

**Opinion article, Quarrying and Mining magazine, May 2008**

**Crunch time is approaching for New Zealanders if they want to continue building houses and roads at a reasonable cost, says James Boyce, Aggregate and Quarrying Association (AQA) President...**

Imagine a world without concrete or tarmac. No new roads, very little construction, virtually nil economic growth. It is a world that few if any of us would wish to contemplate.

I don't want to be over-dramatic but from where I sit running a quarry on the Bombay Hills, this is a view of a New Zealand I am beginning to fear might emerge.

If decisions are not made in the near future about improving access to rock and stone resources, we will all be paying a heavy price.

Already, the aggregate from the quarry I manage is being supplemented on Auckland road and construction projects from material imported from 100 kms to my south and 150kms to my north.

You are all footing the bill for that already. Every 30 kilometres a load of aggregates has to be transported, its cost doubles. Much of your tax roading dollars and your construction costs are being wasted on unnecessary trucking costs.

There is no shortage of aggregate in Auckland. Councils run shy of renewing quarry permits let alone allowing new ones. We need the community to plan further, to plan for example for residential areas to include provision for aggregate production.

There is no formal policy statement or national strategy for the provision of aggregate reserves into the future.

Unless we implement appropriate planning controls very soon, I cannot see how the industry will be able to provide the aggregate required to sustain our current lifestyle requirements past the next 20 years in an economically viable manner.

New Zealanders want the aggregate but they perceive that quarries will bring aggravation, especially in urban or semi-urban areas.

The AQA has been a supporter of sustainability since the 1970s. Last year, we chose our annual conference theme to integrate social and economical sustainability with environmental sustainability.

We recognise we are long-term citizens. Quarries need to be able to meet the current and future aggregate requirements of the community but also to harvest their reserves in an economical, profitable and sustainable manner.

In addition, we recognise that we are part of the community where we operate and must cohabitate with other users of the environment.

Quarries are not the dirty neighbours that many people perceive. New Zealand's Resource Management Act consent requirements are among the strictest in the world. In addition quarries like all modern businesses have also grown into being responsible citizens.

For example, Holcim's Bombay Quarry works to industry and resource consent requirements and to Holcim principles. We communicate regularly with neighbours and try to operate in a sustainable manner. Bombay opened ten years ago in a semi-rural setting. Currently it produces 60,000 tonnes per month. From planning stages, Quarry personnel have engaged pro-actively with the community and our community liaison group meets several times each year.

Like most quarries, we carefully monitor the quality of water entering and exiting our property. Dust deposits upwind from Bombay are higher than those downwind, dispelling the perception about quarries being very dusty. Processing the aggregates has become a much quieter operation than generally assumed. Rehabilitation of former quarries can provide public amenities - Mt Smart stadium is but one example.

Until recently, the quarry industry usually kept out of the limelight. However we now must rebuild our image to ensure our industry and the products we provide are seen as essential to our nation's future on a sustainable basis.

The 2008 AQA conference will show we are ready for that challenge.