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MINING AND QUARRYING INTELLIGENCE

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## EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW: Wayne Scott - chief executive, MinEx

Bernie Napp - Wed, 28 Mar 2018

Wayne Scott reflects on nine months in the role, and health and safety priorities for the mining and quarrying sectors.

### BN: Workplace health and safety milestones to date?

WS: Establishing the mentor programme has been a success, and not only in terms of the 20 or so mentors that have volunteered their time. I think it's highlighted to the sector at large that mentoring plays a big part in developing people and in preparing people for the oral exams. The B-Grade pass rates are now at 80 per cent, compared to 40 per cent previously.

### BN: The mentoring programme has a broader impact on the skills of mining and quarrying people, and managers?

WS: It does. I think with the competence model that the legislation is based on, there's been an acceptance from the sector that sending people off to training does help develop them into better managers.

I think the failure rates of particular B Grades, and also other Certificate of Competence levels, has highlighted deficiencies in the way people get trained at the workplace, how they relate their training in that classroom to their work.

When I first arrived the industry were very much in the mode of blaming trainers. What appeared to me was that there's something fundamentally wrong when a bloke that's been 40 years in the quarry business can't articulate how he manages safety. That was really where the whole mentoring thing came from in my mind.

The second thing for me is engaging with a lot of people in the industry, and to an extent it is has driven the business plan for next year. I spent a lot of time travelling, but in doing that I've been able to get a really good picture at all levels in the sector.

The other thing is the re-focus on the data that we collect, and getting people thinking away from incidents and injuries, and lost-time and medical treatments, to the fatal hazards and the incidents that occur that, but for luck a lot of the time, could have been a lot more serious. And with that, there's been this whole sharing of safety alerts and information, which is only in its infancy but probably a significant milestone for the sector.

### BN: How do things stand for the extractives industry on workplace H & S?

WS: I think a bit too much effort goes into measuring performance. I've deliberately tried to shy away from that, and to focus people on what's happening in their business, what could have been really bad, high-consequence events.

The last five years in particular, certainly post-Pike River, there's been a significant improvement. I've spent a bit of time in the country over the years, and I've really noticed it, particularly in the quarry sector, in the last five years.

### BN: Highlights of the new MinEx business plan?

WS: Getting me on the ground more, and providing extra resources for the sector. We're going to be providing some training for the small end of town; we've got planned 17 regional workshops to help small operators with the effectiveness of their safety systems, just the real basic stuff.

These guys can actually get their B Grade Certificate of Competence and not have anything in place at their operation, because they can go off to the classroom, complete the unit standards, get an understanding of what's required, they can then articulate the scenarios and so forth when they go and do the oral exam. They can be issued with a Certificate of Competence - saying I'm now a B Grade quarry manager. None of that process, particularly if they haven't had a visit from a WorkSafe inspector, necessarily prepares them for what they need to physically do at their workplace.

We have started a series of flyers on worker health issues - the first one was on respirable crystalline silica, and the second one is on whole-body vibration, which is due out soon. So, there'll be half a dozen of these through the year.

We're looking at developing some field booklets, which is an idea that came out of Australia and they're a little easier to read, aimed at workers and we're going to be producing those this year. Australia's got about a dozen of them - they actually sell them through the Institute of Quarrying but we're going to look at producing them as part of the MinEx budget, making them free.

The other biggie is the regulation review. The Minister for Workplace Relations and Safety, Iain Lees-Galloway, has determined he wants the regulations reviewed, and in place by December this year. There's going to be a fair bit of work go into that. He's got a fairly aggressive agenda around regulations and codes of practice, so there's going to be a fair bit of effort go into those things as well.

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**BN: Where next for workplace H & S in the industry?**

WS: New Zealand should be up there with all advanced nations.

On the traditional measures around fatality rates and incident rates, NZ doesn't sit too badly. We're certainly under America, quite significantly, but we don't have the gun laws that they have. In fact, their largest single cause of workplace fatality is shotgun wounds. So, we sit well below them, but we sit higher than Australia and I think that we shouldn't be. There's not that many differences that we shouldn't be at least at the level that Australia's at with injuries and incidents.

Culturally, we are a bit different to Australians in terms of what we're prepared to accept in terms of personal responsibility. I think New Zealanders still believe that people should take personal responsibility, and that it's not all on the employer. In Australia, health and safety is seen as more the employer's responsibility. That's just an observation. And, in my view, you are going to fail if you are going to leave it up to individuals to make decisions or follow procedures.

The other biggie, when you compare us to Australia, is that Australia's disasters occurred earlier. The three Mowra explosions were in 1986, in the early 90's, and the last one was 2003. Their legislation came in 1999 on the back of the second Mowra multiple fatality.

Whereas New Zealand had that 20 years of deregulation that didn't help. Hindsight's a wonderful thing but it didn't take the country forward in health and safety.

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