

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

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A guide to doing business
during construction and road
upgrades



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A note about Department of Transport and Main Roads Projects

Like many towns throughout regional Queensland, the main streets of towns in Somerset region are also state controlled roads or highways. This limits the level of control Somerset Regional Council has to directly impact the construction and outcomes from these roadworks.

Council recognises the importance of a collaborative approach between the Department of Transport and Main Roads and local businesses during periods of road works. Council commits to strongly advocate on behalf of the Somerset business community and strives to ensure the state understands the level of disruption these upgrades cause to the local community.

A message from the Mayor

The continuous improvement of infrastructure is critical for the ongoing growth and prosperity of the Somerset region. With our beautiful natural scenery, rural lifestyle and welcoming community, combined with our location in south-east Queensland, we will see our region continue to grow. It's Council's vision for the Somerset region, with its unique identity and proud heritage, to be vibrant, cohesive and connected, providing the foundations for a prosperous rural lifestyle.

Council enjoys a collaborative relationship with our community and continues to develop strategies that ensure the prosperity and growth of our region. Our recently released Corporate Plan for 2021-26 ensures that Council's existing infrastructure assets remain maintained and new infrastructure is planned and delivered optimally. Council has demonstrated this commitment with record spending on infrastructure in recent budgets.

However, some disruptions during infrastructure upgrades are unavoidable and Council appreciates the difficulties these disruptions can cause. We have developed *Business Continuity - A guide to doing business during construction and road upgrades* to help businesses and employees be better prepared as the necessary improvements to our infrastructure are carried out.

These infrastructure upgrades are for the benefit of our whole community and Council has a strong interest in maintaining and building on the great working relationship we have with our community and local businesses to minimise disruptions during this time. It's important to Council that we encourage and maintain positive interactions with our community and I hope this guide will provide some positive and practical solutions to issues that might arise in the upcoming period of road works.

Acknowledgement
Sunshine Coast Council, Business Continuity Guide

Take action to assist your business

The Somerset region is growing.

Upgrades to infrastructure, improvements to existing community facilities, streetscape and place making projects are some of the positive initiatives that Somerset Regional Council is delivering to help create a vibrant, connected and prosperous lifestyle.

We understand construction projects may impact local business and residents, so we have prepared this guide as one of the tools to help you plan and prepare in advance of construction beginning in your area.

While construction projects can be frustrating, it's important to remember the positive impact these projects will have in your area in the years to come.



“Working together with our business community to help minimise disruption during construction periods.”

How Council plans for projects

On many major projects, Council uses a place making philosophy based on building better communities and creating better places to live by focusing on long term commitments to people, places and partnerships.

After community feedback is received, Council starts planning and designing. Then, once budget is allocated, construction is scheduled. Consultation takes place throughout this process.

How Council helps support a community during construction

Council's project teams and contractors make every effort to reduce the impact of major construction projects to nearby businesses including:

- Wherever possible, avoiding planned work during peak holiday periods (such as Christmas and Easter).
- Liaising with local business or community groups prior to construction to identify ways to help mitigate project impacts.
- Informing businesses of timeframes of upcoming work so they can plan ahead.
- Providing regular, detailed construction updates to local businesses and community members through project newsletters, emails and face-to-face liaison.

- Once work is underway, retaining access for customers and vehicles during standard trading hours (wherever practicable and safe to do so).
- Providing advice and guidance from Council's Business Recovery Officer to assist businesses to help mitigate construction impacts.
- Providing project information on Council's website and social media platforms including the project benefits for residents, visitors and local businesses in addition to specific construction details such as changed traffic conditions.

For more information about projects and planned works, contact Council on 07 5424 4000 or visit somerset.qld.gov.au.



Get involved early



When projects are announced

In most cases, major projects are planned and budgeted for several years in advance of when construction is to occur.

Once major projects are underway, a project manager is assigned who will manage the project until the end of construction. A site office may be established at the project location to manage the on-site needs of the project.

How you can be proactive

The early stages of a planned project is the perfect time to brainstorm ideas with other businesses in your area to identify possible activities and events which could help drive business and attract customers before, during and after the construction period.

Key steps

1 Seek out information

2 Stay informed

3 Take action



Before construction

Actions

What actions will you undertake?

To assist in this process, we've started with a few actions.

1. Talk to your staff and make them aware of the construction period and potential impacts on your business.
2. Brainstorm ideas with your staff about how they can give even better customer service to your valued customers and ask customers to keep supporting your business during the construction period.
3. Talk to your neighbours and see what plans they have to promote their business/products/services and identify if you can collaborate on any initiatives or share costs on initiatives.
4. Can you take your products and services offsite to new locations/businesses to expand business? Market stalls, or a mobile or pop-up operation during construction.
5. Ensure your signage and wayfinding to your store is easy to understand and clearly communicates when you are open and your trading hours.
6. Do you have your database up to date so you can communicate with your customers? Get their emails and other details to alert them to specials/promotions and/or events (conducting marketing efforts during the period).
7. Ensure all staff know where customers park when visiting your business (consider printing some maps).

As a business owner, you're always planning and improving your business. When you're informed ahead of time, project construction is something you can prepare for.

Here are some best practice suggestions to help you manage during the construction process.

Partner with other local businesses

- You're not alone. Collaborate and work together with other businesses and community leaders in your area so you can communicate effectively and make any concerns heard.
- Develop a group plan to stay in contact and share information with Council, the construction project team and most importantly, clients and customers.
- Consider appointing an organisation representative as a liaison to Council and the project team. That person can attend planning meetings and then share the information with the group (you can take this in turn to lessen the time requirement on one business or individual).
- Connect with community groups and neighbourhood associations to widen your communication audience. These organisations could potentially assist you to coordinate periodic communications to the community, updating them about promotional activities, road closures and any other relevant information.
- Alert key stakeholders and influencers (the local police station, the local school and other professional offices) with a fact sheet explaining that shops are still trading, providing key information and seeking their ongoing patronage and support. Make it personal. Tell a story.
- Working together has benefits in understanding considerations and developing ideas to deal with future issues.

Communication

Construction timelines can be impacted by many factors including weather, funding, utility providers (such as phone, water, power) and underground services, so staying informed will allow you to plan your business operations more efficiently – whether construction is occurring directly in front of your business or in the nearby vicinity:

- Ensure you have the most current project information so that you can plan for your business accordingly.
- Ensure you are aware of the various construction phases and what this will mean for your business, for example will customer access be affected? Will there be changes to parking or deliveries? Do you need to advise any suppliers of these changes?
- When a project starts in your area you'll be supplied with contact details of the project team, including email address. This will be your point of contact during the project.
- Communication is critical during the entire construction project. As a business owner, you must communicate with the construction project team, your employees, other businesses, and most importantly, your customers.
- It's important to discuss the projects with your staff as they may be impacted by changed hours, traffic changes or changes to parking. Having an open discussion provides staff with information and sets their expectations.

Resources planning

- It's an unfortunate reality, but you may need to consider changes to trading hours and staff rosters to adjust to changes in customer numbers/visitation patterns once construction begins. Plan ahead for this important step and engage your staff early.
- Allow employees to share any concerns they may have with you. Your staff will appreciate the opportunity, and the discussion may spark new ideas that will benefit your business.

Stock

- Consider how you will manage your stock levels or orders prior to/during construction. How will you handle deliveries? Do you need to plan for changes in visitation patterns and deliveries?

Suppliers and lines of credit

- Inform current suppliers of the upcoming construction project and see if there are opportunities to involve them during the construction activity. Do they want to be part of a special product promotion? Can they assist in providing deliveries when it suits you? Do you need to ask them to review your line of credit and payment schedule aligned to new customer visitation patterns?
- Communicate with your suppliers any changes to access and modify delivery days and schedules to suit.
- Speak with the project team to ensure deliveries can be made to your business during construction.

Landlord

- Advise your landlord of the upcoming construction project and be sure to keep them informed of all construction information.

- Think about how the landlord could be part of your planning? Can they provide assistance/support to businesses as they are likely to see an upside in assets and rents in the medium and longer term when the project has finished?

Budget review

- Budgeting and understanding your cash flow situation is one of the most important areas of a business. You may need to consider managing your cash flow a little differently than normal and think about new budget line items, for example increased cleaning of signage, windows or general cleaning and upkeep to keep dust to a minimum.

For more information about budgeting visit the Queensland Government's business and industry portal www.business.qld.gov.au.

Gather customer contact information before construction begins

- Keeping your customers updated with information is vital, as discussed on page 5. Providing customers with information about the project, what to expect, where to park and how to reach you will benefit you and customers. You may also like to communicate any specials, sales or activities that you are planning.
- Consider offering promotional specials during the construction period.
- Send weekly emails to customers to encourage ongoing patronage and support. Keep them informed and involved.
- Use a database and email management tool to build your customer database. You can use this to track who is opening your communications and see what promotions or information

they are clicking on and reading.

Inform customers before, during and after construction

- Keep your customers informed so they can navigate construction and access your business.
- Keep them focused on the end product and the benefits for them as a loyal customer to your business (for instance, more shade, increased seating spaces, improvements to parking or public art).
- Consider posters or handing out copies of alternative routes to your business before and during construction, show them pictures of the 'finished product' to help demonstrate the small inconvenience will be worth the gain (for them and for you).

Marketing

- Talk to staff about the project and strategies put in place during construction.
- Share project information and positive business messages with customers by collecting a database of customer contact details whenever possible.
- Approach businesses or consultants in your area who might be able to provide free assistance. This can be a great opportunity to pool resources together for some collaborative marketing initiatives with other businesses.
- Contact schools, TAFE and universities to identify if there are any opportunities for the students to use the construction as a marketing project to support your business and the community.

Examples of collaborative marketing initiatives

- Develop coupon books for local businesses and distribute them regionally. Make them available through businesses' websites/ social media sites.
- Send emails and social media notices to potential customers with daily or weekly specials being offered.
- Feature a business and restaurant of the week.
- Reach out to a local radio station to develop a campaign to welcome them and their mobile vans to your area to give out prizes to encourage visitors to the area. Ask them to let their listeners know that you are very much open for business.
- Use prize draws to attract customers. Do something above and beyond what you would usually do in your business to attract and retain customers.
- Work with local business groups.

Social media

Well-structured social media advertising campaigns with high quality visual components can help you grow your following, better reach your existing followers and reach people within a geographic area who don't follow your pages.

Facebook ads in particular can reach a much larger audience than traditional advertising for small businesses with a small advertising budget. Remember, great photos and short videos are key for this but you can capture great content on your smartphone and use photo editing apps to enhance them. Consider having a private Facebook group for you to share ideas, tips and concerns with other businesses in the area impacted by construction. Only positive opportunities should be communicated externally.

Facebook provides some great free online training resources for those who don't know where to start at www.facebook.com.

Driving customers to your business

Historically, many businesses reduce advertising and promotional expenditure rather than slash fixed costs during construction periods. However, studies have shown that those maintaining or increasing advertising outlays during slowdowns wind up outselling rivals who cut back. Here are some tips for driving customers to your business:


- If you haven't already started a customer loyalty rewards program, website or text marketing program, this may be a good time to do it.
- Provide kerb service or other convenience-oriented services.
- Work with your business neighbours to run special promotions such as BBQs, pop-up markets, street parties or prize draws.

Extend business hours

- Consider staying open later in the evening after construction crews have finished for the day or opening a little earlier to take advantage of construction teams in the area (particularly if you are a food related business).
- Be flexible to accommodate customer demands and other perceived needs where possible.

Make the construction work for you

- If you've been considering a business remodel/refurbish, why not do it during the construction period? Use this period to get things done that you haven't had time to address.



“ Now is the time to brainstorm ideas with other businesses in your area to identify possible activities and events which could help drive business and attract customers before, during and after the construction period. ”

During construction

Handy tips once construction begins

Here are some ideas during construction:

Stay informed

- Attend meetings held by Council, business associations (such as the local business groups), or others relating to the project.

Create a friendly rapport with construction workers

- Consider offering 'construction specials' for coffee, breakfast or lunch if you are a food related business.

Be positive

- Encourage and generate positive, healthy working environment with staff and customers to ensure retention of valued employees and customers.
- Have a positive attitude, especially when dealing with the public and customers. People want to have a pleasant experience in your community and business district.
- Tell the truth about the construction situation in an upbeat way. Don't apologise for the construction situation, unless you really need to. Everyone knows construction can be an inconvenience, you don't need to remind them. Negativity and complaining will drive people away. A positive atmosphere will bring them back.



Here are some examples of what other communities have done to encourage people to continue to visit the area in similar situations.

- Outdoor cinema – this can be as simple as screening a movie on a blank wall using a projector
- Temporary markets
- Information booth explaining the construction work, parking options, changed retail hours, etc
- Murals/artwork
- Construction specials for construction workers and customers
- Mini festival
- Kids activities – face painting, mini golf, art and craft, etc
- Yoga or Tai Chi in the park or other open/unused space
- Temporary pop up gardens
- Photography display – historic images of the town/competition to capture unique images of the area
- Storytelling – through words, images, artwork
- Buskers

Some of these activities may even become regular events after the construction project has finished, creating a new tradition for your area. Ideally, best practice is to adapt events and activities prior to construction to create and build on momentum.

Your business group may be eligible for a Community Grant.

Make sure you check with Council's permits team to identify if a permit is required for any events and activities. You can contact Council on 07 5424 4000.

Post construction. You made it!

Consider promotions and advertising

- Let customers know that the project is finished, roads are open and it is 'business as usual'.
- Promote the new image and convenience of the completed project.

Celebrate the project's completion and host a reopening event

- Talk to your local project staff or business association or join with other local businesses to hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony, grand celebration or community event and invite the local news media, Council, customers and the community to the event/ceremony.
- Consider an advertising or promotional campaign.
- Support other businesses that undertake promotional activities.

Compensation

Council appreciates that there are many challenges for all types of businesses during construction activity. The law recognises that it is in the greater public interest that government be able to carry out public works. Other than under compulsory acquisition, this generally entitles federal, state and local government organisations and departments (such as Transport and Main Roads) to construct works including streetscape and place making projects without providing financial compensation.

Some businesses may have clauses in their insurance policies to cover lost trade/income or landlords may agree to provide rent abatements or reductions for a period.



Your business continuity checklists

Before construction

- ❑ Stay informed about upcoming construction projects in your area.
- ❑ Attend project meetings and provide feedback, voice any concerns you may have during these meetings.
- ❑ Contact other businesses in previous project areas for their experience and tips on how to trade during construction projects.
- ❑ Develop a marketing plan, to identify how you will attract customers to your business during this time.
- ❑ Construction may take many months, what initiatives can you plan in advance to encourage customers? In other project areas, 'construction coupons' have been introduced.
- ❑ Collaborate with businesses and other community associations in your area to develop marketing initiatives like advertising, social media or events that could attract visitors to the street or precinct.
- ❑ Plan staff levels during construction. You may need to discuss this with your staff, for example changed hours might be an option or discuss with neighbouring businesses how you can manage staff impacts/levels.
- ❑ Contact lenders and landlords to inform them of the construction timeframes and potential impacts.
- ❑ Review your line of credit by discussing the situation with your suppliers. You may be able to amend the terms and conditions of your arrangements, which may allow for greater cash flow.
- ❑ Review your inventory. Do you need to stock-up or manage a just-in-time model? For example, will you still need the same amount of fresh produce or general stock levels?
- ❑ Rework your budget or look at your outgoings – can you make adjustments? How will you manage purchasing? Reviewing the budget allows you to plan, forecast and manage better cash flow where possible.
- ❑ Collect contact information for your customers and notify them of the project in advance. Having an up-to-date database has many benefits including providing accurate information to customers, project information, sales you're planning, events happening in the area and any changes to parking during the project.



During construction

- ❑ Pool advertising and marketing resources with other businesses in your area.
- ❑ Stay informed and attend public meetings about the project.
- ❑ Develop a friendly rapport with construction workers.
- ❑ Signage at your shop front and discuss with Project Manager about direction signage and alternative access point options.
- ❑ Provide information and access directions for staff.
- ❑ Keep a script about the construction work next to your phone.
- ❑ Use social media to keep customers informed, offer contests, vouchers, etc.
- ❑ Continue to work with local business groups through collaboration.
- ❑ Consider extending business hours.
- ❑ Deliver products to your customers or increase online business.

Post construction

- ❑ Advise customers that roads are open and promote the new image.
- ❑ Celebrate with an event or grand reopening event.
- ❑ Support other businesses undergoing construction work in their area.
- ❑ Acknowledge the benefits of the project and thank your staff and customers for their patience.

For more information about projects and planned works contact Somerset Regional Council on 07 5424 4000 or visit somerset.qld.gov.au.



Somerset
REGIONAL COUNCIL

**Contacting Council is easier
than ever**

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