

Ballarat Gold Mine slows output for safety as tailings dam fills



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 An aerial view of the Ballarat Gold Mine tailings dam, taken in 2016.

The ongoing dilemma of tailings storage at the Ballarat Gold Mine has halted work at the site, with the Victorian mines watchdog Earth Resources Regulation (ERR) saying they are again 'working with the operation's licensee' as its storage dam fills.

It's understood the tailings dam, which opened in Terrible Gully in 2005, is nearing capacity. Proposals to increase that capacity have not progressed since the ERR said Shen Yao's 2021 plans for expansion had not adequately addressed risks associated with

storage, and had provided 'substandard technical information and rehabilitation plans'.

Those plans suggested a substantial increase in storage at the southern extent of the existing facility.

The ERR issued two safety notices to the mine's Chinese owners, Singapore-listed Shen Yao Holdings, in 2021; firstly as waste rock stored at the tailings dam exceeded height limits, and again as water was observed pooling outside of the dam's western wall.

Work has now slowed as the mine attempts to avoid breaching the dam's safe storage limit.

"We will continue to work with the licensee to understand their current options, forward tailings management strategy and provide guidance on the relevant regulatory requirements," acting executive director of ERR Laura Helm said.