



13 March 2017

Media Statement

Send dust ban to dust bin or end much economic activity

The Aggregate and Quarry Association says if Environment Canterbury implements a new 'no tolerance' ban on any dust beyond quarry boundaries it could end a whole range of land-based activities.

The AQA represents more than 80% of New Zealand's registered quarries and chair Brian Roche says its members take the health issues presented by potential exposure to higher levels of silica dust seriously, with their workers facing the highest of any risks.

ECAN, the Canterbury DHB and Christchurch City Council have jointly announced a new comprehensive air monitoring programme around Yaldhurst quarries given concerns from residents about potential exposure to mined silica dust.

Brian Roche says the quarry industry is very willing to share its scientific advice on silica dust issues and to work with local authorities to address any consent issues which may arise from dust control at any quarry.

Mr Roche says dust is a factor in quarry operations around the country and quarries work with their local authorities and neighbours to have best practice controls including spraying water over truckloads of aggregate leaving a quarry, wheel baths and planting shelter belts.

"We acknowledge that silica dust at certain levels can potentially present risks to staff working at quarries. Many quarries, particularly larger operators, conduct regular health and respiratory monitoring of their staff and I've not been made aware of any particular, pressing health concerns."

Mr Roche says the New Zealand workplace standard is for crystalline silica to be below 0.1 milligrams per cubic metre of air volume over an 8 hour average.

"If there is any evidence of that level being exceeded and a quarry worker being exposed, we'd expect authorities to respond."

"That said we have spoken to our Australian and European counterparts in the quarry industry and they are unaware of any issue ever arising with neighbours being exposed to crystalline silica."

"For ECAN to now announce a 'no tolerance' approach to any dust of any kind beyond a quarry boundary just beggars belief."

"Quarries are like other land-based activities including farming, sub-divisions, forestry and road works. When a howling nor-wester blows, you will have some dust no matter what"

controls you put in place. Whether there's any crystalline silica in it is another matter and that is not supported by evidence we are aware of here or overseas."

Mr Roche says if ECAN's 'no dust beyond the boundary' edict prevails, it won't just be quarries that are shut down.

"Farmers won't be able to farm if there's ever any dust caused. Canterbury's building programme will draw to a halt because earthworks inevitably create some dust. ECAN itself will have to stop river protection work because there'll be some dust in extracting the rocks and later repositioning some of them on river banks."

Brian Roche says the quarry industry accepts some neighbours may face issues with higher than acceptable dust levels and particular concerns about the amount of crystalline silica in the dust.

"We are more than happy to work to address such concerns but an overnight blanket ban on any dust is going to have enormous consequences for our economy and society if it is allowed to stand."

Contacts: Brian Roche, Chair, Aggregate and Quarry Association, AQA 021 900575

Brendon Burns, AQA Communications Adviser 0274 305501