

Grinding into gear

Some organisations have a Back to the Grindstone event around this time to mark the return to work. I think this will be one year where many of us already have our noses pressed firmly to the wheel.

Take, for example, our CEO Wayne Scott. He's spent a good part of January shaping up the AQA's critical submission to the two cornerstone bills replacing the RMA. (see story page 5)

After 30 years of the good and the bad, I think the RMA has become ugly and needs to go.

That said, the AQA is concerned at the timeframes involved in the new legislation. The 900 plus pages of the Natural & Built Environment and Spatial Planning Law bills were tabled with a thud in November. Submissions were due to close January 30; the AQA helped win a week's reprieve. The Government now wants these bills passed before the election, scheduled for November.

I shudder to think whether all the fishhooks can be removed in that timeframe.

Some of our quarries are still paying the cost of having to wait for the rectifications promised to the rushed changes in 2020 regulations affecting the definition of wetlands. That took more than two years.

I know Wayne Scott, the AQA Planning Committee and some companies have been working hard to spot the hooks and at least blunt the barbs. Of course, it'll be the 2030s before the new law is fully bedded in, so perhaps there's time to ensure we as a nation get this momentous change correct.

Meantime, some things are more positive and closer in timeframe. I hope to see some of you at the Komatsu New Zealand Women in Extractives event next month.

I also sit on the MinEx Board and was so saddened this time last year at the loss of our colleague Kristy Christensen to breast cancer. It's wholly appropriate we will in March honour her with the inaugural memorial award in her name for championing diversity in the workplace. I'm really proud to see we are now



recognising leadership among women in our sector. (See story page 6)

If you haven't yet booked airfares to the QuarryNZ conference in July, you are best to do that soon and to register; this Christchurch conference is going to be a whopper.

Last but not least, read the feature on our Technical Adviser Mike Chilton (see page 3). Mike provides free initial technical advice to AQA members on all manner of things – resource consents, processing issues, site assessments, how to find technical equipment or specialised advice. He reckons he could help more of you – and that's all part of your AQA membership benefits.

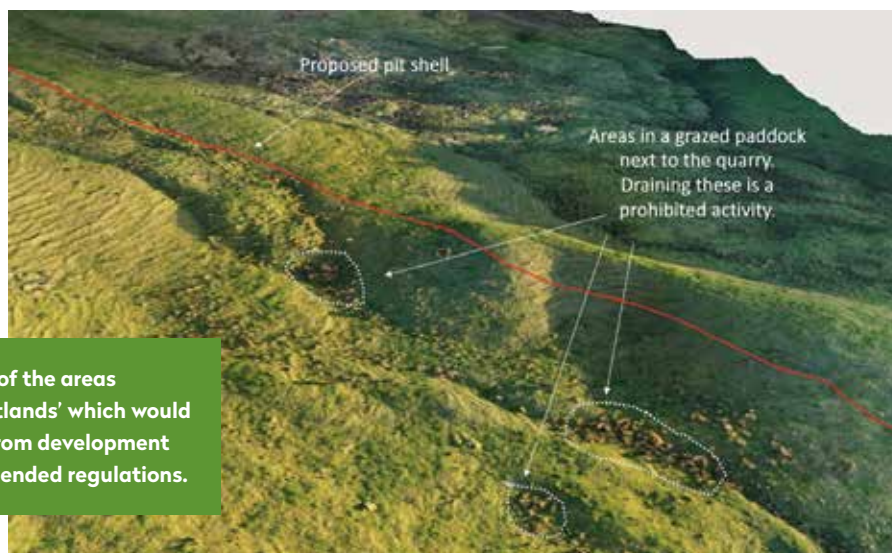
One area Mike can help with is the reporting of your production stats to NZ Petroleum & Minerals. Some of you really need to take this up – 2021's production stats saw barely half of you reporting. That's not helpful to any of us; we all need good data if we are to maintain our messaging to the Government, councils and the public about how critical we are to this country's progress.

If you didn't report your production for 2021, please lift your nose off the grindstone in March when NZP&M seeks your 2022 data.

Jayden Ellis
Chair, AQA



Quarry production figures are woefully down – ensure you get yours into NZPAM in March.



Wetlands revisions a win – but no champagne

In early December 2022, the Government's revised regulations on wetland development were gazetted. It was a win for the quarry sector led by the AQA, but CEO Wayne Scott says there was no case for popping corks.

"Councils began interpreting the initial rushed regulations to mean that no development could take place across virtually any land that got wet.

We are relieved to see these amended but for some quarries it's come at considerable cost."

Environment Minister David Parker says the amended regulations provide special consenting pathways for industries including quarries and landfills.

"The consenting pathway has high threshold tests that relate to the significance of the activity, and if it needs to occur in that location or there is no practicable alternative location."

An effects management hierarchy requires that an impact is avoided where practicable, mitigated or offset.

"This will ensure there is no net loss of wetlands," says the Minister.

The definition of a 'natural inland wetland' has also been clarified, making it easier to undertake activities that maintain and restore them.

Wayne Scott says quarries are crucial activities that are almost always located in locations where there is no practicable alternative and often work to offset any environmental impacts such as by extensive planting.

He believes quarries will be able to work within the amended regulations and says the Minister deserves some credit.

"At an early stage he fronted up to the mistake in the 2020 regulations and set about getting a solution. That's not always the case with a Minister.

"We've also had good engagement with officials from the Ministry for the Environment including getting a couple of

them up to see Auckland quarries being badly impacted by the original wetlands definition."

But Wayne Scott says the error forced some quarries to develop uneconomic areas while holding up other quarry developments.

"This was the unintended consequence of rushing through the regulations. The Minister and his officials spun the wheels of Government as fast as they could but it added costs and uncertainty for our members."

He says the AQA's estimate is the faulty regulations held up about 15 million tonnes of production a year. While quarries worked to find alternative sources, it was often from less economic areas of their sites.

"They have also lost two stripping seasons to get some areas ready to access rock and aggregate."

Wayne says one greenfield quarry site in Waikato has been unable to proceed and another lower North Island operator was going to walk away from a quarry development.

"I urged him to hang in there as I knew we would get a resolution."

Wayne Scott says the message Government officials should take from the need to revise the regulations is to talk to the quarry sector ahead of drafting.

"We are happy to discuss ideas or review early drafts. If they choose not to listen to us that's their call but at least they will have the industry's views. It may help avoid costly delays and rectifications such as we see in today's amended regulations." **AQA**



Need technical help? *Call Mike*

Mike Chilton regards himself as the Technical Help Desk for AQA members; and he's wanting you to use him more.

After completing a mining engineering degree in hometown Sydney, Mike has added 18 years working in the NZ quarry sector including seven years as the AQA's Technical Adviser. He's helped dozens of members in that time, most of them via a phone call.

"Some of them are just five-minute things, where people just need a copy of a paper or a spec. Some things take a bit longer, if I need to look something up or research something myself.

"For example, I had a call asking about the steel thickness required for FOPS on a digger working under a 30 metre

face – I had to look that one up. Or a ban on aggregates from a particular North Island region for a council roading job, that required deeper investigation to understand what was happening.

"Some of the inquiries are asking where they can find a particular rock type, or production data for their resource consent application. I've been asked about material for rip rap and the usual concrete and asphalt aggregates as well as enhanced rock weathering, thermal sand and kitty litter."

One recent example, says Mike, was Seay Earthmoving in



“The vast majority of our members are well-prepared and put a lot of time into their resource consents. Often though, issues come up at hearings which see a quarry operator needing some advice.”

“A lot of the inquiries are: 'Who can I talk to about this issue'? For example, a quarry valuer in the Coromandel, a geotech engineer in Hawke's Bay, a resource consent planner in Bay of Plenty, the list goes on.”

Mike has a list of quarry consultants to which he can refer companies. He also sometimes provides advice himself through his own consultancy Aggretech. Mike only works part-time with AQA and that also includes working with the AQA Technical Committee and agencies including Waka Kotahi and reporting to the AQA Board.

He's based in Palmerston North, so his own consultancy work – largely around quarry site design, consents and technical improvements – is mostly to quarries in the North Island.

Mike says he is managing about one specific AQA-only inquiry a month at present and says his contracted hours could see him handle one a week, particularly the sorts of issues he gets from small quarry operators.

“The reality is more often it's the smaller members asking for help. It's usually not a new issue, just new to the operator.”

Mike also gets people interested in joining the industry.

“I get a few enquiries each year from people who want to start a quarry or have purchased or even inherited a quarry and are not AQA members yet.”

He's learned to spot the tyre-kickers while choosing to assist people he believes genuinely want to enter quarrying and join the AQA as well.

“I figure anything that can progress the quarry industry and the AQA, it's worth helping.”

There are also a lot of calls from people who are approaching their oral exams for Certificates of Competence.

“Usually, it's first timers who are scared about this part of getting their ticket. I can point them in the right direction and share resources they might not have found themselves.”

He can provide some advice as he holds an A Grade CoC but the AQA, through their involvement with MinEx, can provide mentors from time to time to assist people coming up through industry ranks.

If you think you would benefit from some mentoring and haven't found one, contact AQA CEO Wayne Scott. wayne@aqa.org.nz; 021 944 336.

If you need help with a technical issue, Mike Chilton can be contacted at tech@aqa.org.nz, or 021 594 225. **AQA**

Taupo wanting advice on where to find remotely powered dust monitoring equipment. Mike was able to put him in touch with a supplier.

A Northland quarry wanted to prove to the local council it had been operating long enough to have existing use rights. Mike was able to get copies of the old aerial photos to prove when it had started.

“There are all sorts of inquiries, some I've had before, some not. I love the variety and being able to help our members when they need it.”

Issues with resource consents make up a lot of his inquiries involving more time.

“The vast majority of our members are well-prepared and put a lot of time into their resource consents,” says Mike. Often though, issues come up at hearings which see a quarry operator needing some advice.

He will sometimes spend up to about half a day helping AQA members remotely or out on site but that's about the point where it becomes clear, the company needs more than the AQA itself can provide.

RMA reforms hit fast-forward

By the time you first read this in early February, submissions from the AQA will have been made on two of the key pieces of legislation replacing the Resource Management Act.

The much anticipated Natural and Built Environment Bill and Spatial Planning Bill were introduced to Parliament in November with submissions initially due to close last month (30 January 2023).

The AQA joined with other business organisations seeking six more weeks to consider the 900+ pages of legislation and frame submissions. After a meeting with Environment Minister David Parker, he allowed an extra week to 5 February 2023.

CEO Wayne Scott then worked with the AQA Planning Committee before Christmas to define the core issues for the quarry sector and sought feedback on these from members.

In January, while some were still on holiday, Wayne was writing the AQA submission to meet the new deadline.

"Given the rapid nature of the process, our submission is mostly high-level. That said, what we've seen is some poor drafting which doesn't in our view, reflect the policy intent signalled by Government. We have to ensure accurate and well-defined wording."

Wayne Scott says for example the National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Soil needed input from the AQA before it emerged as the NPS on Highly Productive Land.

"That NPS spells out that land containing quarries providing significant regional or national benefit must be protected by councils from inappropriate use and development, notably urban spread."

This and other National Policy instruments are being folded into the new legislation but Wayne says it is critical that the

bills are precisely worded to ensure consistency and reflect the policy intent.

"We've seen the RMA subject to far too much court action to get clarity over what a policy means, so we've got to get these new laws sharply defined to minimise those risks."

Wayne says while the Government is in a rush to get the legislation passed before the election, he's advising AQA members to recognise it will take 10 or more years for it to be operative at a regional level.

"What happens in that interim is going to be as important as what takes effect in a decade's time."

While the Government has created fast-track provisions which can speed up important consents under the RMA while it continues to exist, how consenting will work more broadly over the next few years is unclear under the new legislation.

It also creates 15 regional spatial planning committees each with its own spatial strategy and plan. We understand that three regions – possibly Auckland, Bay of Plenty and a South Island region (either Otago or Canterbury) will trial new spatial plans.

Wayne says Auckland as a unitary authority is well-advanced in this space but Bay of Plenty and either South Island region cover multiple councils with multiple district plans.

"There's going to be a lot of work necessary to see through all these issues over a number of years. For now though, the focus is to seek clarity in the new bills which will help deliver these changes." **AQA**

AQA works for the quarry industry – join us today

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Time to register for these events

Registration is now open for the QuarryNZ conference in July and, even more urgently, the Komatsu New Zealand celebrating women in extractives event is taking place next month (March.)

The AQA, along with Straterra and MinEx, is organising a lunch in Christchurch on 10 March 2023 to coincide with International Women's Day (8 March). This event is open to all, says organiser Straterra Business Manager, Sarah Walker.

"We want this to celebrate what women do in our sector, promote the huge opportunities to recruit more women and the career pathways that exist for them in extractives."

Sarah says the event is attracting CEOs, managers, HR and people capability professionals as well as women in the extractives industry.

"We are limited to 130 people max so I'd advise people to get their skates on," says Sarah.

Komatsu New Zealand is sponsoring the event with three awards to be presented. Among them is the Kristy Christensen Memorial Award – Champion for diversity in the workplace.

Awarded by MinEx, this will first be awarded posthumously in 2023 to Kristy who was a pioneering woman miner who challenged a lot of sexism in the sector as well as being an advocate and role-model for women. She was a member of the MinEx Board at the time of her death early last year. A member of Kristy's family will receive the award.

Our sector's training organisation MITO, a division of Te Pukenga, is the sponsor of an award for the Emerging Star.

There is also an award for Leader of the Year among women in extractives, sponsored by Hanga-Aro-Rau, our Workforce Development Council.

Meanwhile, registrations opened in January for the 2023 QuarryNZ conference in Christchurch from July 5-7, which is a little earlier than usual.

Conference organiser Melissa Bahler says there's already been a good number of registrations, with some companies also taking note of the benefits of booking early airfares.

You can register at quarrynz.com. The website also includes details of special accommodation deals for the conference available at five top Christchurch hotels.



Pioneering woman miner, Kristy Christensen, will be posthumously given the first award in her name at the March event celebrating women in extractive industries.

All of them are within easy walking distance of the venue; certainly a benefit in Christchurch in sometimes chilly early July.

The conference centre, Te Pae is a striking new facility big enough to host the 100 trade displays and all conference sessions including the opening night and awards night dinners.

Among those awards presented on the night is the MIMICO Environment & Community Award recognising excellence in environmental work or community engagement.

Entries are due by Friday 12 May. The awards night also sees about a dozen other awards from the IOQ and *Quarrying and Mining* magazine. Judging for each of these are due in late May. Details of how to enter all the awards see the QuarryNZ website or www.quarrynz.com/awards/

Others include the Q&M Tomorrow's Leader awards, presented by Alan Titchall, to encourage and recognise up and coming contributors to our industry. If you have a deserving entry, then contact Alan direct (0274050338).

Being election year, there's a political panel on the final day before the awards dinner, hosted by MC Steve Davis. ACT's Simon Court and National's Stuart Smith are already confirmed to attend. **AQA**

AQA Technical update

Poor response dogs aggregate production stats

- NZ Petroleum and Minerals 2021 quarry production statistics, released in early December, suggest total production was down 13 percent on 2020 at less than 30Mt.
- That reflects a very poor response, with only 367 quarries submitting data. NZP&M says the response rate was 54 per cent, down from 83 percent in 2020. "This is the lowest response rate in the 10 years since NZP&M has been collecting data on survey response rates. Furthermore, many responses received were only partial responses. This means the 2021 data will be less complete and representative compared to previous years"
- The reported tonnages suggest production not seen since early 1990s – which is of course untrue. Some regions' reporting was abysmal; Manawatu's for example, was so low it was withheld.
- AQA CEO Wayne Scott says failing to report production undermines the industry. "It makes it harder to put the case for our sector and the need for plans and rules which allow for extensions to existing operations and new production sites if we don't have accurate figures. Non-reporting by companies large and small also lends weight to calls, such as from the Infrastructure Commission, for mandatory reporting."

Because the AQA has to extrapolate from incomplete data, this can distort the true picture. "For example, we say Auckland uses around 15M tonnes of aggregate annually but don't identify where it comes from. This distorts the fact that much of Auckland's aggregate is imported from Waikato and Northland and suggests our concerns over demand exceeding supply in Auckland are unfounded."

He understands it's been a demanding time for quarries with Covid and labour shortages impacting along with personnel

changes at quarries. "But with barely over half the quarries reporting production we are clutching at straws to provide viable, extrapolated production figures."

Wayne acknowledges a wider model needs to be developed which collects aggregate production and use data from multiple sources. He and AQA Technical Adviser Mike Chilton were due to meet early in the New Year to discuss if data can be obtained from sources including Waka Kotahi and local councils.

In the interim, Wayne urges all quarries to respond to the 2022 survey when asked by NZP&M in March and notes all data is anonymised so no individual producer's data can be identified. If you would like assistance with the 2022 survey, please contact AQA Technical Adviser Mike Chilton – tech@aqa.org.nz or 021 594 225

National Pavements Technical Group

- AQA is currently working on two subgroups with NPTG; research opportunities and dissemination of technical information.
- Research opportunities are technical areas that require more NZ-based insight and investigation. Some ideas are dense graded aggregates for roads, cement replacements and how to increase recycled aggregates use.
- The dissemination of technical information is mainly focused on sharing technical information and issues alongside solutions and lessons learnt. One area that could be included here is manufactured sand.
- AQA is interested to hear member feedback on any technical issues that should be receiving greater focus for these subgroups. There's a survey in the next "From the Quarry Face" in late February or early March. **AQA**

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