Blue Hills Quarry project EES

Scoping Requirements FAQs August 2026

Department of Transport and Planning

1. What is the Blue Hills Quarry Project?

The Blue Hills Quarry is a proposed hornfels hard rock quarry situated on an elevated hill on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung people. It is located in the Mount Alexander Shire local government area, approximately 25 kilometres (km) south-west of Bendigo, near Bradford.

The proposed project components include a 34.5 hectares (ha) quarry, a 4.5 km haul road and ancillary infrastructure such as a stockpiling area, vehicle workshop, office area, and site power and water reticulation. The quarry is expected to produce up to 500,000 tonnes per annum of product at peak operation and be operational for 70 to 100 years. An average of 60 loads per day will be transported at its peak.

Rehabilitation of the site would be progressively undertaken and completed following the productive life of the quarry.

2. What is the purpose of the EES scoping requirements?

Scoping is an important stage that occurs prior to preparing an EES.

The scoping requirements set out the matters to be investigated and documented within the EES. The EES will include a description of the proposed project assessment of its potential effects on the environment proportionate to the level of risk and potential significance of effects and approaches to management.

The EES scoping requirements have been issued by the Minister for Planning and are available on the Planning website:

https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/environmental-assessments/browse-projects/referrals/blue-hills-quarry

3. How has the approach to EES scoping requirements recently changed?

The Department's approach to EES scoping has been revised as part of Victoria's Economic Growth Statement (EGS) reforms, which aim to make assessment processes under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*, faster, more efficient and focused.

Under the new approach, scoping requirements are structured to support a targeted, risk-based and proportionate environment assessment, enabling proponents to focus greater effort on potentially significant environmental effects.

The scoping requirements now identify key matters for potentially significant effects and categorise them according to priority level.

4. What do the scoping requirement identify as the priority matters for assessment for the Blue Hills Quarry Project EES?

For the Blue Hills Quarry EES, native vegetation and biodiversity values, groundwater (including groundwater dependent ecosystems), and surface water are identified as high priority matters for assessment.

Aboriginal cultural heritage, air quality, noise and vibration, and traffic and transport are identified as 'priority' matters for the EES, reflecting their potential for state or regionally significant effects.

The scoping requirements also identify 'other matters' that are not priorities for detailed assessment but may be important for an integrated assessment and should be considered through a risk-based examination in the EES. These include historic heritage, community, economic and land use, landscape and visual and bushfire impacts.

5. Did the public have an opportunity to comment on the scoping requirements?

Yes. Draft scoping requirements for the EES were exhibited on the Engage Victoria website from 19 June to 10 July 2026. Notice of the draft scoping requirements' exhibition was advertised in state and local newspapers. After receiving numerous requests for extensions, DTP allowed for several groups to make submissions until 17 July. These submissions were made via direct email to DTP and not through Engage Victoria.

A total of twelve submissions were received during the public exhibition period, including from individuals, community groups and local businesses.

Redacted versions of the submissions received have been provided to Mawsons & Sons to inform the ongoing development of the EES.

6. What issues were raised in public submissions on the draft scoping requirements?

Key concerns raised by submitters related to:

- Environmental values and biodiversity impacts
- Environmental offset strategy and effectiveness
- Impacts on Bells Swamp and nearby reserves
- Traffic, road network and safety impacts
- Amenity impacts
- Cumulative project impacts

7. What revisions have been made to the final scoping requirements?

Where appropriate, amendments have been made to the scoping requirements to address issues raised by submitters that had not been well or explicitly considered in the draft scoping requirements. Many of the issues raised were already encompassed within the draft EES scoping requirements.

The amendments made to the scoping requirements included minor updates to address the following:

- Habitat fragmentation, landscape-scale impacts and cumulative regional impacts, and that biodiversity assessments are not limited to listed species.
- Expanded consideration to include aquatic ecosystems.
- Clarified that rehabilitation considerations include surface water management, revegetation and ongoing weed control.
- Addition of incorporating local knowledge of potential environmental impacts into the consultation and project assessment processes.
- Expanded amenity impact considerations to include other sensitive receptors, including conservation and recreation spaces.
- Strengthened assessment requirements relating to potential road damage, seasonal traffic peaks and impacts on local transport users.
- Recognised the need to consider other matters that may have localised effects.
- Specifically identified historic heritage as a matter requiring consideration.

- Made minor editorial amendments to improve clarity and consistency throughout the document

8. What happens now the Minister has issued the final scoping requirements?

The proponent will proceed with the necessary information-gathering and investigations to inform the EES. This is expected to take a number of months and conclude in the second quarter of 2027. The proponent will conduct its studies and prepare the EES in close consultation with DTP and the agencies on the Technical Reference Group (TRG), which DTP has put in place for this EES.

The proponent's EES will include a detailed description of the proposed project and a rigorous assessment of its potential effects on the environment and approaches to mitigation.

When completed, the EES will be placed on public exhibition, and the Minister for Planning will invite public comments. At the end of the process, the Minister will issue an assessment of the environmental effects of the project. The Minister's assessment will inform statutory/approval decisions needed for the project to proceed.

The proponent has finalised and begun to implement its EES consultation plan to engage with the public and stakeholders about the EES process and its associated investigations, ensuring it provides opportunities for input and feedback on its investigations.

9. When does Mawsons & Sons expect to publicly exhibit its EES?

When the proponent believes the EES is ready, it will be reviewed by DTP, and the Minister for Planning will decide whether to authorise the EES to be exhibited. If authorised, the EES will be advertised for public comment for no less than 30 business days.

Mawsons & Sons are planning for public exhibition of the EES in the second quarter of 2027.

The EES and the submissions received will be referred to an inquiry to be appointed under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (EE Act). The inquiry will consider all the information before it and will report to the Minister, who will then make an assessment and provide it to decision-makers.

10. Why is an EES required for the project?

An EES is the state's most rigorous and transparent environmental assessment and is typically reserved for those projects that require integrated assessment across a range of potential adverse effects when there is potential for significant impacts. The EES will provide an integrated and transparent examination of the proposed project and its environmental effects to inform both the proponent's refinement of the proposal and the statutory decisions/ approvals needed for the project to proceed.

In October 2025 the Minister for Planning determined under the EE Act that Mawsons & Sons should prepare an EES for the Blue Hills Quarry project. The project as proposed could have a range of significant impacts, including on the:

- native vegetation, with implications for both terrestrial and aquatic environments;
- biodiversity, with implications for threatened species and communities listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*;
- water resources, with implications for both groundwater and surface water, potentially affecting groundwater dependent ecosystems;
- Aboriginal cultural heritage, with the potential of uncovering unidentified subsurface aboriginal cultural material and;
- Traffic and transport from heavy vehicles leaving the site onto the local road network.

11. What about the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act?

The proponent referred the project (EPBC 2025/10133) for a decision from the Commonwealth on whether the proposal is a 'controlled action' requiring assessment and approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

On 3 May 2025, a delegate for the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water determined that the project was a controlled action, as it is likely to have a significant impact on the following matters of national environmental significance (MNES), which are protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act:

- listed threatened species and communities (section 18 and 18A).

This EES is being undertaken as an accredited process set out in the bilateral agreement under the EPBC Act. It will have to assess the relevant matters of national environmental significance identified in the Commonwealth decision that the project is a 'controlled action' requiring decision under the EPBC Act.

In Victoria an EES assessment does not confer approval of a project, rather it informs decision makers when considering project approvals. The EES preparation is a rigorous process, that ends up with the Minister for Planning issuing an assessment of the project's effects.

12. What about planning approval under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987?*

Provided the requirements of section 77T of the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 (MRSD Act) are fulfilled, extractive-related works undertaken within the work authority area will not require planning approval under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

The project may however trigger planning permit requirements for other project elements outside of the work authority area.