With the development of the North East Link and major construction to start from 2022, the Watsonia Traders Association (WTA) has expressed concerns about impacts that the North East Link project, and associated construction, may have on their small businesses and the Watsonia shopping precinct overall. As a result, the North East Link Project (NELP) has been working closely with the Watsonia Traders Association (WTA) on behalf of the businesses it represents.

This has included preparing a business support strategy to assist the traders in Watsonia Shopping Centre throughout the construction period for the project. Prior to construction, NELP has agreed to provide WTA with support, including market research and development of a marketing and promotion plan.

Market research will provide a current baseline of shopping behaviours given marked shift in suburb demographics and community profile over the last couple of years, since WTA has last carried out research. It should measure current shopping habits and what impact North East Link construction could have on their future shopping habits. This will then be able to evaluate a clear outcome to aid the development of a supportive marketing and promotion plan for Watsonia shopping traders.

The OCG on behalf of the North East Link Project commissioned this research to include intercept surveys and focus groups. The aim of the research was to understand and measure awareness and perceptions of the Watsonia Shopping centre as well as current and future intention to shop.

The key project outcomes are to understand current shopping behaviours at the Watsonia Shopping Centre amongst Watsonia residents, shopping centre workers and visitors and to measure what impact, if any, North East Link construction could have on their future shopping habits.

- The research will seek to answer the following:
  - Current awareness and perceptions of the Watsonia shopping centre and the retailers operating there
  - Visitation frequency and shopping behaviour: how often do people visit the centre, at what times, which shops do they visit, for what purpose, how they get there, current barriers to visitation
  - Awareness and sentiment towards the North East Link project
  - Understanding of how construction of the NE Link might impact people’s shopping habits at Watsonia shopping centre (i.e. parking, road changes, noise)
  - Understanding of the likelihood to support traders during the construction period through shopping behaviours and what initiatives may help to entice people to shop there
A Two-Phase Research Approach

Luma conducted a mixed methodology approach that included both quantitative and qualitative measures. The initial quantitative phase provided a robust and reliable indication of current shopping behaviours, while the qualitative phase will allow us more opportunity to dive more deeply into the needs of each audience (shoppers and traders).

Phase 1: Quantitative

Intercept Surveys (at Watsonia Shipping Centre)

Intercept surveys provide information on current and future shopping behaviour from local foot traffic – shopper and traders.

Phase 2: Qualitative

6 x Focus Group Discussions (2 traders, 2 frequent shoppers and 2 infrequent shoppers)

Focus groups help us to gauge current and future shopping intention across a more specific cross section of people. It gives us a greater understanding of shopping behaviours, awareness of the shopping centre, awareness and sentiment of NELP, potential impact of NELP on shopping behaviours and likelihood to support traders.
Sample Details:
5 minute f2f survey with
- Passing foot traffic at Watsonia Shopping Centre Precinct located on Watsonia Rd
- Mix of males & females
- All aged over 18 years
- All visitors, workers or residents along Watsonia Rd
- Surveys conducted by TKW between 16 – 20th July 2019 (10am – 4pm)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
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<td>Workers</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>65+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Watsonia North</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greensborough</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briar Hill</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yallambie</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macleod</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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n=141
Qualitative Sample Structure

Group Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1 &amp; 2</th>
<th>Watsonia shopping centre traders</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 3 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Watsonia local residents – frequent shoppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4 &amp; 6</td>
<td>Watsonia local residents – infrequent shoppers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specifications

Trader Groups:
- All traders (owners or general managers) in Watsonia shopping precinct
- All over 18 years
- Mix of genders
- Mix of shop types
- Are not employees or have worked in transport, public transport, advertising or marketing related companies including market research and journalism
- Have not have attended a focus group or depth interview within the last 6 months

Shopper Groups:
- Mix of frequent and infrequent shoppers of Watsonia shopping precinct.
- Mix of those who live on Eastern and Western side of Greensborough Road (Elder Street side)
- Must live in Watsonia or surroundings suburbs
- All over 18 years
- Mix of genders
- Are not employees or have worked in transport, public transport, advertising or marketing related companies including market research and journalism
- Have not have attended a focus group or depth interview within the last 6 months

Groups were conducted on the 25th and 30th of July 2019.
Management Summary
Summary

WATSONIA SHOPPING PRECINCT

Overall, the Watsonia Shopping Precinct is highly regarded, with close to 4 in 5 giving it a rating of 4 or 5 (very good) out of 5!

While there is a high level of shopper frequency to the Watsonia Shopping Precinct (shoppers tend to visit the precinct two days a week or more), shoppers generally don’t spend much time there (the majority spend less than one hour per shop).

Nearby residents (empty nesters and young families) speak fondly of the ‘village vibe’, but for most it serves a functional purpose (convenience); they go there because it’s a quick and easy place to run errands and pick up a few grocery items.

The majority of shoppers travel to the precinct by car and do so between mid-morning to late afternoon. Shoppers are most likely to visit shops which cater for food and Liquor.

Current frustrations and barriers include increased traffic in the area and competition for parking. Some visitors complain about the duplications and gaps (for example, multiple pharmacies and pizza stores, and limited ATMs.) The current gaps including spaces and places where they are encouraged to socialise and linger.
Typical Precinct Visitation Summary

- **71%** Shop at Watsonia Two Days a Week or More
- **93%** Shop During the Week
- **65%** Shop in the Early Afternoon
- **73%** Spend Less than an Hour Shopping
- **81%** Travel by Car

**TOP 3 TYPES OF SHOPS VISITED:**

- **84%** Supermarket / Liquor
- **76%** Fresh Food and Bakery
- **64%** Medical / Optical / Dental / Pharmacy / Massage

**78%** Find the Watsonia Shopping Precinct to be Good!
**NELP**

Awareness of the North East Link Project is high, with almost all who frequent the precinct being aware of the project. Amongst those aware, 2 in 3 also feel positively towards the project.

A lack of understanding around the project’s details (including when, where and how construction will take place) means it’s often hard for visitors to predict how construction could impact on their future shopping behaviours.

Based on the survey findings, the majority feel the NELP will have little impact on their decision to shop there. However, around one third feel that it could.

The key concerns are reduced access to the area, increased traffic congestion and increased competition for parking. This would most likely affect those who live of the eastern side of Greensborough Rd and those who drop by on the way through to somewhere else.

Ensuring continued access to the shops and parking throughout the construction period will be important to ensure ‘business as usual’ for both shopper and traders.

Other protective factors include: effective communication (signage, notifications etc.) to minimise inconvenience; building awareness and customer loyalty through marketing and cross-promotions, and building a unique ‘village vibe’ and appeal (events, beautification, central spaces etc).
Watsonia Shopping Precinct
Precinct Visitation

Close to three-quarters visit the Watsonia precinct two days a week or more. Those who live in Watsonia are significantly more likely to visit more frequently than those from other suburbs.

SHOPPING FREQUENCY:

- **71%** Two days a week or more
- **14%** One day a week
- **10%** Once a fortnight
- **5%** Once a month
- **1%** Less than once a month

Significantly more likely to live in Watsonia than other Suburbs (86%, compared to 59%)

Source: Q5. On average, how often do you visit the Watsonia Shopping precinct?

BASE: Shoppers (n=130)

ODG HELP Watsonia Traders Research August 2019
**Precinct Visitation**

Most shoppers visit the Watsonia Precinct during the week*. Most are likely to visit between mid-morning to late afternoon. Watsonia residents are significantly more likely to visit in the early morning than those who live in other suburbs.

*It's important to note that 4 out of the 5 days of interviewing were during the week.

**TYPICAL SHOPPING TIMES:**

- **Early morning:** 16%
- **Mid/late morning:** 58%
- **Early afternoon:** 65%
- **Mid/late afternoon:** 45%
- **Early/mid evening:** 17%

*Source: Q5a. Do you typically visit on a weekday or a weekend? Q6. In a typical visit to the shopping precinct, what time(s) of the day do you generally visit? BASE: Shoppers (n=130)

ODG NELP Watsonia Traders Research August 2019*
Precinct Visitation

Most shoppers spend less than an hour at the Watsonia shopping precinct and none spend more than three hours or more there.

TIME SPENT AT PRECINCT:

- Less than an hour: 73%
- Between 1-2 hours: 25%
- Between 2-3 hours: 2%
- Over 3 hours: 
- Other: 

Significantly more likely to live in Watsonia than other Suburbs (82%, compared to 66%)

BASE: Shoppers (n=130)

Q6b. And in a typical visit, how long do you generally spend in the shopping precinct?
Mode of Travel to Precinct

The majority of shoppers typically drive to the Watsonia shopping precinct. Those who live outside of Watsonia are significantly more likely to drive than Watsonia residents. While Watsonia residents are significantly more likely to walk than those living in other suburbs.

Q7. How do you typically travel to the Watsonia Shopping centre precinct?

Drive a Car: 81%
Walk: 18%
Ride a Bike: 1%

Those who live in a suburb other than Watsonia are significantly more likely to drive than those from other suburbs (90%, compared to 68%)

Those who live in Watsonia are significantly more likely to walk than those from other suburbs (32%, compared to 8%)

BASE: Shoppers (n=130)
Types of Shops Visited

The majority of shoppers visit to buy food (supermarkets/liquor, fresh food and bakery), for medical appointments (medical/optical/dental/pharmacy/massage) and to eat out (restaurants/cafés/take-away/catering). Around half visit the Library and RSL community spaces.

**TYPE OF SHOPS VISITED:**

- Supermarket/Liquor: 84%
- Fresh Food and Bakery: 76%
- Medical/Optical/Dental/Pharmacy/Massage: 64%
- Restaurants/Cafes/Take-away Food/Catering: 52%
- Newsagent/Australia Post/Drycleaners: 48%
- Public Library/RSL: 48%
- Banking & ATMS: 32%
- Building, Design & Hardware: 22%
- Hair and Beauty: 13%
- Automotive: 10%
- Giftware/Florist: 8%
- Clothing/Workwear/Embroidery: 5%
- Sport & Leisure: 4%
- Other: 14%

**Significantly more likely to be female than male** (89%, compared to 74%)

**Significantly more likely to be female than male** (70%, compared to 52%)

**Significantly more likely to be male** (50%, compared to 23% female) and live in Watsonia (47% compared to 21% from other suburbs).
Overall Rating of Watsonia Shopping Precinct

Overall, shoppers rate the Watsonia Shopping Precinct highly, with close to 4 in 5 giving it a 4 or 5 out of 5.

Q9. Overall, how would you rate the shops at Watsonia Shopping centre precinct, where 5 is very good and 1 is not good at all?

TOP 2 BOX 78%

- 39% Very good
- 39% 4
- 21% 3
- 1% 2
- 1% Not good at all

BASE: Shoppers (n=130)
Sentiment of Shoppers

For most shoppers, the primary drawcard is convenience...

- The mix of shops covers most people’s basic needs.
- A handy place for running quick errands i.e.:
  - Posting a letter
  - Doing a quick ‘top up’ shop
  - Picking up take-away diner
  - Filling a script
  - Filling up with petrol
- An alternative to battling the crowds at one of the larger shopping centres.
- Popular with local residents, but also a handy place for people to stop on their drive further north.
- NB: Most of those who stopped on their way to somewhere else either used to live in the area or had friends or family nearby. One of the reasons they keep coming back is that they know where things are and how things work.

For most, being able to get in and out quickly is what sets Watsonia apart from bigger shopping centres. If this is compromised, some shoppers may well take their business elsewhere.
Sentiment of Shoppers

Shoppers tend to have small collection of favourite shops or businesses that they visit regularly, but rarely venture beyond this...

There are some exceptions:

• Events at the library (popular with young families).
• A night out at the RSL.
• Midweek lunches and coffee dates (retirees, stay at home mums).
• Weekend brunches (mostly a younger crowd).
• Perusing the op shops.

But for the most part, visitors don’t have much reason to linger or explore.

“For me it’s get in and get out.”

“It’s so spread out. I just go to the shop I need and go. I’m not going to get back in the car and drive down the other end.”

“I mainly come here for the chemist and bakery. That’s it.”

“The IGA. I feel that’s the pull. You wouldn’t do a full shop there because it’s too expensive but you stop by to do a quick top up. Things you’ve forgotten or run out of.”

“It’s not the kind of place where you hang about. There’s nothing here after dark apart from the take-away places and the RSL. I wish someone would put in a wine bar.”

“The library’s great. I used to bring the kids down when they were little for their story time events. There’s not much else for the kids though. Macleod’s much better for that – there’s a park across the road.”

“I when you come here you know what you’re here for. You get it and you get out.”

“It’s not the kind of place where you hang about. There’s nothing here after dark apart from the take-away places and the RSL. I wish someone would put in a wine bar.”

ODG NELP Watsonia Traders Research August 2019
Shoppers’ Dislikes & Frustrations

PARKING AND TRAFFIC ISSUES

- Have become more challenging in recent years.
- Peak hour commuters are cutting down through Watsonia Road as a way to avoid the traffic on the highway.
- In the afternoon, the queue to turn right at Grimshaw St causes traffic to bank up as far back as the Devonshire Rd roundabout, causing mayhem for locals.
- Reversing into the traffic in Watsonia Rd can be scary.
- Increasingly difficult to find a park.

“At 6pm at night it’s a nightmare around here.”

“There’s so much traffic going through. You can’t wait to get a spot, people honk at you.”

“The beauty of this place has always been that you could park right out front of the shop you needed, but that’s not always the case anymore. It gets pretty busy, especially down this end.”

“One of the reasons I wouldn’t meet friends here is because you can’t count on anywhere being open… on Saturday or Sunday arvo, it’s all pretty quiet. Even after school they’re often closed. That puts you off coming.”

GAPS & DUPLICATIONS

Whilst most shoppers felt that there is a fairly good mix of shops, they are frustrated by the duplications and gaps.

- For example, there are multiple chemists, hairdressers and pizza stores (but there are only two ATMS)
- Aside from the RSL and some take-away eateries, there’s no nightlife or entertainment that appeals to a younger crowd.
- There are few shops to browse (like clothing or homewares)
- There is a shortage of places to take young kids.

“There’s no ATM down the end so you have to do two trips in the car.”

“There are too many things that are the same.”

“There’s nowhere to bring kids really, apart from the library.”

ODG NELP Watsonia Traders Research August 2019
**Sentiment of Shoppers**

Older residents who live closely by acknowledge and value the sense of community, but there are opportunities to enhance this and create more of a ‘village vibe…’

- Some (mostly older) shoppers who live in the local neighborhood spoke fondly of the sense of community in Watsonia Rd.
  - familiar faces,
  - friendly smiles, and
  - ‘old fashioned’ personal service
- People yearn for connection and will often go out of their way to find and nurture it.
- It can be a strong driver of loyalty.

“Imagine if they had a wine bar near the station where you could get a drink after work, or meet for pre-drinks before you go into the city.” (Infrequent shopper)

“Last year they had a Halloween event. The kids loved it, they went to every store.” (Frequent shopper)

“You like support the smaller businesses and people you know.” (Frequent shopper)

“I love it. I call it the village. You get to know the traders, and you stop and have a chat.” (Frequent shopper)

“It’s more of an older generation shopping centre. There’s nothing to linger for. It’s get in and get out.” (Infrequent shopper)

“It’s pretty dead on weekends. You wouldn’t come here on a date.” (Infrequent shopper)

“I love it. I call it the village. You get to know the traders, and you stop and have a chat.” (Frequent shopper)

But younger singles and families seek a different kind of vibe. They value personal service but also crave spaces and places where they can meet up with friends, be social, or simply “hang out”.

The wish list includes a wine bar, casual dining, park for the kids & more cafés with extended trading hours.
The shopping precinct is growing and changing too:

- Retirees are moving out, whilst young (more affluent) families are moving in.
- The mix of businesses has diversified and the ‘quality’ of their offer has increased.
- An expansion of service-based businesses (e.g. health services, a dance school, cafés, beauticians, hairdressers etc.) is encouraging repeat visitation.
- New and improved library facilities, along with the child care centre, are a drawcard for young families.
- The combination of affordable rent and relatively easy access to both the CBD and the city’s eastern suburbs is attractive to small-medium employers who service the NE and SE metro areas.
- Some reported a noticeable increase in the number of commuters stopping to pick up essentials on their way to or from work, including people from the northern growth corridor who are choosing to ‘park and ride’ at Watsonia station.

Sentiment Amongst Traders

Watsonia is seen as an ‘up and coming’ growth area…

“The demographic is changing. The mix of businesses is changing. We’re getting more quality businesses coming, which is great.”

“The reason my business is located here is that it’s very central and easy to go out to other parts… geographically it’s very good.”

“The library brings people… we wouldn’t want to lose it.”

“The people who moved into Watsonia in the 60s and 70s are now in their 80s. We’re seeing a large influx of younger families because it’s an affordable suburb.”

“Watsonia is a hub for people going into the city. If more people come here (to park and ride) that is generating more business for the rest of us.”
Business was reported as ‘picking up’, and traders believe there are opportunities aplenty for savvy entrepreneurs to take advantage of the current boom.
Sentiment Amongst Traders

Despite the rapid development, traders feel that the precinct has largely retained its friendly ‘village-like’ atmosphere that helps set it apart from the big shopping centres nearby...

But there are growing pains...

- The biggest issue is **parking**... finding a spot is becoming increasingly difficult for both clientele and staff.
- Whilst local and passing **traffic** is getting noticeably worse.

Traffic & parking problems are seen as barriers to continued growth.

- "We don’t want a scenario where they don’t come to us because it’s too hard to get a park."
- "If people can’t get a park nearby they’ll keep on driving."
- "There isn’t much all day parking for people who work here... we’re competing with commuters for the all day spots."
- "The place is more segmented.. Down at the IGA it’s always busy, there’s nowhere to park. But there’s no reason to come up to the other end.. It’s seedy."
- "It used to have a great community feel. Everyone knew each other. It’s lost that buzz [at the Devonshire Rd end]."

Some felt that the expansion has led to the precinct becoming divided and losing some of the community feel...

- Whilst there is a noticeable ‘buzz’ around the northern end of Watsonia Rd, the section south of Devonshire Rd was described by some as tired, neglected and forgotten, and detracts from the community feel.
- Some businesses have struggled to keep their doors open at that end of the strip.
Awareness of NELP
Almost all who frequent the Watsonia Shopping Precinct are aware of the North East Link Project. Amongst those aware, 2 in 3 feel positively about the project. Males are significantly more likely to feel positive about the project than females.
Understanding of North East Link

Although most had heard of the project, understanding of what was involved varied greatly. Traders and those who live alongside Greensborough Rd generally had the most insight, whilst those from Bundoora and further afield knew very little about it at all.

What local residents & traders have heard so far…

• It is a massive undertaking
  • A tunnel or trench will be constructed alongside Greensborough Hwy, linking Eastern Freeway to the Ring Road.
  • Construction will start in the next couple of years, and will go on for 5-10 years.
  • Some houses will in the area will be acquired. Roads will no doubt be closed.
  • Winsor Reserve will be closed to make way for the temporary construction headquarters.
  • Proposing a sewer multi-story carpark at the station.

• But there are still many unknowns, including when construction will start, how it will roll-out, what the design is, and how it will impact the area.

“Don’t know the plans or how they’re going to do it.” (Resident)
“There’s a lot that’s still up in the air.” (Trader)

Key sources of information to date…

• Letterbox drops (including a survey conducted by Banyule Council about preferred designs)
• The local paper
• Community Facebook pages and social media in general
• Hearsay
• Some traders and anxious residents have actively sought more information via websites, meetings and/or the NELP hub, and have come away feeling frustrated around the lack of certainty or sense there’s a clear plan

“I follow Dan the Man on Facebook. He’s often posting updates on projects like this.” (Resident)
“I’ve been to the Hub but there’s not much they can tell you yet.” (Trader)
Sentiment around North East Link

Attitudes are mixed...

Most agree that it needs to happen, and that there will be long term gain for Melbourne as a whole:

- Connecting the SE suburbs to the airport
- Reducing traffic & taking trucks off local roads

But they worry about the ‘cost’ to local residents and traders:

- “Don’t get me wrong. Melbourne needs this. It has to happen, but I’m worried for sure.”
- “It’s absolutely crazy that it takes half an hour to get to the Eastern Freeway from here.”
- “A positive is that it will take the through traffic off local roads which is a good thing.”
- “It’s the missing link. We need it”
- “It used to be a quiet suburb and they’re going to destroy it.”
- “In the long run people will be thinking ‘thank god that’s been done. But in the meantime it will be hell.”
- “I feel really bad for older people who rely on the local shops.”

Connecting the SE suburbs to the airport
Reducing traffic & taking trucks off local roads
Impact of Construction
Impact of Construction

Without knowing the details, it’s hard for anyone to predict exactly how it will impact the shopping strip. But locals & traders expect that construction will cause major disruptions in the area for many years to come…

The main concerns are around access, traffic & parking. Specifically...

• Reduced access to the area (in particular, that roadworks will form an impenetrable barrier between the east and west of Greensborough Road).
• Increased traffic congestion on Watsonia Rd and nearby residential streets as a result of detours and/or people trying to evade traffic jams.
• Loss of parking spaces at the station (which in turn will increase the competition for places along the strip).
• Increased trucks and construction vehicles on narrow local roads.
• An increase in trucks and heavy construction vehicles on local roads.

Nearby level crossing removal projects are often used as a reference point (i.e. ‘that was bad enough, this will be much worse’).
Most of those who visit the Watsonia Shopping Precinct feel that the NELP is unlikely to impact their decision to shop there. However, around one third do feel like it will have an impact, with females more likely to feel it will affect their decision than males.

Q12. Thinking ahead, what is the likelihood that this construction will affect your decision to shop at the precinct?

Q13. What might entice you to shop at the precinct during the North East Link construction?
The focus group findings suggest impact may vary depending on motivations and where people live...

Those who are motivated primarily by convenience freely admit that if access becomes more difficult due to parking issues or increased traffic along Watsonia Road, they may well avoid the area and take their business elsewhere.

Those who live on the eastern side of Greensborough Road predict it will change their habits if the intersections become too busy or are closed. (They’ll travel to Greensborough Plaza, Safeway or Diamond Village instead)

Those who live on the western side are less likely to anticipate problems, especially if they walk to the shops. They’re also more likely to feel an obligation to support small business in their area.

“It’s going to change my routine. It’ll take longer to get home. I will not come over here to do my shopping anymore.” (Lives Greensborough)

“If I can’t get a carpark I just keep driving. I think dark, I’ll have to go without my bread.”

“If I have to be re-directed I won’t stop here.” (Lives Bundoora)

“I’ll still come because I love the people here.” (Lives Watsonia)
How Traders Feel

They are understandably anxious - their livelihoods are at stake...

The future is uncertain...

- Even short-term disruptions could cause visitors to permanently change their shopping habits.
- Investment in the precinct will be put on hold until the project is complete.
- Any shops that close down could remain empty for years.
- It will be hard to find a buyer if they want to sell up and move on.
- Some predict they could lose up to 30% of their business during the construction.

"I spoke to traders in Rosanna and they suffered greatly as a result of the level crossing removal and that was only for 6 months." (Trader)

"I'm scared by the unknown." (Trader)

"It's hard to visualise how they'll do things." (Trader)

"We do quite a bit of business with the Barracks, so I don't know how that will go." (Trader)

"If people are late we can't run our classes." (Trader)

"My business can't afford a [road] closure. We need trucks to get in and out all day." (Trader)

"If it's too hard to access Watsonia Rd or they can't get a park out front they'll go elsewhere. It doesn't take long for people to change their habits." (Trader)

"If it's all too hard people will take their business to Greensborough." (Trader)
Perceived Impact on Future Development

Whilst in the long term the impact could be positive, both traders and local residents worry that the project will discourage new & interesting businesses from setting up shop during the construction phase. Development to enhance the area may well come to a halt...

“If shops close or businesses move, it seems unlikely they will be replaced during the construction time.” (Trader)

“This could further detract from the overall appeal of shopping in Watsonia Road.”

“If there are empty shops, that puts you off.” (Shopper)
Strategies for Enticing Shoppers
The main opportunities to encourage people back to Watsonia during the construction is to make the access easy for people and provide ample parking.

**WHAT MIGHT ENTICE SHOPPERS TO PRECINCT DURING NELP CONSTRUCTION:**

- **56%**
  - Easy access/ Parking (see below)
  - “No road works. Time is important. I’ll go where there are no hold ups.”
  - “Easy access. Not too much construction traffic.”
  - “Easy access to shops. Great parking.”

- **19%**
  - Other (see next page)
  - “Keep it open. I’ll only call in if it’s easy access when visiting family, otherwise ill just go to Diamond Creek.”

- **25%**
  - None/Don’t know
  - “Adequate car parking needed.”
  - “Increase parking spaces.”
  - “Easy parking. Shops to remain open. Continuous travel without being stopped.”

BASE: Those who feel the NELP would likely impact their shopping behaviour (n=48)

Q13. What might entice you to shop at the precinct during the North East Link construction?
Watsonia Shopping Precinct Draw Card

The other suggestions people had were quite varied...value, good shops and supporting the local traders.

What might entice shoppers to precinct during NELP construction:

- **Good Shops**
  - “I will still come here as the butcher is good.”
  - “Nice coffee shop.”
  - “the Library and the supermarket.”

- **Value**
  - “Bargains inside stores. Will still come for tattslotto thought”
  - “Bargain prices from traders.”

- **Community**
  - “Don’t lose business. give traders support. I don’t want businesses to close.”

- **Makeover**
  - “The strip needs a revamp.”

BASE: Those who feel the NELP would likely impact their shopping behaviour (n=48)

Q13. What might entice you to shop at the precinct during the North East Link construction?
Other Suggestions From Shoppers

Other ideas for enticing shoppers to the Watsonia Rd shopping precinct and building loyalty during the construction period...

- Family friendly events to promote the area (markets, festivals, etc) to help create a more vibrant village atmosphere (like the Halloween event last year).
- Loyalty programs/cross promotions (i.e. spend $30 at the IGA and get a voucher for a free coffee at A-Team).
- Increased advertising (social media, ads in the local paper, letter box drops etc) to build awareness of the strip and encourage support for local businesses.
- Notifications of road closures etc and suggested alternative roads/places to park (via social media, SMS messaging to customer database, digital signboards, posters in store etc) and reminders that the shops are still open.
- Installing sign boards at key intervals along the road with a directory of shops, and community notices.
- A cosmetic makeover to improve the area’s visual aesthetic and atmosphere.
- Encouraging local traders to ‘lift their game’ through better customer service, more unique or interesting wares/services, delivery services, self-promotion, etc.
- An open air playground for children (near the library?).

“They need to promote themselves more on social media.”

“Brighten the place up a bit. It’s a bit dated.”

“Bring back loyalty cards. Every 6 coffees, get one free.”

“We need a playground for the kids.”

“The pizza shop has outdoor tables, but you never see anyone. Put up some fairy lights, make it nice. Encourage people to eat in.”
Potential Ways to Support Traders

What traders think might help...

- Ongoing consultation and communication with traders and local residents
- Parking solutions that offset both short and long term loss of parking spaces (e.g. bigger multi-story car park)
- Timely and accurate notifications of any closures. Provided in a format that businesses can directly pass on to their clients and customers
- Support with a marketing plan & activities to build customer loyalty prior to construction starting (e.g. through community events)
- Reassurance that businesses will have uninterrupted vehicular access throughout construction for deliveries etc.
- More advertising and promotion of the shopping strip

“We need help to convince shoppers to stay local. We need to build up their loyalty now.”

“We would want a couple of weeks notice at least if there are going to be any closures that affect us.”

“We need help to convince shoppers to stay local. We need to build up their loyalty now.”

“Weekly updates of what’s going on, disseminated through the traders’ association.” (Trader)

“A proper consultation process.”

“We need help to convince shoppers to stay local. We need to build up their loyalty now.”

“We need a set-up so that couriers and trucks can still get in.”

“Build the community’s sense of ownership and loyalty, so that they support us even if some of the convenience is taken away.”

“We need help to convince shoppers to stay local. We need to build up their loyalty now.”

“We need an extremely strong marketing plan.”
Next Steps
Strategies to Consider

Opportunities to entice shoppers in the lead up to and during the construction phase fall into three main areas...

Minimising Inconvenience via
- Proactive communication and timely notifications around disruptions using a variety of methods and channels (letters, posters, social media, signage, the Hub, postcards etc).
- Clearly signposting parking.
- Provide day parking for staff and construction workers further away and designate parking out front 'customer only'.
- Encourage local residents to walk. (signposting the way)
- Fasttrack additional parking projects (e.g. station multi-story carpark)
- Installing a directory of shops at intervals along the strip.

Building Customer Loyalty via
- A marketing campaign that promotes the strip and appeals to community spirit ('we need you’re support').
- Sponsoring local community groups (e.g. football club)
- Cross promotions and loyalty rewards programs (e.g. spend at IGA and get a free coffee etc)

Enhancing The ‘Village Vibe’ via
- Community events, festivals, markets etc.
- Improving aesthetics & communal facilities in the area. (e.g. playground or skatepark)
- Supporting and encouraging traders to put their ‘best foot forward’ via outstanding customer service, unique offerings, delivery services etc.
- Ensuring that the southern end of the strip is included.
What should we do?

In short...
The research shows that the construction of NELP will potentially limit shopping at the Watsonia village for around a third of current shoppers.

Marketing Plan

A marketing plan that includes the below elements could help to counteract the impact of the construction period:

Pre-Construction
- Community engagement activities to build the emotional connection and community feel (e.g. events or sponsorships)
- Promotions to build awareness and encourage people to the strip.

During Construction
- Flyers / social media posts about closures and opening hours
- Promotion of delivery services for some traders
What should we do?

Infrastructure Considerations

Car Parking
(multi-story for commuters and site parking for construction workers and traders)

Community Space
(like a playground or skate park)

Support to Upgrade the Shops
(the street appeal)

Access

For the construction period, minimise road closures to enable traffic to pass through the shopping strip and clearly sign access points.
Thank you!

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