

Article for Quarrying and Mining June edition

Take notice of a truck coming your way; laden with 11 tonnes of aggregate. This is your per capita delivery. As a New Zealander, you are one of the world's biggest consumers of aggregate. But soon, unless your Council and Government make some major changes, your delivery might dwindle to a car trailer load...

This is the message that will be bluntly given to local body and Parliamentary leaders at this year's Institute of Quarrying / Aggregate and Quarry Association Annual Conference, being held in Auckland from July 9-11. Around 400 delegates will attend..

Conference chairman Andrew Dronjak says the industry has long been a quiet achiever but now sees the need for a significant shift in political and public attitudes to the importance of local access to rock and stone resources.

An industry 'election year manifesto' is under development for launch ahead of the July conference, setting out the policy setting changes needed if New Zealand is going to continue to grow. It will be followed by a public awareness campaign. The conference theme 'Our Foundation, Our Future" underpins the reliance placed on aggregate supplies by virtually every economic activity. No buildings can be built, few homes erected, no roads, bridges, tunnels or even railways constructed.

Andrew Dronjak says in 2006, the industry produced 46 million tonnes of aggregates worth \$558 million. That's about 11 tonnes or one truckload of aggregate for every New Zealander, making one of the highest consumers of aggregate in the world. There is a strong link to infrastructural development and economic output in developed economies. The Irish, the world's second wealthiest people produce 33.3 tonnes per capita.

The IOQ and AQA project that despite a possible recession, pent-up demand for aggregates in New Zealand will see our 11 tonne per capita figure increase.

Andrew Dronjak says there is an important caveat: major improvements are now required in access to resources. Take Auckland. Our nation's biggest city has seen no new significant greenfield quarries opened in the region the past ten years as existing quarries are being mined out.

Mayors from around the Auckland region have been invited to take part in a panel discussion at the IOQ / AQA conference and to outline how their councils' view quarries.

Leading into the panel discussion is keynote speaker Stephen Sellwood, Chief Executive, New Zealand Council for Infrastructural Development, who will outline how to reduce the obstacles to allow for more sustainable development.

Andrew Dronjak says in currently considering Quarry Resource Consent Applications, councils tend to reflect incorrect public perceptions that quarries are not good neighbours.

“The result is local reserves of aggregate material are cordoned off and increasingly the industry is pushed out of urban boundaries. We all pay a heavy price for this; every 30 kilometres a load of aggregates is transported doubles its cost. Not to mention the increased carbon footprint of trucks travelling ever greater distances. This makes it less sustainable from a commercial and environmental perspective.”

An information campaign to counter incorrect public perceptions about quarries will be launched at the July conference.

Andrew Dronyak says the message to the public and politicians is simple: “If you continue to put barriers in the way of quarrying and the sourcing of aggregate, the foundation for the future of New Zealand will be at risk.

“We intend to show people how much the industry does to be sustainable and a good neighbour; how vital quarries are for our country and our vibrant way of life. Without quarries, everything we take for granted would be affected in some way. Our message is they are as essential to New Zealanders as water and electricity.