

# Two NZP&M permit holders seek work changes

Simon Hartley - Fri, 24 Apr 2020

Just two of the more than 900 extractives industry NZP&M permit holders have applied for any form of deferment, brought on by the month-long Covid-19 lockdown across the country.

More than 90 per cent of up to 1,200 quarries around New Zealand were unable to work under Alert Level 4 lockdown, 20-30 West Coast alluvial gold miners were closed and OceanaGold's Waihi and Macraes mines were only able to operate in a limited capacity.

Extractives prospectors and junior explorers alike were shut down for the month.

While permit fees relief measures were announced on some States in Australia earlier this month, MBIE told *Inside Resources* at the time there would be no fee waiver, citing provisions in the Crown Minerals Act where permit holders could apply to change permit conditions, including work programme commitments.

An MBIE spokesperson told *Inside Resources* today it recognises the challenging circumstances its permit applicants are facing in light of Covid-19, and their important roles supporting the New Zealand economy during these times.

NZP&M has just received two applications for change of work programme conditions, he says.

"They're a result of the lockdown causing delays in getting equipment to site and work done in time to meet some [permit] obligation deadlines," the spokesperson says.

The applications are under evaluation, he says.

"We're encouraging any permit holders to get in touch with us if they have any issues," the spokesperson says.

Both the quarrying and alluvial mining sectors, at times backed by some in local and regional councils, expressed frustrations they could operate safely, given the remoteness of sites and distances staff using machinery usually operated under.

NZP&M says it is processing permit applications as quickly as possible and hopes to bring in additional resources to help speed the application process up, he says.

"At the same time, we must ensure any decisions are granted in accordance with the law," the spokesperson says.

## ASR returns during lockdown

Despite the Level 4 lockdown, the spokesperson says NZP&M "has been encouraged" by the number of Annual Summary Returns received during lockdown.

Last December NZP&M moved to only accepting ASR's online, to help overcome delays in permit processing, as only a third of 900 were previously done online; which became a drag on actual permit processing times.

The CMA requires all permit holders to keep detailed and timely records and reports on prospecting, exploration and mining activity, with the ASRs due by 31 March each year.

## Industry Covid-19 H&S

The spokesperson says as the sector prepares to move from Alert Level 4 to 3, he urged care in returning to work and to have regard to standard industry H&S processes, highlighting MinEx's Covid-19 Management Plan template.

## South Australia initiative

Australia's Association of Mining and Exploration Companies has been calling for cost relief from all Australian governments in two key areas, exemptions from minimum expenditure requirements and mining tenement rental fees, both large fixed costs.

Earlier this month the South Australia State government announced that permit holders' committed exploration expenditure will be waived for 12 months, plus there will be a six-month deferral of rents.

The SA initiative is being followed by some other Australian States, notably Western Australia.

