



From the Quarry Face August

As with all media, the COVID-19 second wave is our first focus in this newsletter.

We probably all knew we were likely to get another burst – and the swift move to Level 3 lockdown across Auckland was the best response from the Government.

Quarries would appear to be able to keep working because building and construction for critical infrastructure and transport projects was deemed able to continue.

Things started out ok with workers trying to get to quarries and related sites simply able to carry a letter from their employer to show at the police checkpoints.

But on Friday 14 August the rules changed; you or your employer now had to apply to the Ministry of Health (MOH) for an exemption.

Ok, there were undoubtedly people starting to engineer excuses to be able to cross into and out of Auckland – but neither I as Chief Executive of the national organisation nor any or most of our quarries were advised of the change.

The Government needed to use the time from mid-May when we all moved back to Level 2 – and last week – to have had better plans in place for the almost inevitable return.

It's been really confusing for companies and workers across Auckland and adjoining regions like the Waikato where Auckland quarries source some of their staff; most would accept some restrictions and inconvenience – what matters most is clarity.

I acknowledge the NZ Police who came to a common sense solution by creating special lanes to at least allow trucks through without too much delay.

It is pleasing to see that over the weekend changes were made to allow for workers needing to cross the Auckland border for work, to do so without the need for a MOH exemption, as long as they have proof of their need to travel for work.

Elsewhere in this FTQF, please take a chance to read the link to my [opinion piece](#) prepared for Stuff last month which has had much wider pick-up. This includes Heidi O'Callahan who used it as the basis for a thoughtful [article](#) for the Greater Auckland Inc website, which provides commentary and encourages intelligent debate about transport and urban form issues.

Also, read the profile of Kristy Christensen who's literally worked at the coalface for women and is now sharing her insights.

We also celebrate the contribution to date of Cobus van Vuuren who'll be known to many

of you as an industry stalwart, always prepared to share his knowledge.

Finally, you'll note that we have recently emailed our AQA 2020 Annual Report, in replacement of the AGM this year. You can find this report in the members only section of our [website](#). Email office@aqa.org.nz if you have any trouble accessing.

Enjoy the read and stay safe and productive.



Wayne
CEO AQA & MinEx

At the coal face for women

Kristy Christensen is a mother, a miner and a motivator. She's helped lead the charge to get more women into mining in Australia and is now helping pave the way for the recruitment of more New Zealand women in the extractive sector and related industries such as construction.

She's the most recent addition – representing AusIMM – to the Board of MinEx, the sector's health and safety organisation and sees that appointment as another way to get traction for women.

Still only in her thirties, Kristy qualified as a geologist at Auckland University. While studying she met her husband Jamin. After graduating she had a couple of years at Heritage Gold at Waihi before the GFC hit.

Queensland beckoned and Kristy got a job at an underground coal mine near Moranbah in central Queensland. She was the only woman in the 1,200 strong workforce.

"I didn't know I'd be the only one when I started. I was banned from going to my underground induction for the first half hour. The trainer didn't believe a woman would work underground in a mine."

That was only the start. As she eased into 7-12 hour shifts underground, Kristy faced a whole range of issues including no female toilets, having to store gear in mens' bathrooms and PPE designed for a male physique.

Far from putting Kristy off during her three years at the mine, she did her Master's in Mining Engineering through the University of New South Wales. BHP then recruited her, and with Jamin (a metal fabricator not a miner) they moved to Wollongong. She worked there from 2011-2018 in a variety of technical and supervisory roles through six restructurings. Kristy had the luxury of having three women colleagues at the Westcliff mine among a 1,500 strong workforce.

"It was like a band of sisters."

She had her two children Zak, 5, and Lily, 3, while living in Wollongong before the family returned home where she's taken up a position as a senior mining engineer with a New Zealand company and is based in Te Kuiti.

Kristy has also set up a consultancy business [Shesfreetobe](#) to assist women working in the extractive and related sectors as well as businesses wanting to improve their approach to recruiting and retaining female staff.

"It's really about equipping companies to bring them into this time. We don't have many young people in extractives and then, not many women."

Her story brings to mind the film North Country starring Charlize Theron playing a young mother desperate for work who joins a handful of other women working at Minnesota coal mine in the late 1980s. She faces almost unbearable harassment from her male co-

workers before winning a lawsuit against them. The film is based on a real-life story.

Kristy says the extractives sector in Australasia is not as bad as that, she was treated generally more like a sister than a target and things have improved somewhat since she started work nearly 15 years ago.

“Underground mining remains the last frontier.”

As for any difference in approaches to employing women in New Zealand vs Australia, she says Kiwi companies don't realise there is an issue presented by the lack of female participation in extractives.

Australia's bigger workforces and greater demand means they have to address the need to employ more women.

On the flip side, is the attitudes of Kiwi women. “I think New Zealand chicks just get in and do more.”

She says that won't overcome all the obstacles that can be in front of women. Companies need to understand how females experience their workplace every day and the benefits they bring.

Her consultancy helps provide understanding on the best way to support women employees through each stage of their life including pregnancy, motherhood and menopause.

Shesfreetobe provides survival tool kits which include female urination devices – sheweese – and spends a day at a site to find ways to improve workplace design.

- AQA/MinEx Comms Adviser Brendon Burns who interviewed Kristy for this story recently happened to watch the movie North Country. It's highly recommended – available on Netflix
- Kristy is guest speaker at the opening night of the Minerals Forum, 13-14 October for the WENNZ (Women in Extractives Network NZ) her topic: Helping organisations invest in their female workforce and see them thrive!



There's also an Aggregates & Industrial Minerals stream on Day 2 of the Forum, and all streams offer CPD hours for both in person & online – check out the [programme](#) for more details.



New Zealand

Minerals Forum 2020

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The case for better planning of quarries

All the talk about infrastructure being the co-lead with agriculture to COVID's economic impacts may just be that; the reason being successive Governments have failed to plan and provide for the very materials that will build the roads and water schemes they each incessantly promote.

That was the basis of my [article](#) on Stuff last month arguing that whoever is in power had better make it a very early priority to talk to the AQA because without urgent moves to find extra sources of supply (including extensions and renewals for existing

quarries), infrastructure projects will fail to move at any pace.

What's encouraging have been the responses. Comments on the Stuff article went on over three weeks. It's been picked up and run in allied industry journals here, as well as in Australia.

In the article I noted the briefing paper sent to all MPs – and the only real response had been from Green Party co-leader James Shaw. You might not instantly think that someone from left of centre would align with those who extract, crush and deliver rock. But in reality, there is some alignment. Every extra kilometre we have to cart material is another dose of unnecessary carbon dumped in the atmosphere, not to mention more congestion and road wear.

Some similar themes were picked up by Greater Auckland Inc blogger, Heidi O'Callahan. Here's her [blog](#).

I'm not going to say I agree with all Heidi wrote but here's some points she made.

Planning for both aggregate conservation and climate change means (Auckland) Council need to:

- *identify our aggregate reserves and ensure we don't encroach on them with inappropriate land uses such as lifestyle developments or urban expansion;*
- *provide for future generations, by conserving well-located supplies and leaving a legacy of infrastructure with a low maintenance burden;*
- *reduce our aggregate needs so that we're not forced to haul aggregate into the city from a distance or quarry in precious environments.*

Ok she went on to say Auckland Council and Government should halt our road expansion programme but writing for a centre-left audience, she's endorsing the need to identify aggregate resources, keep them from encroachment and stop long-hauls – all key AQA messages.

What's more, her post attracted more than 30 comments in its first few hours.

Post-election, I intend engaging with a new or re-elected Government and starting a conversation with groups which share some (not all) of the interests of the AQA.

Your thoughts from either side welcome – wayne@aqa.org.nz

Cobus forges a new career

Cobus van Vuuren has always embraced change and he's now doing it again, offering himself as the quarrying equivalent of a journeyman blacksmith.

His latest challenge comes after restructuring at Winstone Aggregates saw the offer of an exit package or, a move out of his adopted Manawatu.

Cobus has stayed put and set up Aggresmith Ltd, providing advice on all manner of quarry issues.

With nearly half a century of quarrying skills under his belt and qualifications in both South Africa and New Zealand, he's already fielding the calls.

It was a chance job offer from Bernard Higgins while Cobus was on holiday here 24 years ago that brought him and his wife Beulah and their two children from Cape Town to Palmerston North.

He already had 24 years' experience including a seven-year qualification in mechanical and electrical engineering. Those qualifications weren't recognised here so as well as taking on a role as Aggregates Manager for Higgins, he did his A Grade CoC and gained a diploma in quarrying management.

In Cape Town, he'd managed two sites for Anglo Alpha, part of the Holcim conglomerate, responsible for 120 people and 3M tonnes of production.

At Higgins Aggregates he managed 30-40 staff across nearly a dozen permanent and occasional sites. The issues were on a smaller scale but just the same –

consents/labour/processing – and without the support of specialised staff.

“I actually worked harder there but they were good times.”

Cobus forged together the dozen sites into a productive operation mostly focused on supply to roading contractors.

“They didn’t have to worry about aggregate supply – we took care of that.”

Higgins also provided all the materials needed to build wind farms across the Tararua and Ruahine ranges and even at Makara in Wellington.

A 100-year flood in the Manawatu River could have meant a four-hour round trip to provide material; instead Cobus organised a site adjacent to the river and transported it across (after flood water went down) by Moxy.

Along the way, Cobus collected several industry awards – the Rocktec Innovation Award in 2015 recognising an individual’s contribution to the quarry sector, a Niemac IOQ award, the Lyn Jordan Memorial Trophy for best conference paper and a Komatsu Travel Award; the latter allowed to travel back to Cape Town for a conference and also see his wider family.

By that time he’d become a Springbok supporter; while living in South Africa he’d been a rare backer of the All Blacks – Cobus enjoys the banter as much as the rugby.

As for the cycle of change, four years ago Winstone Aggregate’s bought Higgins quarries and kept Cobus on as manager of the Linton hard rock quarry; last month as part of its restructure, Winstone sold the Linton and Te Matai quarries back to the Higgins family which had continued to operate ready-mix concrete and property businesses, centred in Palmerston North.

Also based there is AQA Technical Adviser Mike Chilton. The ex-Sydneysider left his first job in New Zealand to work for Cobus at Higgins Aggregates.

“I learned a lot from him and continue to do so,” says Mike, who still works with Cobus on the AQA Technical Committee.

At 69, Cobus still wants to share his knowledge – and perhaps help knock a few quarries into shape in his own low-key way.

“My wife has been by my side with every step I took in the presence of giants, be they operators, colleagues, reps, consultants or bosses, the whole bundle. I learned a lot from them all, too many to mention. I owe them all a lot of thanks and gratitude.”



A message from ACC

ACC wants to ensure that your 2020/21 provisional levy reflects the impact COVID-19 may have had on your payroll. You are due to be sent your levy invoice from October.

Your 2020/21 provisional levy is based on an estimate of your liable payroll for the year ending 31 March 2021. To arrive at this estimate, ACC uses the 2019/20 liable payroll information that your business supplied to Inland Revenue.

Between now and the end of September, ACC is encouraging employers to update their estimated liable payroll for 2020/21. This is something you should consider, if you know that

COVID-19 has had an impact on your payroll, or is about to. This will help ACC ensure your invoice is as accurate as possible.

There are two ways to provide ACC with a revised liable payroll estimate:

1. If you're an employer with PAYE staff, register or log in at [MyACC for Business](#) (simply scroll down to the actions section of your policy information when logged in)
2. If you're a non-PAYE shareholder, contact our Business Customer Contact Centre on 0800 222776 or at business@acc.co.nz

ACC has created a web page that contains helpful information about invoicing this year and it's available [here](#), or you can call 0800 222 776 if you have any further questions.

Highlights of what we have been up to since last issue

- Submissions on the Government's:
 - [National Environmental Standards for air quality](#)
- District Plans
 - [Manawatu District Review](#)
 - [Kaipara Sub Region Spatial Plan](#)
- Media releases
 - [Plan for quarries or face more Transmission Gully debacles](#)