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Media Release from Aggregate & Quarry Association

New Prime Minister needs to halt new indicated extractives ban

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins has been asked to intervene following confirmation today that the Government plans to implement a ban on all extractive sector activities on the conservation estate.

Wayne Scott, CEO of the Aggregate and Quarry Association, says while the media coverage focuses on the possible effects of such a ban on mining and the West Coast, such a decision would have profound implications across New Zealand.

“If this new bill extends to all minerals covered under the Crown Minerals Act, it will end access to riverbank gravel deposits on land with little or no conservation values.”

Wayne Scott says Chris Hipkins should contemplate what that means for his Government’s plans for infrastructure and housing as well as its current efforts to support flood-ravaged regions.

“Over-flowing rivers can be a key contributor in floods such as those in 2021 in the Ashburton area where not enough gravel was removed to mitigate flooding.”

“Last year, there was pressure on the Government to support a Green Party bill which would ban all quarrying on any piece of conservation land, no matter what it’s conservation value.

“If Labour follows suit it would end alluvial gravel extraction as well as lock up as much as a third of New Zealand’s future hard rock reserves which are situated on the broader Department of Conservation (DOC) estate.

“We are not talking national parks. Most rock reserves sit in stewardship land that has much lower conservation values. If these reserves are roped off in perpetuity, it will halt the ambitions of this and future governments to resolve our woeful national infrastructure deficit.

“These are the roads, rail corridors and cycle tracks we variously use, the huge water infrastructure repair that’s needed, not to mention the 250 tonnes of aggregate required for every new home.”

Wayne Scott says there are existing quarries already operating on DOC land including in areas like Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Northland, and Southland.

“We even have the example of DOC choosing to extract rock and gravel from conservation land adjoining the Waiho River near Franz Josef Glacier to help protect its walking tracks. This sensible and pragmatic decision saved DOC a four-fold amount and considerable carbon emissions from the alternative of trucking material a long distance from an existing quarry.”

He says the rock, gravel and sand resources needed to build a modern society aren’t sited everywhere and access to river deposits and hard rock on low grade conservation land needs to continue to be available.

“Chris Hipkins is already showing a pragmatic face and a wish to concentrate on bread and butter issues. We respectfully suggest he needs to also focus on where our nation gets its rock because without it, New Zealand can’t roll.”

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