

Let's keep building

Stunning. Stimulating. Even surreal. And so much to take away. If you were at the QuarryNZ Conference in Wellington last month, you'll likely agree it was a conference to remember.

As the incoming Chair of the AQA, a big ups to Brian Bouzaid and the organising committee, AQA CEO Wayne Scott and office, and conference organiser Melissa Bahler – putting together a programme that successfully caters for nearly 600 people is no cake walk.

We do face some huge challenges as an industry, but having been elected during conference to take on the AQA Board Chair's role, I feel there's finally an air of progress.

That came through in the reassuring key note address from Infrastructure Commission CEO Ross Copland. He praised the work Wayne and the AQA have been doing in getting the message to Government on the need to unblock the supply chain for aggregate – or face shortages and steep price rises.

Ross clearly understands how critical our industry is to the Government's \$61 billion infrastructure spend up. He nailed nimbyism and noted how even before the big tide of infrastructure launches, supply shortages are already seeing aggregate prices rise (see story page 45).

Media comments from Wayne on the eve of conference repeated observations from Infrastructure Commission Chair Dr Alan Bollard that current planning rules meant virtually no new quarries are being approved. It was encouraging to see Matt Hill from GNS Science detail at conference the now complete national aggregate planning model, which identifies where our resources are located (see story on page 49).

I'm now confident that the message is getting through, and we will see planning changes emerge which protect and facilitate new quarries. The big question is what, if anything, the Government can do in the next 3-5 years to support supply before those changes begin to roll-out?

In the interim, you can be confident that the AQA Board and Wayne will endeavour to maintain the momentum we've now established.

One challenge we all need to address is training. IOQNZ President Dean Torstonson hit it on the head with his comments at conference on how we really need to improve our induction and management of new workers (see page 46). We are facing a looming labour shortage crisis and as a sector with a lot of skilled machinery operators, quarries will face a particular threat from Australia. As Dean observes, money isn't everything and a good company culture that makes people feel valued and safe, helps retain them.

Finally, well done to my fellow AQA Board member Tony Hunter



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(who's served even longer than me) for his company's success in taking five out of the 7 awards at the TransDiesel dinner. This included Abbey Loveridge from AB Lime in Winton for winning the *Q&M* magazine's Tomorrow's Leader Award.

As Tony says, it's all about the team and supporting the younger members to come through. Congratulations are also due to Winstone Aggregates for their WorkSafe Chief Inspector Safety Leadership Award, to Dr Mary Obele for best conference presentation (Lyn Jordan Memorial Trophy) and to Steve Ellis, as the IOQNZ's Honorary Fellow.

As American comedian Lily Tomlin says; "The road to success is always under construction." Let's keep building.

Jayden Ellis
Chair, AQA

• We will carry a profile of Jayden Ellis as new AQA Chair in the October/November edition of *Aggregate News*

Quarries essential to NZ's \$61b infrastructure pipeline

A clarion call has been made by New Zealand Infrastructure Commission CEO Ross Copland for decisionmakers to allow quarries to exist near urban centres.

In a keynote address to the QuarryNZ conference in Wellington, Ross Copland said; "Our country has managed to create famine from plenty. New Zealand was blessed with abundant aggregates but 'nimbyism' and planning inaction had meant aggregate supply was under pressure."

Ross said there was a very strong environmental and economic case for locating quarries close to their markets as it reduced emissions and costs.

He believes the current blockage on quarries getting consents or even renewals ran against the environmental objectives of dealing with climate change. He signalled that improved strategic planning would feature in the Infrastructure Commission's 30-year strategy, due in September, and this would help quarries.

He said it was important to remind people in central and local government that aggregate went into everything in infrastructure and encouraged the quarry sector to make its voice heard. "We need to look at this issue with the facts and in a balanced way."

He identified \$61 billion in infrastructure projects already in the pipeline and even more will need to be spent to address



Make your voices heard Infrastructure Commission CEO Ross Copland told the QuarryNZ conference in July.

New Zealand's infrastructure deficit. "There are significant cost pressures emerging."

This included prices for aggregates which the commission is seeing rise around the regions of New Zealand.

The Government's reform policies involving the RMA, three waters and local government, housing and climate change were all impacting or going to impact on aggregate supply and demand.

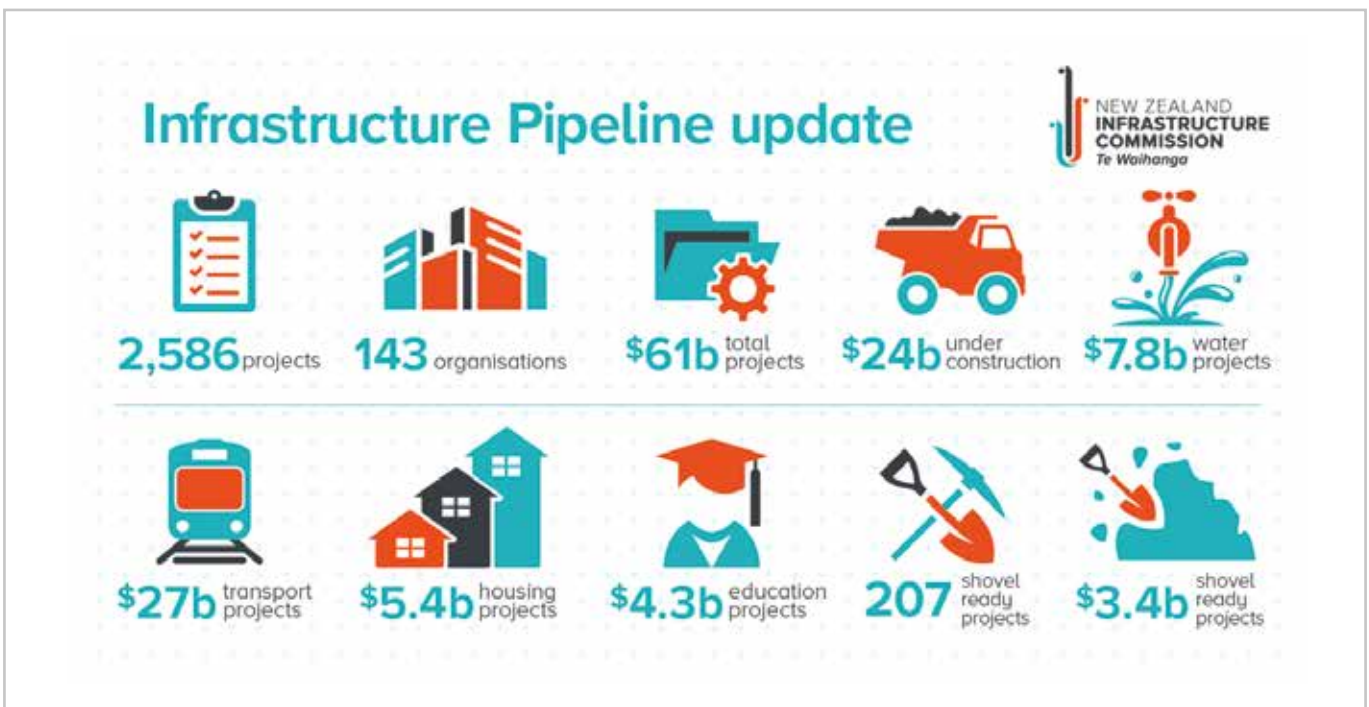
Urban encroachment was pushing quarries further and further from their markets but it made economic and environmental sense to have proximate resources. It was useful to remind people of the cost to housing if aggregate supplies became ever more remote.

Wayne Scott says the industry had finally found a voice within Government.

"We have for years been telling ministers and officials that if they didn't start planning for quarries, New Zealand would end up without enough supply to build homes and roads.

"We are now seeing prices rise as supply is unable to meet the twin demands of a booming housing market and major Government spend on infrastructure." **AQA**

It all needs aggregate - where the \$61b in infrastructure is being spent



Mullet man Dean may have been overlooked

QuarryNZ attendees were told to ask if they would have employed themselves as young people – and to give today's generation more of a chance.

Institute of Quarrying NZ president Dean Torstonson told the conference's opening day that he had an "impeccable mullet" when he was a young fella.

"I know I would probably not have employed myself when I was younger."

Dean challenged quarry operators to ask themselves the same question when a potential employee wearing trousers down around his butt and a reversed baseball cap slouches in front of them.

"We need to accept it's a generational thing."

In a recent IOQ NZ newsletter he had mentioned the issues around staffing and many members had shared their frustrations. "On reflection, this brought me back to Tony Hunter's presentation at conference in 2019. It was titled *The Kids are OK*.

"The question I ask myself is, 'What are we looking for in an employee'."

Dean outlined a couple of scenarios about hiring new staff.

"I hear so many stories around the employment of a new operator. They are given an induction then a baptism of instructions with often minimal support or guidance that is mainly due to everybody being busy and focussing on their own tasks due to being short staffed which of course, compounds the issue.

"The new operator over the next few days manages to knock over the chip bins with the bin truck, consistently puts Grade 2 in the Grade 4 stockpile and manages to run off the road and get his truck stuck with significant effort to get him out. In many cases, this individual is labelled an idiot. But who is at fault?"

His second scenario involves quarries near Auckland employing former international airline pilots, after Covid to drive dump-trucks, loaders and operate mobile crushers.

"Now you would think that with their skillsets with the responsibility for flying jets with up to 300 people on board, good communication skills and a strong focus on process and disciplines that they would



Would this man (Dean at QuarryNZ conference) have hired this man – Dean with a mullet 30 years ago

"My message is we need to persevere with some of these young people. It is my belief that there is a switch in everybody that for some individuals takes longer to engage than others..."

be the perfect operator.

"Unfortunately, they are making the same simple mistakes and costing productivity just like in scenario 1," said Dean.

That meant quarry operators had to provide a supportive training and work environment. This was now particularly important with Australia's bright lights and higher incomes waving at Kiwis.

Dean says New Zealand companies will never be able to match Australian pay rates, but good company culture was part of what attracted and retain skilled staff.

"My message is we need to persevere with some of these young people. It is my



belief that there is a switch in everybody that for some individuals takes longer to engage than others and we may be setting our level of criteria for employment a bit too high which ultimately robs a potential candidate of an opportunity to showcase their actual ability.

"We may have to accept that the perfect operator will never be found but you must embrace the effort you put into a new staff member and give them as much support and commitment as you can. The effort you put into a new employee should result in the effort they put out," said Dean. **AQA**

Peter Walsh signs off as AQA Chair

After two years chairing the AQA Board, Peter Walsh signed off at the AGM with a message that the need for an industry association had never been stronger.

He says the AQA has faced a range of challenges over the last couple of years including the new Freshwater Regulations, particularly relating to natural wetlands.

"These have the very real effect of preventing the extraction of hundreds of millions of tonnes of aggregate, and limiting where overburden can be placed."

Peter says after much advocacy, the Government recently admitted the regulations 'impacts' were inadvertently much greater than intended and committed to changes before end of the year.

He says the industry has also seen some river extraction reductions where AQA CEO Wayne Scott has successfully engaged with regional government to ease the impact of new restrictions.

Wayne had also engaged with Government on changes to Significant Natural Areas and Significant Landscape Areas all potentially limiting future quarry resources.

"The need for a strong industry association has never been greater, and the AQA has, I believe, greater accessibility to both Government departments and Ministers than at any other time, allowing us to be more effective in steering governing bodies," he told the AGM.

Peter Walsh thanked Wayne for his professionalism, leadership, energy and commitment to the quarry industry supported by Sarah Walker's administration and Brendon Burns and Mike Chilton who provided invaluable communications and technical advice.



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He says the AQA's business plan targets have largely been met, thanks to the Technical and Planning committee members. The Technical Committee's work had included Auckland Transport's material specifications, a supplier guide for Hi-Lab, the M4 specifications review, initiating work on an industry recycling guide, pipe bedding materials guidance, ethylene glycol position statements and managing the Waka Kotahi relationship.

The Planning Committee has been busy with major policy and legislative changes from central government and a large number of regional and district plan changes from councils.

"These all have the ability to impact on our industry, also effecting our individual businesses on a national and regional basis. A large number of submissions supporting our industry have been made, as well as work continuing on a national code of environmental compliance."

He said the rate of major change continues with the RMA, Crown Minerals

Act and legislation on biodiversity all proposed for this coming year.

Peter Walsh concluded by highlighting other significant challenges that the industry need to consider and meet.

- CO2 reduction: the industry is required to reduce CO2 emissions.
- Employment: how to meet the challenge of an increasingly tight and arguably less skilled labour market.
- Maori interest: the need to review how we engage with iwi around the country and changing legislation.

"So plenty of challenges for us to face, to embrace and overcome, which I am confident that as an industry we will do."

Peter Walsh concluded his remarks by thanking his AQA Board members: Mike Higgins (J Swap Contractors), Tony Hunter (Blackhead Quarries); Brian Roche (Ravensdown); Ian Wallace and Tim Hazell (Winstone Aggregates); as well as Jayden Ellis (Stevenson Construction Materials) who is the incoming chair. Peter will remain on the AQA Board. **AQA**



Logan Point quarry manager Joe Hunter with MIMICO's GM Chris Gray.

Blackhead sweeps national industry awards

Dunedin's Blackhead Quarries swept the annual national awards of the quarry industry. At the gala TransDiesel dinner in Wellington last month, Blackhead Quarries and associated companies took five of the seven awards given to quarries competing from around the country.

The awards included the MIMICO Environment and Community Award, where judge Bernie Napp said Blackhead Quarries was up against three other impressive candidates – Ravensdown's support for a community conservation group at its Ngarua quarry on Takaka Hill; Stevenson Aggregates for its 55 hectare ecological restoration project at its Drury quarry; and Vickers Quarries for its long-standing commitment to environmental management in Taranaki.

Bernie said Blackhead Quarries won through being the first quarry in the country to use an electric truck. The 30 tonne truck, imported from China, costs about \$4 a day to run, carting 600 tonnes of aggregate at the Logan Point Quarry in Dunedin, as opposed to burning 80-90 litres of diesel.

The company's Walton Park Sand operation then won the Winstone Aggregates Safety Award. This recognises a quarry operation which has implemented a shift change in worker participation in health and safety. Walton Park Sand manager, Jason Blair, also won the R D Hassad award given for the most outstanding contribution by an Institute of Quarrying NZ member.

Abbey Loveridge from Southland's AB Lime, a company associated with Blackhead Quarries, took the *Q&M* magazine's Tomorrow's Leader award.

To cap the night, Blackhead Quarry manager Gavin Hartley took

the Caernarfon Award, which recognises internationally the best paper advancing the quarry industry in technical, environmental or strategic issues. Gavin's presentation was on his work setting up a quarry in Antarctica in 2019 to supply foundations for six new buildings at the American base at McMurdo Station. The award is competed for by national branches of the Institute of Quarrying around the world.

Blackhead Quarries General Manager Tony Hunter says he was very proud of the team working for the company started by his great great grandfather.

"We are being recognised for our innovation, our approach to looking after our workers, leadership and for our technical excellence. I can't think of a better legacy for our staff and our Otago community. We are being encouraged to foster the next generation and most of these awards recognise the work of our younger staff," he says.

AQA CEO Wayne Scott says the awards give recognition to many years of contribution to the industry by Blackhead Quarries and by Tony Hunter as a long-serving AQA Board member, as had been his father Jim.

"Dunedin has always punched above its weight as a city in all things and it can now be assured that its local quarry company carries on that tradition." **AQA**



GNS Science geologist Matt Hill outlining the new study at the QuarryNZ Conference.

Use this study to plan your quarries

The AQA and myself applaud GNS Science for producing the first national assessment of aggregate opportunities as it will greatly help quarries and others with infrastructure planning.

GNS geologist Matt Hill outlined the assessment at the QuarryNZ Conference and urged quarries (and councils) to start using it to plan access to resources.

The document is available here.: <https://infracom.govt.nz/policy/reports/aggregate-mapping/>

The GNS study includes a detailed report, 21 printable regional maps for both hard rock and gravel aggregate types, and customisable Geographic Information Systems (GIS) spatial data layers.

Matt says the report doesn't just simply identify resources but weighs 23 different criteria across a range of issues including existing land use, cultural sensitivity (notably potential concerns from nearby communities), infrastructure and demand requirements, to help determine where the 'Goldilocks' zones exist.

"Infrastructure such as roading and building construction requires large amounts of aggregate, and ideally it is extracted close to its end-use to minimise transport costs and carbon emissions," he says.

"Aggregate transport costs double in about the first 30 kilometres and continues rising, so ideally quarries should be located close to their final market. However, community sensitivities to quarrying can significantly constrain operators.

"Therefore, planners look for a 'goldilocks zone' that provides high quality raw material and keeps costs down, while also minimising factors such as noise, dust and heavy vehicles near built-up areas," says Matt.

GNS tested its model on 200 existing quarries and found the model would have served them well if available when they began to develop.

"Quarries and councils will find the report a valuable resource as they plan for future growth," says Matt.

I certainly hope the GNS study provides a turning-point in the increasingly expensive and frustrating efforts required to secure and maintain supplies of aggregate and rock.

I've been pleased to work for AQA with GNS on a pilot project in Opotiki where plans to import aggregates over long distances contributed to a major blow-out in the cost of the town's new harbour entrance. Our joint work, identifying several new local quarry sites, helped nearly halve the cost of what was projected.

The study acknowledges that transport over distance is the big and avoidable cost in providing the fundamental building block of all infrastructure – the aggregate, sand and rock from quarries – so planning for the future aggregate resources in each district is critical.

Many of them are nearing the end of their existing life and new, accessible deposits are desperately needed if we are to build out of the pandemic's debt legacy.

GNS is now making available the data which shows where deposits in 'Goldilocks' zones are located, which reduces the risks of impacting on community sensitivities.

Both myself and the AQA trust central government agencies and councils around the country will now use this important data in their district plans and begin some prudent planning towards opening up new quarries and protecting future resources from conflicting land uses and sterilisation in every region.

These are urgently required in every region and I commend GNS Science for this pivotal study. Please make every use of it. **AQA**

• **AQA technical update from Mike Chilton, AQA technical Advisor**

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Tim Hazell
Winstone Aggregates

Tony Hunter
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