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Media Release from Aggregate & Quarry Association

Quarries rightly protected along with soils under new policy statement

Quarry operators around the country are pleased the Government's new National Policy Statement on Highly Productive Land extends to quarries, says an industry leader.

Aggregate & Quarry Association (AQA) CEO Wayne Scott says quarries, by far, give a better return than most uses of land and the materials they provide for building homes and roads, are as essential as food production.

"We welcome the new NPS and agree with the Government that the spread of lifestyle blocks present the biggest risk to the loss of highly productive land, be it for aggregate or food."

Over the last 20 years, nearly five times as much highly productive land has been converted to lifestyle blocks than for residential sections.

Wayne Scott says these blocks provide the greatest risk to quarries with newly arrived owners soon challenging the effects of sometimes long-established quarries, already subject to often strict resource consent requirements.

"In our discussions with Environment Minister David Parker we have pointed out these 'reverse sensitivity' risks and it's very welcome that he has identified them as one of the issues to be addressed by councils as they formulate new land use plans over the next three years."

Wayne Scott says the new NPS spells out that councils must provide for mineral and aggregate extraction that allows 'significant national or regional public benefit that could not otherwise be achieved using resources within New Zealand.'

A comparison of revenue per area of land done five years ago had shown quarrying generated between 6 and 10 times more revenue per hectare than dairy, beef/lamb or horticulture.

Wayne Scott says these were estimates calculated from available data and he accepts things may have changed somewhat in five years.

"The key point is that NZ needs quarries able to operate in close proximity to urban populations because transport is the big cost in each truckload of delivered aggregate, rock or sand. That's why quarry operators around the country welcome the new policy statement saying their land deserves to be protected from encroachment, just as much as market gardens and other food production."

Quarrying is a highly productive use of land and in most cases is a temporary land use, with site restoration a critical element to ensure that land is available for future generations, says Wayne Scott.

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