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Simon Hartley - Mon, 16 Nov 2020



The NZ Minerals Forum 2020 Award Winners were announced today at the rescheduled on-line conference – the four major winners being Nuenz, OceanaGold, Bathurst Resources and Road Metals.

Prospect Consulting director Bernie Napp, who chaired the judging panel, says the four awards showcase the New Zealand minerals sector at the leading edge of sustainability and social performance.

“We manage our impacts on the environment and on people, and we do it well, as we should. This is a message for the incoming Government, and to all with concerns about mining,” Napp says.

“Clearly, it’s important that the minerals sector operates in a responsible way, and the many awards entries the judging panel received this year show a genuine commitment to that.”

Others on the judging panel included Alan Broome, who has a long career as a mining professional and is an expert on technological advances in mining; Dean Fergusson who has an extensive mining geology and management background; Heather McKay, consents and compliance manager at the West Coast Regional Council; and Sheryl Roa, principal advisor consents at Waikato Regional Council. Also on the panel was Wayne Scott, chief executive of the Aggregate and Quarry Association and chief executive of MinEx.

Innovation award winner – Nuenz, for development and commercialisation of silicon nitride nanofibre advanced material.

Nuenz is 100 per cent owned by New Zealand Coal and Carbon and is based in Lower Hutt. Napp says the company's ability to produce an internationally competitive product earned it the win over a highly competitive field.

“It is so difficult to commercialise a new material and they did it by working with their customers to produce advanced, high-strength composites that they could use in construction materials, mining technology, and other applications,” he says.

Nuenz is on the way to fulfilling its vision of becoming an advanced materials company with its novel process of converting lignite to silicon fibre (Si_3N_4) and collaborating with customers to manufacture new composite materials.

In doing so, the company has created significant intellectual property in the form of manufacturing trade secrets and its marketing of trade secrets.

Health and safety initiative award, sponsored by MinEx – OceanaGold Macraes, for its *Healthy employees make safer employees* programme.

MinEx chief executive Wayne Scott announced the award, saying it was a hard fought win and was due to the duration of OceanaGold’s healthy and safe workers programme and its commitment to its people.

Health, wellness and a happier lifestyle are behind OceanaGold’s five-year drive to assist employees across the company to make proactive health choices.

Its *Healthy employees make safer employees* project worked on numerous studies including fatigue/sleep, Vitamin D levels, hydration, physical activity, injury management and return to work plans.

It collated in-house medical data, devised and implemented health programmes, and undertook case studies across multiple areas.

Environmental management award, sponsored by Lane Neave – Bathurst Resources, for its Stockton mine related bird conservation.

Napp says this successful conservation programme for native birds and other species on the West Coast was a standout entry for Bathurst Resources.

“Particularly for the well documented bird recovery rates, among them kiwi and blue duck,” he says.

The largest coal producer in the country, Bathurst is funding and managing a predator control programme to offset the biodiversity effects of mining at Cypress, with a 1000 hectare kiwi and other native bird area established in the Oparara catchment of the Kahurangi National Park.

Bathurst Resources Oparara Kiwi Sanctuary on the West Coast’s Stockton plateau is beginning to rival those seen on predator free offshore islands.

Community initiative award winner – Road Metals for its open day at Rolleston quarry.

The Community initiative award is for outstanding initiatives which have been demonstrably beneficial to both the organisation and communities involved, Napp says.

“The open day at Road Metals’ Rolleston quarry was delivered with such energy and passion, and vivid storytelling, as to make this entry highly memorable to the judging panel,” he says.

The promotion of community involvement was the key to Road Metals decision to host a quarry open day last October in Rolleston – attracting more than 1000 visitors – under the theme “Engaging the Community”.

The Open Day included Civil Contracting NZ’s annual excavator competition, where visitors were able to see skilled operators at work. Aside from showcasing the large quarry and its daily operations and products, the public were also able to see rehabilitated areas which had been re-soiled and grassed, with stock grazing.

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