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SAFETY



LEAD ROLE FOR PAST PRESIDENT IN PUSHING SAFETY COMPLIANCE

Posted March 01, 2018 |

Past IQA President Wayne Scott has embarked on arguably one of the toughest gigs in the New Zealand extractive industry – promoting industry safety compliance.

Scott was appointed as the chief executive of the NZ Mining Extractives Health and Safety Council (MinEx) in July 2017. He had moved from Queensland where he was an inspector of mines for the Department of Natural Resources and Mines for nearly nine years.

A New Zealander, Scott grew up near Auckland and moved to Australia in the mid- 1980s, working initially in civil construction as an accountant (he is a qualified chartered accountant). He entered the extractive industry in the early 1990s and, prior to his inspectorate role, spent 20 years in various quarrying positions (he is a certified practising quarry manager with qualifications in extractives and risk management). He was on the IQA board for nine years and President from 2011 to 2013.

Scott says his strengths lie in people management and development, safety procedures and training, and financial management. After starting as MinEx CEO, Scott travelled around NZ, meeting with key industry players and familiarising himself with their occupational health and safety (OHS) issues and challenges.

"Essentially my mission, and that of MinEx, is to be an effective voice for the mining, tunnelling and quarrying sector on OHS issues and to drive improvement in safety across the industry," Scott said.

"I'm here to help managers and staff recognise the importance of operating in a safe, competent manner and to assist them in setting up OHS management systems that are compliant with the new legislation."

He added there was little difference on OHS issues between Queensland and New Zealand – especially concerning smaller operators.



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The biggest hurdle for MinEx, Scott said, is convincing some businesses that OHS is a vital component of everyday business and that managers and staff should take it seriously.

"While the new OHS legislation may not have been well 'marketed' to the sector when government introduced it, and is perhaps aimed more at underground mining, there have been some 'knockers' who see the extent of the regulations as unnecessary or over the top for quarrying," he said.

"The fact remains, however, there have been fatalities in the workplace and there's been no improvement since 2001. We need to change the mindset and get greater compliance across the sector."

Scott said his initial focus was on the potentially fatal and serious injury hazards and better engagement with the whole industry.

"I want to get people thinking as one entity," he said, "with none of this 'us and them' mentality that appears to exist between mining and quarrying people. After all, both extract material from the ground and as most mining in [NZ] is now above ground there is a greater commonality."

Scott added that he doesn't propose throwing OHS manuals at workers for instant reading.

"That's okay for the bigger players with OHS people on-staff who can mentor employees, but for the small operator with less than 10 staff, I am coming up with ways to support them by providing a more favourable hands-on training approach.

"For example, by holding informal presentations in their 'smoko' room, by pointing out the basics and reasons for maintaining a safe workplace, encouraging people to look out for each other, and by encouraging two-way conversation and listening to ideas.

"It's about engaging with people, getting 'buy-in' with a *softly, softly* approach, not about ramming legislation into their heads. It is in the small mines and quarries that most incidents happen – so they are my main target."

Scott said complaints from the quarrying industry that "mining" regulations were being pushed upon them by "mining consultants" was indicative of the "us and them" mentality.

"I acknowledge there are some difficulties around this and some issues to deal with – but I don't really see it as a problem. We need to look to the future, not the past. We need to be prepared to share commonalities."

Moving forward with the new legislation, which he said reflects the best platforms of other countries (including Australia), Scott said he was encouraging operators and staff to discuss any problems with him or the team at MinEx.

"I may not have all the answers in the short term but I will do my best to understand the issue and provide guidance in complying with the legislation.

"I am also here to assist government to ensure our workplaces are safe and to act as a conduit between the sector and the relevant government agencies so that they better understand our industry and our concerns. It's about being on the front foot."

Scott also understands that there are concerns quarry operators are not being fairly represented on some boards, eg the Environmental and Industrial Analysis group in Christchurch and Wellington and within WorkSafe [NZ]. Even MinEx has been criticised for not being representative of quarrying.

"I've heard that and I will be working to bring about changes in representation," he said.

He also advocated closer collaboration between MinEx and other extractive peak bodies such as the NZ Minerals Industry Association (aka Straterra) and the Aggregates and Quarries Association. "I would not see it as a merger though, more the setting up of a new entity encompassing the roles of some of these organisations," he said.

Scott added that he has no aspirations of heading such an organisation and believes there are others better suited to that role.

"The big question is can the extractives sector as a whole agree to work together through a single entity?" he asked. "I like to think they can."

By Richard Silcock

Article courtesy of Q&M (NZ Quarrying & Mining). Visit quarryingandminingmag.co.nz



"My strengths lie in people management and development, safety procedures and training, and financial management."

Wayne Scott, Chief Executive of MinEx

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