



Lowdown on lockdown

As I write, Auckland remains in Level 4 as the rest of the country enters Level 2.

It's been a pretty hard month for our industry with most sites entirely closed for three weeks and we Aucklanders still facing further weeks. A small number of quarries have opened to supply essential services/projects but this is problematic to say the least. At L4, I understand some staff were reluctant to return for restricted hours and the risk of catching or spreading the virus.

Operating on skeleton crews with limited production doesn't always make for the best return. Hopefully those working in L4 will at least be able to build up stock levels before they enter Level 3.

However, most quarry workers I know here in Auckland are looking forward to a full return to work. That said they are not so welcoming of the new controls required at L3, but understand why we have them. I've also heard that some subbies are reluctant to return in L3 as the new controls make it almost impossible to do what they normally do in an efficient way.

Up here when we do go to L3 the issues will be distancing requirements, PPE, border crossing, hygiene protocols, protecting vulnerable workers, staff with child-care issues and transport to work.

I'd expect most in quarry senior management have been using lockdown like me to do planning for such challenges and those other types of projects you can do from your desk. Managers are also facing the reality that lockdown will have obvious effects on the end of month profit and loss reviews.

Outside of Auckland I'd expect most of you were engaged in a lot of catch-up as you entered Level 3. I've heard staff can be a bit jittery and distracted on the first couple of days back. This is an important reminder to us all to be aware that safety issues extend

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well beyond managing Covid-19.

And of course, our industry faces other challenges – and I'm pleased to say we've had a few wins of late. Hats off to Wayne Scott and senior quarry industry leaders who've managed to start the turn-around on the prohibition of development around 'natural wetlands.' That was beginning to impact on quarry expansion and development plans, particularly here in Auckland. Also, we welcome the Environment Court decision which has ruled that we don't have to go cap in hand when we need to remove vegetation to strip overburden on two of the Auckland Special Quarry Zones. It's good also to see that the last significant piece of land in Christchurch's Yaldhurst Quarry Zone has been green-lighted for development. (see stories pages 41-43)

As incoming chair of the AQA I feel pretty proud of what we are achieving – but as my profile article (page 44) says, we need to maintain the momentum.

That includes the great work that Mike Chilton leads as our Technical Adviser and as a self-confessed techie, his Technical Update (page 45) is always required reading for me.

Here's hoping we are all firmly back at Level 1 when our final edition of the year comes out in December.

Jayden Ellis
Chair, AQA



Some welcome wins for quarries and common-sense

There have been three significant resource wins for the quarry sector in recent weeks, each of which AQA CEO Wayne Scott says provide wider benefits for the industry.

The first win is the revised regulations proposed by the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) to rectify the restrictions on development around 'wetlands' announced last year in new freshwater regulations. MfE acknowledges this had impacted on 15.5m tonnes per annum of current aggregate supply which would negatively effect achievement of the Government's objectives on infrastructure projects and housing supply.

A consent pathway for quarries is now proposed, consistent with what the AQA suggested.

"Everything that we raised has been addressed," says Wayne Scott. "It's been a bit painful and took some time but we got there."

The revised regulations are contained in an MfE discussion document *Managing our Wetlands* and accompanying regulatory impact statement. These propose to now define natural wetlands to exclude areas of pasture that have more than 50% ground cover of exotic pasture species. Where a prohibition on development was in place under the initial regulations in an area which included natural wetlands, there will now be a consenting pathway for development within 100m of a natural wetland.

MfE says the Government has recognised quarrying requires consenting pathways due to its national and/or regional significance and the occurrence of aggregates only in particular geographical locations.

The proposed changes continue to emphasise the preservation of 'natural wetlands' and regulate against inappropriate use and development, while providing a consent pathway for appropriate use and development.

MfE says the obligation to offset any more than minor negative

effects is consistent with the RMA's direction to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

No carte blanche is provided for quarries in areas with natural wetlands – and Wayne Scott says that was never sought by the AQA or industry.

"Environmental protection is a good thing and we support it but prohibiting development is not a viable option."

Wayne says he cannot recall a recent quarry resource consent application that did not provide for some environmental gains.

"The key is to include in the application for a resource consent what the site will do to ensure positive outcomes for the local environment."

Often quarries went well beyond what was required of them in environmental performance.

In its consultation with the Ministry for the Environment the AQA referred to case studies on three quarries – Isaac Construction's quarry near Christchurch Airport, Fulton Hogan's Stevensons site at Drury and Winstone Aggregates Pukekawa quarry in the Waikato.

"Each of these quarries and many others have been exemplars when it comes to managing natural wetlands and providing other environmental benefits. Often people have no idea that the park or community asset they are visiting, full of flora and fauna, was once a quarry."

Submissions on the MfE discussion document and proposed new regulations close on 13 October. Wayne Scott says it can only be hoped the changes are rapidly adopted by councils. The AQA and its Planning Committee will be closely monitoring things to see that the consenting pathways for development around wetlands don't become bogs. **AQA**



Wayne Scott says the court's decision is a victory for common-sense. "Clearly, you can't provide aggregate if you can't remove overburden."

Court removes overburden constraint

A recent decision by the Environment Court has affirmed that the Brookby and Drury quarries – Auckland's two biggest suppliers – don't need to avoid vegetation removal in seeking to strip overburden.

In an earlier decision, the Independent Hearings Panel on Auckland's Unitary Plan (AUP) had removed this requirement in a quarry zone.

Forest and Bird and the Environmental Defence Society appealed to the High Court and the requirement was reinstated.

Brookby Quarry appealed this to the Environment Court and Fulton Hogan joined the proceedings. They sought a specific policy and objective framework which recognised the need to remove vegetation in order to remove overburden and enable mineral extraction.

Forest and Bird and EDS said the usual requirements should apply so that adverse effects had to first be avoided, where practicable.

Auckland Council highlighted the difficulty in avoiding adverse effects at the same time as enabling extraction of aggregate. It wanted a clear framework in place to avoid difficulties when it came to processing consents.

The Environment Court did not accept the opponents' submissions that there was a mandatory obligation on regional Councils to maintain indigenous

biodiversity. Whilst accepting that this was important, it was not an environmental bottom line.

Wayne Scott says the court's decision is a victory for common-sense.

"Clearly, you can't provide aggregate if you can't remove overburden. This was a bit like the natural wetlands issue where quarrying activities were constrained, rather than looking for off-setting environmental gains. Quarries often remove flora and fauna before they develop an area and that can lead to a boost for bio-diversity." **AQA**

AQA works for the quarry industry – join us today

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Yaldhurst site expansion for Fulton Hogan

The last untouched piece of land of significant size within the Yaldhurst Quarry Zone has been approved for development.

A 41 hectare expansion has been approved for Fulton Hogan by an Environment Canterbury RMA hearings commissioner. The expansion will be across the road from its existing Miners Road site at Yaldhurst on the outskirts of Christchurch. The area has been subject to major development since the Christchurch earthquakes.

Commissioner Craig Welsh heard from some residents with concerns about dust and water quality impacts. He found these could be mitigated and imposed a number of conditions including only five hectares being open for extraction at any one time, reduced operating hours and seasonal (wind) restrictions on operating within 200m of any dwelling.

"...the Commissioner supported Christchurch's ongoing need for aggregate to support its housing and infrastructure needs and the use of mitigation to manage effects was sensible."

He noted that quarries had been operating in the Yaldhurst area for many decades, were important in supplying the Christchurch market as well as providing jobs and supporting economic activity.

While the Miners Road West site will be extracted, material will be carried under the road on a conveyor belt and processed at

Fulton Hogan's existing operation on the eastern side of the road.

Wayne Scott says the Commissioner supported Christchurch's ongoing need for aggregate to support its housing and infrastructure needs and the use of mitigation to manage effects was sensible. He says it's interesting to note that while there were a handful of people submitting to restrict the scope of what would be allowed, the case did not attract some of the furore of earlier consents at Yaldhurst.

"I think that reflects the efforts of the Canterbury industry in developing and implementing its own Code of Practice for managing environmental impacts of local quarries." **AQA**



**"One thing I have learned
is you can have your ideals
but you won't get anywhere
unless you have some
engagement and respect."**

– Jayden Ellis

From lab stool to Chair

Until recent years, Jayden Ellis spent most of his career in the laboratory but he's well aware that technical excellence is only part of what is needed for the quarry industry to progress.

As the new Chair of the Aggregate and Quarry Association, Jayden says the AQA needs to expand its focus and messaging on what quarrying means and contributes to New Zealand.

He's no stranger to the AQA Board, having been initially co-opted nearly 10 years ago to provide technical expertise.

At that point he was Technical Operations Manager for Stevenson Construction Materials group, having joined at 18 in 1993 as a trainee laboratory technician. His father Steve had been there since 1973, rising to General Manager.

Jayden immediately began studying for his NZCE, with support from Stevensons. After qualifying he became Laboratory Manager in his mid-twenties overseeing a team of nearly a dozen people testing Stevensons' aggregate products as well as doing earthworks tests for the company's construction division.

He then helped form CETANZ – The Civil Engineering Testing Association – which works to further the quality and understanding of civil testing and became a technical expert for IANZ – International Accreditation NZ (Stevensons was one of the first privately-owned labs to meet IANZ's strict standards).

"It's geeky stuff but it's interesting to get into the inner workings of some of these organisations."

His love of technical issues wasn't just done to reward his inner-geek. "It helped me understand how we can serve our customers better."

That experience, including with the AQA and MinEx boards, hasn't gone unnoticed by Fulton Hogan which bought Stevensons in 2018, making Jayden Business Services Manager, covering

production, environmental and engineering requirements, resource consents and technical matters.

He remains based at the Drury quarry in south Auckland not far from where he grew up. He still lives in Pukekohe with his wife Kylie and children, Leighton and Mia.

Jayden credits AQA CEO Wayne Scott with getting the organisation more active on policy issues, including the Government's turn-around on the freshwater regulations which were halting quarry developments because of very narrow definitions of what constituted a wetland.

"We are very aware as a Board of where we have come from and we have to build on that momentum," he says. "We know we can't as an industry, get all that we want, but we need to make the Government understand the repercussions of its policy decisions".

Jayden says many people in the quarrying industry are passionate about where it sits in the world but some are less understanding of the need for social licence to operate.

"We need to do a much better job at explaining ourselves. I think the industry is open to a lot of change if it feels it is being listened to."

"One thing I have learned is you can have your ideals but you won't get anywhere unless you have some engagement and respect."

While this can be time-consuming and frustrating with people who appear to be polar opposites, Jayden believes it is worth the investment.

"I always look for the best in people." **AQA**

Technical Issues for AQA members

Serpentine & basalt as CO2 storage

- AgResearch is starting a desk-based survey on using crushed serpentine and basalt to capture carbon.
- This research would need to be followed up with field trials.
- AQA is helping locate suitable quarries and will keep a watching brief.

Hi-Lab Supplier Guide

- AQA is still collating Hi-Lab documents and specifications to publish a guide for aggregate suppliers.

Annual Quarry Production Survey

- Hopefully you saw NZPAM's request to submit production data and have helped us as an industry by submitting your 2020 production data.
- The survey officially closed at the end of August but late submissions are able to be accepted – send to NZPAM-QuarriesSurvey@mbie.govt.nz
- AQA encourages all quarries to report their data to NZPAM. The data is anonymised but gives a very helpful overall picture to us to influence government and planning issues.
- I have a list of 11 AQA member companies which may be finding it difficult to get the data together during the latest Covid disruption. Please contact tech@aqa.org.nz if you would like some help.
- The survey can be found on the NZPAM website:
<https://www.nzpam.govt.nz/nz-industry/nz-minerals/minerals-statistics/industry-statistics/>

Austrroads' Waste Plastic in Surfacing Interim Guidelines

- Austrroads has been researching different ways to utilise waste plastics in roadmaking, particularly surfacing.
- The guidelines are available here: <https://austrroads.com.au/publications/pavement/ap-g96-21>

M/4 Specification Update

- The AQA Technical Committee has drafted the notes to accompany the proposed specification and is now reviewing them prior to sending to Waka Kotahi.
- Testing cost comparison between old and new specs is also being reviewed in a spreadsheet, so operators can plan for any added testing costs. **AQA**

- **AQA Technical Update from Mike Chilton, AQA Technical Advisor**

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