

# Apprenticeships to attract new extractives workers

Eamon Rood - Tue, 03 Jul 2018

A proposed apprenticeship scheme for mines and quarries promises to bring new blood into an industry struggling to recruit workers.

MinEx and MITO are developing an apprenticeship programme partly modelled on that used for civil trades.

"What civil trades has found that it's easier to attract new people when offering apprenticeships," says MinEx CEO Wayne Scott.

"What we've done is work up a system that is similar to the civil trades system, but not as formalised."

Quarrying and mining apprenticeships are well-established in places like Australia. Scott says he has spoken with several companies that are interested in the scheme, as well as young people intrigued by the idea.

"It's been gaining traction for a while. The industry hasn't been good at training people, though we're not the only industry like that in New Zealand."

Scott says larger companies have their own programmes, noting [Ravensdown's](#) cadet programme.

But the decline of regional polytechnics and pull back from central and local government training has left a gap that industry hasn't quite filled. This also means there are fewer people with transferrable skills that can take up work at a mine or quarry.

Certifications also took a back seat to developing CoCs when health and safety laws for extractives were overhauled, he says.

Scott hopes to release details about the programme before the QuarryNZ Conference in Hamilton later this month.

## Young blood

Senior industry figures from companies including Kaipara, Imerys New Zealand, and OceanaGold [discussed](#) the recruitment challenge, particularly younger of workers, at the NZ Minerals Forum in May.

Industry-accredited apprenticeships recently topped an Inside Resources poll on how best to address the labour shortage, receiving 50 per cent of votes against four other options.

Rebranding to attract millennials was the second-most popular with 27 per cent, followed by more exposure to secondary schools (16 per cent) and relaxing immigration policy (5 per cent). A '[just transition](#)' from some mining to other extractives had no takers.

Aggregate and Quarry Association chair Brian Roche says there is a pressing need for younger people to work in quarries.

"I see it at every quarry conference, when I'm speaking the people looking back at me are old, there's not too many young people in the hall. So I'm acutely aware that the average age is going up, not down."

Apprenticeships could encourage younger people to consider quarrying by offering a clear pathway for skills and advancement.

"In the past it's been a hard sell, we don't come across as the most glamorous place to work. We're an unassuming bunch of blokes, we don't talk ourselves up and are generally pretty humble.

"Once people get into a quarry, they're accepted pretty quickly, people are friendly. But getting people in the gate in the first place is the issue.

"I think it's a good idea to use the opportunity to promote our industry to school leavers, with a pathway from the bottom of the ladder becoming an operator."

## Role-specific

Tai Poutini Polytechnic director Peter O'Sullivan sees merit in the idea if it can guide people towards a specific role such as a mine manager.

"If more people are going train towards that, instead of just to meet compliance requirements, then that can only be a good thing."

He thinks this could be an improvement over the current approach taken with CoCs if done correctly.

"A unit standard by unit standard approach is not conducive to get people to perform a certain role," he says. "If we want people to be a mine manager, then they have to study to be one. Everything they learn must be in the context of the end goal."

O'Sullivan adds he looks forward to being involved in the discussion when more details of the scheme put together by MinEx and Mito.

