

Strategic Extractive Resource Areas

Information for community and landholders



Extractive resources like rock, sand and gravel are essential inputs to the building and construction sector.

The extractives sector is playing a key role in the state's post-COVID economic recovery effort. In the longer term our population is forecast to exceed 10 million people by 2050. Demand for extractive resources in Victoria is expected to more than double 2015 levels by 2050.

We need to plan ahead now, to ensure that quarry materials can be sourced close to where they will be used, to keep transportation and construction costs down. That's why the Victorian Government has developed Strategic Extractive Resource Areas (SERAs).

SERAs aim to get the right balance so that communities can continue to develop, but not too close to where quarries are or to where important areas of sand, stone and gravel resource can be found for use in the future.

What is a strategic extractive resource?

'Strategic extractive resource' is a general term that covers areas likely to contain sand and stone resources of sufficient quantity and quality to support commercial quarry operations. These resources are close to appropriate transport routes and located in areas where a potential quarry will have limited impact on the environment and surrounding land uses.

What are Strategic Extractive Resource Areas?

SERAs indicate the locations of existing quarries and potential future quarries in areas close to where they are needed for construction and infrastructure projects. SERAs aim to identify and safeguard land with the highest potential to supply material to build Victoria's future, taking into account the surrounding natural, cultural, and existing land uses, and supporting transport networks.

SERAs are also used to provide buffers to existing quarries so they can continue to operate, by ensuring sensitive or incompatible land uses are not built too close to an operating quarry.

SERAs apply a suite of existing planning controls in areas where access to potentially valuable quarry materials such as sand, stone and gravel may be at risk because of new sensitive or incompatible land uses. SERAs serve as strategic land markers in the planning system, indicating locations where extractive resources may exist and ensuring they are considered in land use decision making.

The planning controls that SERAs provide include:

- utilising the Special Use Zone (SUZ) for existing quarries
- applying a State Resource Overlay (SRO1) to areas that have been identified as potential new or expanded quarries in the future
- applying a State Resource Overlay (SRO2) around existing quarries as a buffer.

A SERA is not an approval for a quarry. All proposals for new and expanded quarries in Victoria, including in SERAs, must be assessed under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* and the relevant Council's Planning Scheme, as well as a range of environmental, water and cultural heritage legislation and regulations.

Why do we need SERAs?

The demand for rock, sand and gravel in Victoria is growing and in 2050 is expected to be more than double the demand in 2016. SERAs will help ensure there is a long-term supply of quarry materials available to meet this growing demand so that current and future generations can affordably build homes and infrastructure.

SERAs will better identify potential quarry sites so they are more clearly considered in the assessment of local development and buffer zones. This has the potential to reduce local friction resulting from residents living near to quarries.

SERAs will provide greater certainty to industry, land use planners and the community to better inform future land uses well in advance, by defining the locations of strategic state resources in the planning system while considering other existing land uses, environmental assets and community interests.

SERAs are a key planning initiative from *Helping Victoria Grow: Extractive Resources Strategy* to identify and secure strategic extractive resources.

Why do we need to plan for quarries early?

Ensuring that we know where quarries may be in the future allows us to effectively plan for the land uses surrounding them, which limits potential issues with noise, dust and traffic for communities.

How have the first SERAs been identified?

SERAs are being implemented in the Wyndham and South Gippsland local government areas, with a small amount of Cardinia included as a buffer.

The initial SERA boundaries were developed using a range of available information including:

- local geology
- Extractive Industry Interest Areas (EIIA) currently identified in the planning system
- local transport links
- the surrounding natural environment, including native vegetation and waterways
- existing quarry locations
- other existing land uses
- information from the PwC's 2016 *Demand and Supply Report*, including extensive industry surveys and demand forecasting
- feedback from consultation with extractive industry representatives.



The SERA boundaries were further refined following community, industry and government agency feedback obtained during the consultation period in May-July 2020.

Is an extractive industry the same as a quarry?

Essentially, yes. The term 'extractive industries' refers to quarrying for hard rock, sand and gravel and other materials as defined by the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*.

Quarrying is the process of removing rock, sand, gravel or other stone from the ground in order to use them to produce materials for construction or other uses.

The Victorian planning system uses specific terms to regulate land use within zones and overlays. The land use in the planning system that is related to quarrying is 'Extractive Industry'.

What has the Minister approved?

The Minister for Planning has approved amendments to the Victorian Planning Provisions and three planning schemes, to allow SERAs to be implemented as needed, throughout Victoria.

Statewide provisions

The changes to the Victorian Planning Provisions will provide clearer and more effective guidelines to ensure strategic extractive resource locations are considered in the assessments of proposed land uses and development applications.

In participating local government areas

The following changes were introduced to the Wyndham Planning Scheme and South Gippsland Planning Scheme:

- land containing existing extractive industries has been rezoned to the Special Use Zone (SUZ)

- the State Resource Overlay Schedule 1 (Strategic Extractive Resource Areas) has been applied to those same existing operations being rezoned to SUZ, and to other land where extractive industries may be developed in the future
- the State Resource Overlay Schedule 2 (Protecting extractive industries) has been applied around land in the SUZ to manage the encroachment of sensitive or incompatible uses near extractive industry operations.

In the Cardinia Planning Scheme, the State Resource Overlay Schedule 2 (Protecting extractive industries) has been applied to a small area of private land within proximity of an existing extractive industry located in South Gippsland Shire Council area.

It is anticipated that any future SERA locations will require planning schemes to be amended to respond to the specific needs and objectives of SERAs in those locations.

What does it mean to have a Special Use Zone applied to land?

The Special Use Zone (SUZ) applies to existing quarry operations within the SERAs.

The SUZ provides for the use of land for extractive industries, encourages land rehabilitation practices, and discourages incompatible uses. The SUZ schedule, which is tailored to each Planning Scheme, provides clear policy direction about the future use of the land. It provides a clear purpose and requirements relating to extractive industries.

What does it mean to have the State Resource Overlay applied to land?

The State Resource Overlay (SRO) provides a clear and transparent map of strategically important extractive resources and elevates the importance of SERA sites in the Victorian planning system.

The SRO applied in the Wyndham, South Gippsland and Cardinia Planning Schemes includes a Schedule tailored to the location where it is applied. The Schedule specifies uses, developments and subdivision that will require a planning permit, along with decision guidelines to be considered by the relevant Council.

Where it is applied around an existing quarry, the SRO is securing sand, stone and other resources of strategic value to the state and provides a separation distance between the quarry and new sensitive or incompatible uses (like a house) that may be developed on adjoining land.

What are the buffer zones for quarries in the Wyndham and South Gippsland areas?

The Wyndham hard rock quarries are protected by a 500-metre buffer as recommended by the Environment Protection Authority and regulated under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990*.

The South Gippsland sand quarries are protected by a 250-metre buffer. The buffer distance is smaller because blasting is not used as an extraction technique for sand quarries.



Do SERAs automatically approve any new quarries in my area?

No. SERAs focus on ensuring the Victorian planning system clearly identifies where state-significant quarries are located now, and where they might be located in the future to minimise potential land use conflicts.

While the changes apply new zone and overlay controls to manage quarries in three local government areas, permission has not been granted for any new quarry to be developed.

All proposals for new quarries in Victoria, including in SERAs, must be assessed under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* and the relevant Council's Planning Scheme, as well as a range of environmental, water and cultural heritage legislation and regulations.

In some cases a new or expanded quarry will be referred to an Environment Effects Statement (EES) process, which will assess the impact of the proposal.

Will the entire SERAs become a quarry?

No. SERAs act as a planning tool to identify areas that can potentially become a quarry and manage the relationship between quarries and other land uses. Adjoining land uses are considered in any planning application for a new quarry, and a quarry operator needs to consider the resource to be commercially viable.

All proposals for new quarries in Victoria, including in SERAs, must be assessed under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* and the relevant Council's Planning Scheme, as well as a range of environmental, water and cultural heritage legislation and regulations.

Why do we need quarries?

Quarries supply the raw materials (stone, sand and gravel) that are needed to build our new rail, road, housing, school and hospital projects.

Victoria's population is set to reach more than 10 million by 2050, requiring 1.6 million new homes to be built, as well as the supporting transport and social infrastructure. The resulting demand for quarry materials in 2050 is expected to be double that of 2016.

Can quarries exist outside SERAs?

Yes. Commercially viable quarry resources exist all over Victoria, and not just within SERA boundaries. SERAs are a new tool to help protect existing quarries and identify potential new quarries that are close to where they are needed, and to minimise the impact of quarries on sensitive or incompatible land uses that may be nearby.

To support Victoria's growth we need much more sand, stone and gravel than what is currently within SERAs, and the Victorian Government is working to identify more areas where SERAs can be implemented.

How did you ensure the public had its say on Strategic Extractive Resource Areas?

An eight-week public consultation period in mid-2020 generated more than 300 separate submissions about the SERA project and the proposed new mapping and planning controls.

The Victorian Government exhibited a range of information about the project, and actively sought feedback on the proposed reforms.

Feedback from communities and individuals raised issues about protecting the ecological and social values of bushland reserves; ensuring new quarries are located at an appropriate distance from houses and settlements; and ensuring traffic and road networks are managed to reduce amenity impacts.

Feedback from extractive industry representatives raised issues about the need for flexibility to change boundaries to cater for new and closed quarries, suggestions for reviewing processes, increased certainty for extractive industry; increased protection from existing and future resource sterilisation by discouraging incompatible uses in buffer areas and the need for SERAs in regional centres to include small and medium-sized quarries.

Feedback from Local Government organisations raised issues about the use of specific policies and planning controls; the placement of Strategic Extractive Resource Area (SERA) mapping; and the need to ensure existing quarries, and land for possible future quarries, is clearly identified and protected in the planning system.

The information gathered throughout the project has informed the planning policy approach and the selected areas where new planning controls are applied. All feedback was carefully considered, and it led to some important changes to the SERA projects.

What changes were made after public consultation?

Several important changes were made to the proposed planning controls and maps following a review of submissions received during public consultation.

In Wyndham City, the State Resource Overlay will not be applied to land that is designated for the Western Grassland Reserve. The Special Use Zone and State Resource Overlay will only apply to land inside the future Reserve where that land contains an existing quarry operating under an approved work authority.

Also in Wyndham City, the location of the State Resource Overlay has been adjusted to provide a greater setback distance from Little River township and Eynesbury Estate.

The increased setbacks ensure that any future extractive industries developed in these areas can maintain appropriate separation distances from existing settlements.

In South Gippsland Shire, the State Resource Overlay will not be applied to the Adams Creek Nature Reserve. The Special Use Zone and State Resource Overlay will only apply to land inside the Reserve where that land contains an existing extractive industry operating under an approved work authority.

Why are the Wyndham City and South Gippsland Shire areas important?

Wyndham and South Gippsland were chosen because they both have a significant resource of critical importance to the state's growth, and to keep construction costs down we need to ensure that rock, gravel and sand come from places close to where the material will be used.

Wyndham is one of Victoria's fastest-growing areas, and is recognised for its significant hard rock reserves, producing about 12 per cent of all hard rock in Victoria.

The north-western area of South Gippsland is critical for the supply of sand to the fast-growing south-eastern metropolitan regions, particularly in Casey and Cardinia. South Gippsland provides 13 per cent of all sand and gravel produced in Victoria.

Without the protection that the SERAs provide, these strategic resources are at risk of being made inaccessible by sensitive or incompatible land uses, driving up construction costs.

What are the effects on transport?

We are working on Transport Network Development Plans to study quarry truck movements around the two pilot SERA sites. These plans will identify opportunities to improve transport productivity and efficiency and determine options to reduce the effect of truck movements on communities.

What are the sensitive and incompatible uses that have been defined?

The following uses have been specified to be sensitive or incompatible uses, requiring a permit under the SRO:

- Accommodation (including a house)
- Crematorium
- Education centre
- Funeral parlour
- Hospital
- Leisure and recreation
- Place of assembly
- Retail premises
- Veterinary clinic
- Winery

For more information

To find out more about how SERAs allow us to plan to deliver affordable quarry materials to meet our future needs:

- visit earthresources.vic.gov.au/sera
- email sera@delwp.vic.gov.au
- call 136 186

