

# Estrella bumps Timor-Leste manganese strike out to 47km

*James Pearson in Business News, 26 June 2024*

Geological mapping and grab sampling by [Estrella Resources](#) has stretched its manganese strike out to 47km in Timor-Leste, with some priority samples already crushed and sent back to Perth for expert lab analysis.

After adding an extra 20km of strike within the Noni Formation, the company says it is now weighing up its business case for the potential first-ever manganese exports from the Southeast Asian country formerly known as East Timor.

High-grade grab samples from Noni include a 28.1 per cent hit recorded 7km north of Estrella's main Lalena prospect. Lalena also threw up further samples of 53.1 per cent and 46.1 per cent where previously-reported results have been as high as 60.8 per cent.

On the back of its recent results, the company is pushing hard with its preparations for the high-grade samples to be trialled for market appraisal, while applications to start trenching and drilling at the site have been submitted to allow further testing.

In a bid to speed up the analysis of its samples, management has recently taken delivery of laboratory equipment in Dili, allowing it to immediately process some 70 samples to improve the accuracy of initial on-site readings. The additional pulverised samples sent back to Australia will be analysed by geochemistry expert ALS in Perth.

[Estrella Resources](#) managing director [Chris Daws](#) said: *"Our teams are working hard to define the limits of the extensive high-grade manganese occurrences located within our granted Timor-Leste concessions. We are working quickly to determine whether we may have an early opportunity to commence the first-ever manganese exports from Timor-Leste to take advantage of recent supply disruptions."*

Daws said the company planned to provide bulk 30-tonne samples to potential end-users for metallurgical testing. He said management was also confident a short period of fieldwork had defined several priority drill targets.

The strike extension news comes after Estrella's recent discovery, just 5km west of Noni, of a 30 to 40-tonne manganese stockpile at a known historic World War II site it has dubbed Japanese Port. Grab samples from the location have yielded assays of 57.1 per cent and 58.1 per cent.

The exact source of the stockpiled material is still unknown, but the company's working theory is that the local river may be cutting away at manganese somewhere below the present-day surface – possibly in layers of mobilised laterite enriched in manganese that have been dissolved from somewhere upslope and redeposited.

Estrella says weathering, lateralisation and erosion has moved manganese oxides from where they formed near the top of the soil profile, to thickened layers within local creeks where the manganese cobbles get concentrated over time. The company is now in the process of acquiring permission from the government to use the stockpile for market appraisal samples to potential customers.

The urgency with which the company is now working should not come as a surprise considering the recent surge in manganese prices. The price for 37 per cent-grade manganese increased recently by 35 per cent to \$US6.29 (AU\$9.44) per dry metric tonne units and although it has pulled back 10 per cent since, it shows little sign of normalising any time soon.

The prices have spiked higher after a decision by South32 earlier this year to rule out any production from its Groote Island manganese operations in northern Australia because of substantial damage inflicted by Cyclone Megan in March. The setback has accentuated an already tight supply situation as South African miners sought to cut back export volumes at the end of last year.

With manganese on the rise and the likelihood of further discoveries at its Timor-Leste ground, Estrella could well be feeling as if it is in the right place at just the right time.