

STRATEGIC EXTRACTIVE RESOURCE AREAS PILOT PROJECT

INDUSTRY INFORMATION: Q&As

It's vital to secure the extractive resources that Victoria needs in coming decades as population grows and the demand for housing and infrastructure increases. The SERA pilot project is trialling the practical use of planning controls to achieve this safeguard and provide certainty to the Victorian community.

The Victorian Government recognises the important role of extractive industries in the future development of the state. It is vital the state's extractive resources are safeguarded, to ensure the long-term and competitive supply of construction materials across Victoria.

Measures are needed to:

- Secure extractive resources close to demand.
- Minimise the impact of incompatible development near operating quarries and in future extractive industry areas.
- Improve the planning system for new or expanding quarries.

The Strategic Extractive Resources Areas (SERA) pilot project is a priority initiative of the *Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy*. The trial project has commenced in partnership with the Wyndham City Council and South Gippsland Shire Council, and will progressively expand to other areas with strategically located resources.

The Resources Branch of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) and the Planning Division of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), lead the project in partnership with the two councils.

What is the government doing to secure current and future extractive resources?

Victoria's population is set to exceed 10 million by 2050. As our population rises so will our demand for quarry materials such as rock, gravel and sand.

The SERA pilot project will ensure ongoing access to the resources needed to meet Victoria's growth while helping to protect communities.

What does the SERA pilot project do?

The SERA pilot project will result in a suite of new planning policies and controls placed into the Wyndham and South Gippsland planning schemes. The new policies and controls will secure future resources and protect existing quarries within the SERA-defined areas.

These policies provide high-level support for the continuation and expansion of existing quarries and new quarries in these areas.

The new planning controls will better manage the interface with other land uses and to minimise constraints on quarry activities. This will provide greater certainty to quarry operators, new quarry applicants as well as landowners in the SERAs.

The SERA pilot project has involved consideration of existing geoscience reports, land uses, environmental values, transport, cultural heritage, as well as ongoing engagement with key stakeholders.

What are the benefits for industry?

The proposed planning policies and controls will support the current and future extractive industry in the SERA pilot project area by:

- Supporting the establishment and continued operation of quarries through clearer and tailored planning provisions.
- Streamlining approvals using permit treatments, and criteria-based notice and review exemptions.
- Securing future resources areas by managing development, land use and subdivision.

INDUSTRY INFORMATION

What are the advantages for extractive industry to develop sites in a SERA?

- Greater planning certainty for quarry operators.
- SERAs are close to transport routes that connect to key demand areas.
- SERAs cover recognised Extractive Industry Interest Areas (EIAs).
- As strategically recognised locations, SERAs may become focal points for managing other policy issues, such as biodiversity, transport and water.
- Quarries in the SERAs will have greater protection from any proposed nearby incompatible land uses.

What involvement has industry had in the SERA pilot project?

The SERA pilot project is overseen by the joint industry-government Extractives Strategy Taskforce. It includes representation from Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia, and the Construction Material Processors Association.

Existing quarry operators in the Wyndham and South Gippsland SERA investigation areas were individually consulted in March 2019 and January 2020. The engagement also involved some quarry operators located outside of the SERA areas.

Submissions from industry will be invited during the public engagement phase.

What have we learnt through the project?

Through our engagement with quarry operators across the SERA investigation areas, we've learnt about quarry activities, the operational challenges and future opportunities within the area. In particular:

- Each area is important for supplying much needed quarry materials.
- Quarries need operational flexibility and good connectivity with consumers as well as other quarries for blending materials.

- There is potential prospectivity outside of the current quarry sites.
- Quarry expansion opportunities are affected by planning processes and uncertainty.

SERAs will serve as clear identifiers in the planning scheme of locations where extractive resources may exist and which need to be considered in land use decision making.

How do the proposed SERA policies/controls work?

- The proposed planning controls are comprised of a State Resource Overlay (SRO) to secure future potential resources and also to protect the buffers around existing quarries. A Special Use Zone (SUZ) is also proposed for all approved quarries in the SERA, as well as maintaining existing SUZs not currently being quarried.
- For existing quarries, the combination of the SRO and SUZ will provide greater support for quarry expansion, while also ensuring any new incompatible uses proposed nearby are strictly controlled, including a referral to the regulator, Earth Resources Regulation, for review.
- For new quarries, the proposed policies recognise the importance of stone resources in the SERA and give stronger effect to the establishment of an extractive industry. New and expanding quarries will continue to be assessed on their merits.
- In some instances where new and expanding quarry proposals meet certain criteria, notice and review requirements will be exempted.
- For other types of new development or uses proposed within the SRO that are generally incompatible with quarries (i.e. houses, places of worship), a permit will be required, along with referrals to the regulator, for review.

INDUSTRY INFORMATION

What are EIAs?

EIAs were established by the Geological Survey of Victoria in the 1990s and were reviewed and updated in 2003. The concept of EIAs was to identify land close to major population centres that are likely to contain commercially viable stone resources and where extractive industry is likely to be established. Both SERAs are completely within the EIAs.

The SERAs will become a clear identifier in the planning scheme of strategically important quarries and areas of actual and/or potential resources.

How does a SERA compare to an EIA?

SERAs have generally only been proposed in areas where there is an existing EIA. While EIAs act as flag in the planning system for potential extractive resource locations, they do not have clear and transparent planning policy protections.

EIAs have played a limited role in the planning system and are not consistently visible in councils' planning schemes. The SERA pilot project proposes to build upon the EIAs and bring a greater level of control through the planning scheme to guide decision-makers and to ensure extractive resources are not jeopardised by incompatible development.

The SERA pilot project contains tailored and enforceable planning provisions, adding improved resource protection to EIA land that has been identified as containing or potentially containing extractive resources.

What does the SERA process involve?

The SERA pilot project has undertaken the following steps so far:

1. Selection of pilot sites following an 'Expression of Interest' process where councils nominated to be involved in the project. Selected sites were strategically supported by demand and supply analysis of extractive resources across Victoria.
2. Investigation of characteristics across the SERA investigation area, including geoscience (existing reports), land uses, environment, transport, etc.
3. Review of current strategies and policy settings relevant to the extractive resources.
4. Design of new planning policies and configuration of SERA boundaries taking into account any key issues and opportunities identified in (2) and (3) above.

What feedback is being sought during consultation?

The concept of SERA is supported by a key action in the *Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy*. Feedback is being sought and is welcome on all aspects of the SERA pilot project, including:

- The method and steps undertaken.
- The proposed SERA boundaries.
- The drafted planning controls.

It is important that public feedback is gathered during this submission process.

After this public consultation phase, and after consideration of all the submissions, the Minister for Planning may decide to exercise his power under s.20(4) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. This includes the power to prepare and approve an amendment to implement the SERA planning provisions without further opportunity for further public submissions.

How do I find out more information about the SERA pilot project?

Visit the website engage.vic.gov.au/SERA-pilot-project for information.

More details about the *Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy* are available at earthresources.vic.gov.au.

INDUSTRY INFORMATION

How can I be involved?

Industry members can make a written submission as part of the public engagement phase through the Engage Victoria website.

Submissions from industry members may outline any feedback, concerns or ideas about the proposed SERA policies and mapping.

The SERA pilot project team will review all submissions to inform recommendations to the Minister for Planning.

Visit engage.vic.gov.au/SERA-pilot-project for more information.