



2018 PERSPECTIVES ([HTTPS://CONTRACTORMAG.CO.NZ/CATEGORY/2018-PERSPECTIVES/](https://contractormag.co.nz/category/2018-perspectives/))



Change and challenge ahead for quarry sector

📅 DECEMBER 21ST, 2017

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A new year, a new government, a half century celebration and potentially for the quarry sector, a change in structure; that's how 2018 is shaping up. By **Roger Parton**, CEO, Aggregate and Quarry Association.



(<https://contractormag.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/parton.jpg>) The new Labour-led government is now in place and the AQA is already putting in its bids to engage with Ministers. At the very least we should acknowledge that changes of government in this country take place democratically and that life continues, albeit with some new directions and dimensions.

Of course, the new administration is built around the Labour Party which is a centre-left party made up of a mix of idealists and pragmatists. It is a government committed to economic development, notably in the regions. With hundreds of quarries dotted from Te Hapua to Bluff, providing the foundations for every road, new home, factory, school, office and hospital, we trust the quarrying industry is able to provide the rock and stone required to keep the country growing.

We will look to the Labour pragmatists in the Cabinet such as David Parker, Stuart Nash and Damien O'Connor, not to mention NZ First's Winston Peters, Ron Mark and Shane Jones to ensure this occurs. Nash certainly impressed the quarry sector by being the only MP from any party to accept an invitation to attend last year's QuarryNZ conference; he gave a supportive and well-received speech on the importance of the sector.

It would be something of an understatement to say that the Green Party is not seen as supportive of the quarrying sector. That said, the AQA notes how one of its own core ambitions aligns with Green principles. We continue to fight for access to local resources, rather than being pushed further and further from urban centres. This reduces emissions and traffic congestion. We trust any MP, especially those committed to climate change, can see the benefits of continued access to urban/urban fringe aggregate.

A related issue that will present potential challenges for us is the Labour-led government's wish to build 10,000 more houses, notably in Auckland. This is seeing the current urban/rural boundary coming under pressure. Much of Auckland's remaining locally-produced aggregate is sourced from the rolling pastures to the north of the Bombay Hills.

These are still zoned rural. If housing is allowed to spread into adjoining areas, you can imagine the difficulty in getting a quarry consent renewed, let alone a new one approved. The government, in concert with the Auckland Council, needs to think very carefully about how to balance its housing ambitions with retaining local sources of the very material that will allow new houses (and the connecting roads and infrastructure) to be built.

On a wider front, the AQA would look to the new government for a share of the promised \$1 billion a year spend in regional New Zealand. While it is not yet clear how this regional development funding is to be spent, it would be hard to overlook improved roads, bridges, new public buildings and rural broadband infrastructure, all of which will require increased volumes of aggregate.


We hope also that the government will address some of the fundamental issues that are plaguing our industry's attempts to meet new health and safety requirements. There is a considerable gap between the training currently provided and what is actually fit for purpose for the quarrying sector. We are not training professionals, but we see everyday examples of mismatches between what's needed by quarry staff and what they are being required to learn.

Our ITO, for one, is proving to be deaf to our pleas but the issues are not limited to this organisation.

All power to any reforms that align the needs of practical, often rural/regionally-based quarry workers with the new health and safety requirements.

In July, the AQA in conjunction with the Institute of Quarrying NZ (our industry's professional body) will mark 50 years since the first quarrying conference. Of course, quarrying has been an activity since the first European settlers arrived and needed stone for buildings and later roads, but we took quite a while to formalise ourselves.

The capacious and well-appointed Claudelands event centre in Hamilton has been booked for what promises to be a memorable event to mark 50 years since our industry came of age. If you are a potential attendee or visitor, mark July 18-20 in your calendars and look at the QuarryNZ website for registration

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