

GUIDE TO MANAGING DISRUPTION

TIPS TO STAY ON TRACK DURING DISRUPTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS



Victorian
**Small Business
Commission**



Message from the Victorian Small Business Commissioner

We are in the thick of Victoria's big build. The state is undergoing a period of transition as infrastructure is created or updated to support our growing population. These improvements are necessary, though the disruption of construction can also place a huge strain on small businesses.

In response, we have created guidelines for project managers to ensure they engage with small businesses during construction works and, where possible, consider your needs.

We also wanted to create a tool for you, the small business owner, to help you plan for disruption and manage the impacts. You know your business and customers better than anyone else, so you are best placed to develop strategies that will be of most commercial benefit.

I wish you luck in developing the tools to manage the impacts of disruption on your business.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judy O'Connell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Judy" and last name "O'Connell" clearly distinguishable.

Judy O'Connell

Victorian Small Business Commissioner



PART ONE: **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Purpose






Part one of this guide includes tips to help you understand the scale of the project and the likely impacts on you and your customers.

Scale of the project

The project manager should be able to give you an outline of the project. This will help you get a sense of the way it may impact on you. The graphic on page five outlines the details that will be helpful for you to know so that you understand the potential impacts on your business. We will discuss options and solutions for dealing with these impacts in part three.



What do you need to know?

	Timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When does the project start and end?• What time of day will there be works on site? Is there any flexibility here?• How many days a week will workers be on site?
	Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will the project look like?• What will customers see when they visit the area?• What will the area look like when the project is finished?
	Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the project likely to impact on your access to the business?• Is the project likely to impact on the way your customers or contractors access the business?
	Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will carparking be affected?• Will local public transport be affected?
	Disruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What elements of the project will be disruptive?• Will there be noise pollution or dust?• How many workers will be on site and will there be carparking for them?

PART TWO **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

Part two of this guide outlines a plan for how you can communicate with:

- the **project manager**
- other **businesses in your area**
- your **customers**.

The project manager

- 1 It's helpful to establish the best person to talk to you when you have concerns. Your local council won't always know about the project and the people on the ground may be sub-contractors. Ideally, somebody from the project will have visited you and given you their contact details. If not, you may need to ask the workers directly who they work for to determine who the project manager is.
- 2 When you identify an issue that you need to convey to the project manager, it can be helpful to have on hand:
 - **evidence** as to the key issue
 - **support** from other businesses in your area
 - a **solution** in mind
 - an **ability to compromise**.

Communication examples | project manager

	Example A	Example B
<i>Notes to have before communicating</i>	Subcontractor's cars are parked in customer parking spots.	Customers cannot see that your business is still open.
Evidence as to key issue	Photos	Photos and feedback
Support from other businesses	Agreement	Agreement and feedback from their customers
A solution in mind	With your local knowledge, you may know of other car parking spots the workers are able to use. Alternatively, can you liaise with your local council to organise temporary permits during the project?	Can you add signs that extend beyond the project perimeter indicating you are still open?
Readiness to compromise	Can some of the parks be delegated 'customer only'? Can the workers get special permits to nearby parking lots?	The signs may not come as fast as you would like them to, so you may need to create your own in the interim. Make sure you keep the invoices. Can you supplement this with social media messages to your customers?

Other businesses in your area

If your area does not have a formal business network, now is a good time to start one.

It could be as simple as a private Facebook Group where you can exchange information or an incorporated group with organisational structure.




For more information, refer to the VSBC Guide on Building Stronger Networks.

Your customers

Here we talk about different ways that you can engage with your customers. Each of the components may require some guidance or training. Small Business Victoria has a range of training options available for small businesses. They regularly deliver courses and can also connect you with the Small Business Mentoring Service, who can provide tailored guidance. Find out more at business.vic.gov.au.

Also consider contacting the economic development team at your local council as they may be able to offer business training and support.

Communication | customer groups

NIL IMPACT	Online		If you have online sales, these will assist you in maintaining an income if your regular sales drop. Ensuring you have a solid social media strategy to promote online shopping during the disruption is important. If you are not online already, now might be the time to consider reviewing your approach.
HIGH IMPACT	Regular		<p>It's important that you maintain your regular customers throughout the period of disruption. Communicating with them early and consistently is important.</p> <p>It's helpful to start communicating before disruption. For example, you could place a sign in your store asking people to follow you on Facebook for updates throughout the works. A competition encouraging people to like your page and tag a friend could be a good way to increase your followers.</p> <p>You might also consider developing an e-newsletter through an easy-to-use provider.</p>
	Passer-by		To keep foot traffic high, it's important to engage with the project manager about what can be done around the works to let passers-by know that your business is still open. This is explored further in the options outlined in part three of this guide.

PART THREE **DISRUPTION MITIGATION PLAN**

Part three of this guide looks at how you can manage the impacts on your business. In the Victorian Small Business Engagement Guidelines we made lots of suggestions for project managers. As the business owner, you are best placed to come up with the ideas that will be of most commercial benefit.

It's very rare for project managers to provide monetary compensation to traders affected by disruption. However they may be able to help you to mitigate the impacts in other ways.

The options in the table on page 12 are linked to the impacts discussed in part one of this guide.

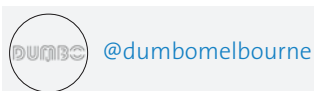


CASE STUDY **DUMBO**

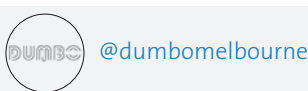
Dumbo is a popular café in Melbourne's inner west that has recently experienced significant disruption due to road works which have:

- disrupted access to the café – parking spaces were inaccessible, and parts of the footpath were completely blocked
- impaired the view of the café from the street
- caused noise pollution.

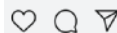
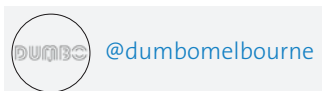
Dumbo caught the attention of the VSBC for their flexible and adaptable approach to mitigating the impacts of disruption. Campaigns undertaken by Dumbo during disruption include: adding an online delivery option for customers, piloting a kids-eat-free campaign and setting up a pop-up when access to the cafe was severely disrupted. Examples from their Instagram below:



KIDS EAT FREE* – There's a buzz of activity happening on our little street, but it's business as usual at Dumbo. While we're not a fan of the trucks in our street, kids absolutely love them! Grab a seat at the window with your little one and let them enjoy a meal on us (*T&C's apply)



Our 'Pop-Up' at [Harley & Rose](#) in full swing!
Open 7:30am – 2:30pm every day this week.



So, we've heard your concerns about how parking can be an issue while our road is being upgraded.

So, we've partnered with [@deliveroo_au](#)! If you can't get to Dumbo bring Dumbo to you!

Available now for preorder!
Link in bio.

Tips for mitigation of impacts

IMPACT	OPTION		PLAN
TIMING		Communication	Can you negotiate with the workers to undertake the major works at a time that isn't your peak trade? Can the works be staggered?
		Planning	If the timing cannot be changed, can you plan for staff accordingly? Can you change your deliveries/ orders to manage for less customers?
LOCATION		Signage	Can signs be used around the precinct to announce that your business is still open? Can you incorporate a message about your business into these signs?
		Wayfinding	Depending on the size of your project, can a map be developed that shows customers how to access your business? Can this be published at the site and online?
ACCESS		Parking	If parking is important to your business, can you talk to your local council about providing temporary permits to workers for neighbouring streets so that the commercial spots stay available?
		Transport	Can alternative transport options be arranged?



Parklet

This is the idea of using available space to create a small urban park using planters and outdoor furniture. The space may be car parks, excess sidewalks or even a lane that has been interrupted by disruption at one end.



Branding

What is it about your precinct that makes it unique and how can you build on that brand? Your small business is part of the ecosystem of your precinct and finding the strengths that make it unique is important.



Marketing initiatives

Is there a way you can work with the project manager to develop special marketing activities such as discount days or raffles? What sort of initiatives do you think your customers would respond to?



Street festival

Can you run an event to announce that the work is complete? This could be a sausage sizzle or an activity that uses entertainers or invites customers to dress up to a theme.



Promote the project for its positive benefits

What value will the project bring to your area?
This isn't about promoting the company doing the works or providing free advertising, but about highlighting the positives of new upgrades to your customers.



We're here to help

Victorian Small Business Commission

As an independent government agency, the Victorian Small Business Commission can facilitate meetings between your business and the project manager to discuss solutions.

vsbc.vic.gov.au

Small Business Victoria

Small Business Victoria provide a comprehensive range of resources for your small business from marketing and sales to managing your finances.

business.vic.gov.au

Small Business Mentoring Service

The mentoring service can link you with a trusted business guide who can provide practical guidance on how to manage your business through disruption.

sbms.org.au



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