

## Submission from Straterra to the Ministry for the Environment Long-term Insights Briefing October 2022

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### Introduction

1. Straterra is the industry association representing the New Zealand minerals and mining sector. Our membership is comprised of mining companies, explorers, researchers, service providers, and support companies.
2. We are grateful for the opportunity to make this brief submission on the Consultation on the Ministry for the Environment's draft Long-term Insights Briefing 2022, [\*Where to from here? How we ensure the future wellbeing of land and people\*](#) (the document).

### Submission

3. We agree that the health of the land and wellbeing of people are closely interconnected and that New Zealand needs to find a way to look after the land while also providing for the wellbeing of future generations.
4. However, we are concerned that the document does not fully appreciate the contribution mineral resources make to wellbeing and economic growth specifically, nor does it reflect the efforts and success that the minerals industry makes to contributing to the health of the land.

### If it is not farmed it is mined

5. It needs to be remembered that the products of mining are essential for the modern society that most people embrace. Almost every aspect of our lives relies on minerals or mineral products. Aggregates for infrastructure, housing and concrete; coking coal and iron ore (including ironsands) to make steel; gold, silver, copper, rare earth elements (REEs), lithium and vanadium for electronics, electric vehicles, solar panels, batteries – the list goes on. Essentially, if it is not farmed it is mined. This is something people are unaware of, overlook, or turn a blind eye to, as they go about their daily lives enjoying such minerals. If it is not mined in New Zealand, it will be mined somewhere else and not mining it here only passes emissions and any other environmental impacts offshore, out of sight and out of mind.

### Extractives

6. We are disappointed that the document makes disparaging comments about the extractives sector e.g. the "over-reliance in the economy and society on extractive activities". While resources are not infinite, extraction of minerals today does not have to deprive future generations of their availability. Archaeological evidence shows people have been extracting minerals in New Zealand since 1400 AD.

## The circular economy

7. We acknowledge the importance of the circular economy in the minerals sector and in general. Maximising the use and reuse of mineral resources for as long as possible is undoubtedly a good thing. However, while greater recycling and improved resource efficiency is increasing, its potential shouldn't be overstated. Technology will need to advance significantly to fully replace the need for minerals extraction.

## Mining and climate change

8. The products of mining are part of the solution for reducing New Zealand's and the world's emissions and they will play an important role as we move to a lower carbon economy. Minerals are needed in abundance to make wind turbines, solar panels and batteries etc. New Zealand has the potential to supply some of these minerals. Vanadium, lithium, REEs and nickel-cobalt are examples of minerals which will be part of the low carbon economy – all of which New Zealand has the potential to supply, providing we have access to land and sea to explore, and appropriate regulation for extraction.
9. These products will also have an important role in helping New Zealand adapt to the changing climate. For example, aggregates are needed to strengthen sea walls to adapt to sea level rise and provide flood protection. They are needed to make infrastructure more resilient generally to resist greater-intensity storms and extreme weather events.

## Mining and the environment

10. Mining is sometimes criticised for its environmental impact but, in fact, modern mining in New Zealand is conducted responsibly and its recent track record is excellent by international standards.
11. New Zealand's environmental standards are among the best in the world. The country today applies world best-practice in environmental and conservation management. This is underpinned by strong regulation. The industry supports this regulation and recognises that it must perform well to meet society's high expectations of respect for the land and the environment, as well as the values promoted in this document.

## Rehabilitation

12. Unlike most other land uses, mining has a finite life. After a mine or quarry operation is concluded the land is restored as per consent conditions. This restoration is 'guaranteed' by bonds and administered by the relevant council. Companies have a strong commitment to this rehabilitation, above and beyond what is required in law and regulation.
13. There are many examples across New Zealand of world-class rehabilitation with former mines and quarries making a positive contribution to conservation and community projects. We highlight some of examples in these [environmental case studies](#).

## Conclusion

14. A mature, informed conversation is needed on ensuring the future wellbeing of land and people as it relates to New Zealand mineral resources. We trust our comments inform this conversation.