

Extractives sector in limbo awaiting Govt training changes - MinEx

Simon Hartley - Fri, 29 Nov 2019

The New Zealand extractives sector ends the year "in limbo" as the quarrying and mining sectors await more details from the Government's wide-ranging Review of Vocational Education.

Under legislation introduced to Parliament in August, Independent Training Organisations like MITO will cease to exist from 2022, MinEx and Aggregate and Quarry Association chief executive Wayne Scott says.

Education Minister Chris Hipkins began rolling out the sweeping vocational training announcements in June.

Sector has vocal concerns

The extractives and construction sectors became vocal with concerns about how crucial on-site training programmes will fit into the new regime, in particular, the Institute of Quarrying New Zealand, Civil Contractors New Zealand, the AQA and Infrastructure New Zealand.

Scott told *Inside Resources* today that now, several months on, he had more confidence the extractives sector would have a voice; albeit still with some lingering fish hooks. "I'm more confident from [attending government] workshops and assurances that extractives will be looked after," he says.

Changes afoot toward national campus

The catalyst for changes to the country's 16 institutes of technology and polytechnics came after three of them were bailed out to the tune of almost \$100 million, and will see them brought together to operate as a single national campus network.

Hipkins told *Inside Resources* in mid-August he wanted on-site training expanded and that the reforms wouldn't undermine on-the-job training or replace on-the-job training with classroom-based education.

He said his goal was to expand on-the-job training and put an end to the split between work-based training and provider-based vocational education.

However, Scott described the situation for the extractives sector as "in limbo" and in a "wait and see" position until Hipkins announces the structure of the Work Development Councils around the country.

Scott reiterated it was important employers should continue to enrol staff for training, and training be encouraged as "business as usual".

No split between differing Work Development Councils

Starting from next April through to 2022, Scott said there would be a transition of all learners to the newly formed, overarching, Institute of Skills and Technology. "One thing that's really important is that we're not split between two Work Development Councils; across mining/quarrying/tunnels," he says.

The issue was that while CoCs came under one level of legislation, that was across two sectors; mining and the civil construction arenas. "We're better off to be under one or the other, not split," he says.

"We're still a small sector and we need to retain suitable, viable training programmes for Certificate of Competence."

He noted that while the Government intended to gazette the proposed changes, the extractives sector may be so relatively small as to not be included.

Replacing the ITOs will be the Workplace Development Councils

"Extractives is likely to be placed under the Construction and Infrastructure or Primary Industries WDC as the probable best fit for our sector," Scott says.

There are also 15 Regional Skills Leadership Groups being formed to make sure community groups, concerns and soft skills are taken into account when developing each regional workforce plan.

"Given our small size as a sector, I can't see extractives being able to play much of a role with these regional groups."

Extractives focus to be at industry level

"Similarly, while some Centres of Vocational Excellence will be formed, again we are too small. Our industry's focus will be at the industry level," he says.

Scott says MITO is happy to support MinEx for the next two years and the sector needed to get qualifications and CoCs "firmed up" before the new structures were put in place.

ITOs last year supported more than 50,000 apprentices and 88,000 industry trainees.

