Proposed ERA code for sewage pump stations

Information sheet

This information sheet helps operators of sewage pump stations understand the draft environmentally relevant activity code (ERA code), what it covers, how it may be used, and what it could mean in practice.

Background

The *Environmental Protection (Efficiency and Streamlining) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2026* (EP(ES)OLA Act) became law on 16 June 2026. It made changes to Queensland's environmental legislation to improve efficiency and keep regulatory frameworks up to date and effective.

Some changes to the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (EP Act) will start on a later date by proclamation. This includes establishing ERA codes for regulating lower-risk activities and introducing significant environmental values (SEVs) to support the administration of the EP Act.

The Department of the Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation (the department) is undertaking consultation on draft ERA codes to ensure they are practical, transparent, effective and will achieve their intended environmental and regulatory outcomes.

The ERA codes are intended to provide a simpler way to regulate those activities where environmental risks are well understood and can be managed through a standardised set of conditions. The draft ERA codes include clear activity descriptions and standard conditions that must be complied with. This reduces the need for individual environmental authorities (EAs), improves consistency and gives operators more certainty. It also makes sure requirements match the level of environmental risk associated with the activity, while maintaining environmental protections.

This information sheet outlines the proposed ERA code for sewage pump station activities. Its purpose is to help you understand what is proposed and give feedback. It includes:

- Appendix A: Snapshot of a proposed ERA code for sewage pump stations
- Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

Definitions and acronyms

Sewage pump station activities – for the purposes of this information sheet, these activities consist of operating a sewage pumping station, where the relevant activity:

(a) has a total design capacity of more than 40kL in an hour; and

(b) is not an essential part of the operation of sewage treatment work under ERA 63(1a);[1] and

(c) intends to operate within a sewerage network, pumping to a sewage treatment plant.

Code-managed ERA – is an environmentally relevant activity that is declared code-managed where the risk of environmental harm is known and can be effectively prevented, minimised, rehabilitated or remediated through compliance with an ERA code.

[1] As defined in the Environmental Protection Regulation 2019.

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Appendix A: Snapshot of proposed ERA code for sewage pump stations

Proposal to transition to ERA codes

KEY CHANGES

- The development of an ERA code for sewage pump stations will provide an option for operators to be regulated under code conditions rather than an environmental authority (EA).
- The ERA code will take effect on a future date yet to be prescribed.
- The ERA code will be available on the department's website.
- Code conditions are enforceable; if you are operating under an ERA code you will need to comply with the conditions of code, as well as other general obligations under the *Environmental Protection Act 1994* (e.g., general environmental duty).
- Code managed sewage pump stations will need to be registered, with details available to the public.

How will this be implemented?

- Current EA holders can choose to operate under an ERA code if they meet the code requirements and comply with the code-managed ERA definition.
- It is proposed that to operate under the ERA code for sewage pump stations that operations will be required to register before conducting the activity. No application or annual fees apply.
- New operators can also apply for an EA if operating under the ERA code is not suitable for their activities, such as when they cannot meet the code requirements or the code-managed ERA definition.

Benefits

- ✓ Cost savings for operators
- ✓ Reduced regulatory burden for both industry and government
- ✓ Environmental standards maintained

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

The responses to questions and answers in this information sheet reflect the current proposed position at the time of consultation. It should be noted that these may change as a result of the consideration of feedback during the consultation processes.

1. What are the benefits of transitioning to an ERA code?

ERA codes are designed for low-risk activities, with conditions developed to manage known and manageable risks.

Transitioning to an ERA code makes it easier for operators to understand their requirements. A key benefit is consistency across activities. The ERA code sets clear conditions for specific activities, ensuring similar activities are regulated in the same way and reducing confusion.

The process for commencing operations under an ERA code is more streamlined than the environmental authority application process, as no application or assessment is required. Whether registration is required will be determined for each ERA code. Where registration is required, the process will be simpler than applying for an EA.

The department has considered feedback from prior external consultations during the drafting process of the sewage pump station ERA code. This includes proposing to allow conditional bypass or overflow releases to waters, resolving a significant barrier for the sewage pump station ERA standard.

2. Will I be issued an environmental authority (EA) when operating under the ERA code?

No. An ERA code is not an EA and is not issued to individual operators. Operators who meet the requirements of the ERA code and any applicable registration requirements may operate under the code-managed framework without holding an EA for the sewage pump station activity. Where registration is required, the department may provide confirmation of registration.

3. Will there be any fees associated with ERA codes?

It is not proposed to require operators to pay any application or annual fees to operate under an ERA code for sewage pump station activities.

4. How will the introduction of ERA codes affect new and existing operators?

Once a new ERA code for sewage pump station activities is made, all new activities can operate under the code or obtain an environmental authority (EA) for the activity.

For pre-existing sewage pump station activities (those operating under an EA), a 12-month transition period will begin. During this period, operators must notify the department of their intention to operate under the ERA code or continue under the EA. If an existing operator does not notify the department of their intention to operate under the ERA code or the EA, they will automatically transition to the ERA code framework by default, 12 months after the ERA code takes effect. However, this transition will not occur *automatically* if:

- the EA is for an ERA project; or
- a development permit for a material change of use of premises is necessary under the Planning Act for the activity; or

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- the EA was issued for a site-specific or variation application.

All existing operators with access to an eligible ERA code may notify the department at any time of their intention to transition from an EA to operating under the relevant ERA code.

If an existing operator holds an EA which authorises other ERAs, the EA will be amended to remove the sewage pump station ERA and reissued.

5. Do I need to do anything to have my annual fee refunded?

No. Any relevant annual fee amount will be refunded after the activity is transitioned to operating under the ERA code.

The ***relevant annual fee amount*** is the proportion of the following amount that is attributable to the remaining part of the 12-month period in which the transition happens—

a) for an environmental authority (EA) that only authorised the sewage pump station activity—the annual fee paid for the 12-month period;

b) for an EA that authorised the sewage pump station and other ERAs—the difference between the annual fee paid for the 12-month period and the annual fee that would have been payable for the remaining EA matters.

6. Will registration be required and will the department and public have visibility of all persons operating under an ERA code?

Registration requirements for ERA codes will be considered and consulted on at the time of the making of each ERA code.

If registration is required to operate under the ERA code, operators will need to register in accordance with the requirements prescribed for in the code.

It is proposed that sewage pump stations will be required to be registered.

When registration to operate under the ERA code is required, details about the activity will be available through the department's public register, providing visibility to both the department and the public.

7. How are ERA codes made?

A statutory public consultation process must be undertaken when a new ERA code is developed, or an existing code is substantially changed.

The consultation process must be at least 30 business days and will require:

- the proposed code to be published on the department's website;
- a notice that invites public submissions and provides instructions on how to make such a submission to be published on the department's website; and
- written notice about the proposed code and consultation process to be given to each holder of a relevant existing environmental authority that is in effect immediately before the consultation period starts.

All submissions must be considered when deciding whether to make an ERA code.

The new or revised ERA code will come into effect when it is approved by regulation, or a later date if specified in the regulation. All ERA codes will be published on the department's website.

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8. How will ERA codes remain contemporary?

Minor amendments can be made to an ERA code, including for example updates to terminology or correcting spelling or grammatical errors, on an as needed basis by the department publishing a copy of the amended code on its website.

For substantial changes to ERA codes, the statutory consultation process outlined above must be followed, which is similar to the current process for updates to ERA standards.

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