected in their workplaces. The industry needed to innovate and make a ‘cultural shift’ towards more sustainable practices so it reflected the environmental and social values of the New Zealand community.

Wayne Scott says the new vocational education structure will be industry-led and will require quarries to step up considerably on training and work a lot harder to retain staff.

“People doing 12-hour days is just not a sustainable model. It’s also not just about pay rates. Offering 50 cents more an hour will not cut it particularly with younger staff who are going to be looking for workplaces where they feel supported on career paths and where work is more enjoyable. Historically we’ve looked for digger drivers and the like. We are now competing with other sectors in construction which are also increasingly struggling to find staff.”

Wayne Scott also says those companies which embrace and lead change will come through the challenges posed by the new vocational training model and evolving societal views about what constitutes good industries and employers.

If you want to make a start on increasing your workforce’s capacity, a great starting point is tapping into the Government’s \$5 billion investment in vocational education. This includes free trade training until the end of next year and is already attracting record numbers of enrolments. There is also a widening number of training options including online and on-the-job models. (See story about Ravensdown employee doing his B Grade online).

The Government accepts new trainees can bring costs until they get up to speed. As a quarry industry employer taking on an apprentice you can receive up to \$16,000 for their first year and up to \$8,000 for their second year.

Details at www.connected.govt.nz, talk to your local Ministry of Social Development office or call Wayne Scott 021 944 336. **AQA**

AQA works for the quarry industry – join us today

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AGGREGATE & QUARRY ASSOCIATION OF NZ

Supporting New Zealand from the ground up





For Andrew Schroeder (above) learning online is best.

Training online a win all-round

Andrew Schroeder is a convert to online learning; so is ACT Safety which started doing online courses during last year’s Covid lockdown and say it’s proving to be a fantastic tool for its business as well as trainees.

After several years working for Ravensdown, Te Kuiti-based Andrew, 28, is one of a group of 14 who in February started doing their B-Grade Certificate of Competency in a virtual classroom run by ACT Safety. The group is drawn from a range of extractive and other sectors including from NZ Steel and Hatuma Lime as well as some quarries and tunnel projects.

Andrew had a Level 2 basic qualification so met one of the B-Grade criteria – industry experience – but he was nervous about doing his training outside of a classroom.

“I was freaking out a bit. I’ve never been too keen on the online stuff.”

He’s now a convert, helped by ACT Safety’s presenter John Preston, who draws on his own wide industry experience in extractives, to cater for the varying levels of skills around Zoom.

“The ability to help everyone at once is amazing,” says Andrew.

The B Grade Quarry Manager training is developed around six units with 2/3-day block courses, approximately six weeks apart.

Andrew says like all block courses, this first required some pre-work, then he and his group had two days back-to-back online to work through two separate unit standards on water control and management before then being tested. Andrew passed both.

As well as the training working well, Andrew loves the fact he doesn’t need to travel. He’s using a spare office at Supreme Lime to do his online courses, rather than at home or at his current worksite, Te Pahu, a lime processing facility he manages near Hamilton.

He acknowledges he’s had strong support from Ravensdown, starting with his then manager at the Supreme lime plant in Te Kuiti (Brian Roche) who hired him after Andrew told him he

eventually wanted his job.

“I’ve definitely been tested and tried a few times and made to work for it. Help is always just a phone call away.”

More latterly, Andrew has been supported – online, naturally – by Kelly Rautenbach, Ravensdown’s Environmental Management Advisor who is Canterbury-based.

Ravensdown had also offered to pay for the training when it was first suggested; however, all trade training is now free under the Government’s package of measures designed to combat Covid-19’s impacts.

ACT Safety Business Manager Irene Volschenk says it began online training during last year’s national Covid lockdown after the extractive sector’s industry training organisation MITO asked if a couple of courses could be done this way.

“It worked really well. It’s a fantastic tool and we’ve kept on doing it.”

Online courses are now running for A Grade CoC and B Grade Tunnel CoC, as well as the current course Andrew is completing, with another B Grade CoC starting in May. In total, ACT Safety has been engaged in training 779 people since the first Covid lockdown, of whom 737 have already completed their full A Grade or B Grade courses.

“It’s bringing in a younger generation,” says Irene. “It also helps us as a small company because we save on the travel time and costs.”

Previously, ACT Safety ran courses in Auckland, New Plymouth and Dunedin. There’s still some demand for face-to-face learning, with a Dunedin-based trainer travelling to Oamaru to run B Grade CoC training for Road Metals. **AQA**



A GP200 cone crusher is the main crusher used for harder materials at one of the country’s largest alluvial operations, Holcim’s Hastings Quarry. Photographed in 2018.

Eastern river supplies go west

The decline of rivers as a source of aggregate is starting to present challenges for the quarry industry and communities in many parts of New Zealand.

AQA CEO Wayne Scott says public opposition to the application of PJ Warren Earthmoving for a land-based quarry near Featherston signals the challenges to be faced in regions which have been reliant on river-sourced aggregate.

He says climate change and the boom in housing and road construction are reducing the available flow of such aggregate across eastern New Zealand and the Wairarapa is a case in point.

Until recently, all of its aggregate came from its rivers which suited everyone. It helped give flood protection to farmers and provided suppliers with clean aggregate and sand from a cheap method of extraction with no blasting or stripping; crushing sites could be located away from communities; and councils, businesses, contractors and home builders got a low-cost, local supply.

“Climate change is now causing councils to look at how they manage rivers.”

Drier conditions in eastern New Zealand, where most alluvial supplies are located, means less material is being washed down rivers. Less river flow means rivers degrade more quickly, with narrower channels scoured out, and what material is available, carries more silt.

Wayne Scott says the Bay of Plenty and the Hawkes Bay are other North Island regions which have already had to reduce consents for river-sourced aggregate.

In the South Island, the Canterbury regional council ECAN had stopped river-based gravel extraction in some rivers due to a slow-down of river material, now accounting for perhaps only a quarter of Canterbury’s aggregate.

Meanwhile, a February meeting of Southland farmers called for

more extraction from the Maitara River for flood protection after two record floods in February 2020 and last January; the local councils said it wanted to survey the river to see if the amount of gravel had actually increased.

Wayne Scott says all these regions need some extraction to manage flood risk but with less material coming down the rivers, increasing land-based extraction is proving necessary. Ironically, this also provides the big rocks needed for flood control on riverbanks.

In the Wairarapa, as local demand continues amid a local housing boom, some large suppliers are only looking after selected customers. Some aggregate was being carted in from southern Hawkes Bay, involving a round trip of more than 200km to parts of the Wairarapa so local land-based supply bids were emerging.

“People in the Wairarapa have never had to contend with quarries which involve land-based extraction. Of course, we as an industry have to meet all sorts of consent conditions to manage environmental impacts and restore the land but those processes don’t attract headlines; nor does the fact that aggregate is the base for every home, building and road.”

While not commenting on the PJ Warren case as it proceeds through finalisation of its resource consent, Wayne Scott says this is a signal of what can emerge for regions which have been historically reliant on river-fed supplies of aggregate.

The AQA is represented on an industry reference group with Greater Wellington Regional Council. Wayne Scott says it is well aware of the issues with gravel supply for the Wairarapa and that this can’t be sourced from Wellington quarries which are already challenged to meet the city’s own demand. **AQA**

M/4 Draft Spec

- The AQA Technical Committee worked through the M/4 spec with a representative from Waka Kotahi / NZTA at the last meeting.
- Once Waka Kotahi has reviewed / edited the spec, it will go out for wider comments.
- The main changes are introducing a class system which will allow for poorer aggregates that traditionally don't meet M/4 and some changes to the quality of fines requirements.
- AQA will also be doing a testing and compliance cost comparison against current M/4.

M/3 Notes Review

- AQA is part of the working group looking at refreshing the M/3 Notes from 1986.

Z1 Quality Management Plans

- A revised draft of Waka Kotahi's Z1 Minimum Standard for Quality Management Plans is out for comment now.
- Z1 requires contractors to maintain a traceable supply chain of aggregates to Waka Kotahi projects. A quarry's quality management system will be an important part of maintaining traceability and keeping quality records.

MELT Workforce Development Council (WDC)

- The Tertiary Education Commission has issued an Expression of Interest for members of the appointment committee for the Manufacturing, Engineering, Logistics and Technology (MELT) Workforce Development Council.
- This committee will play a critical role in appointing members to the WDC which oversees training for people in the quarrying industry.
- Since the WDC has not yet been established, MITO still has an industry Council which was meeting in mid-March to discuss the appointment of directors for this year.

Aggregate Supply and Demand Study

- This project sponsored by Waka Kotahi and delivered by Auckland University is entering the final stages of its scope.
- It builds on previous work looking at efficient use of premium aggregate resources and better use of alternate resources and aims to better understand transport sector requirements in relation to the access, supply, demand and use of aggregates to enable sustainable sourcing of materials.
- This will help in the development of a national coordinated strategy and action plan to optimise material use within the transport sector.
- There has been engagement with iwi, ERoad, the Infrastructure Commission, territorial authorities and consultants as well as Waka Kotahi and AQA.
- On average, 70 percent of people surveyed thought there were major issues with aggregate supply.
- A recent workshop focused on how a coordinated, efficient response to aggregate supply could work and what information was needed.



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