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Traders hurting as tram works deter customers

Shops stay open as construction takes place metres from their doors



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The key section of Sydney Road is scheduled to reopen on September 4.

Mark Phillips
 Saturday, August 29, 2026
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The Sydney Road traders' association is considering boosting promotion of the strip to encourage the return of shoppers following major disruption caused by tram track works near Moreland Road.

With the partial road closure for the replacement of tracks near the Brunswick tram depot into its second week, traders in the area have experienced a significant drop in foot traffic and sales over the past few weeks.

Shops in close proximity to the depot closed their doors for several days this week because of the noise and dust caused by the works. But the impact of the construction project goes back many weeks earlier since hoarding and fencing was erected and two lanes of the road were partially closed.

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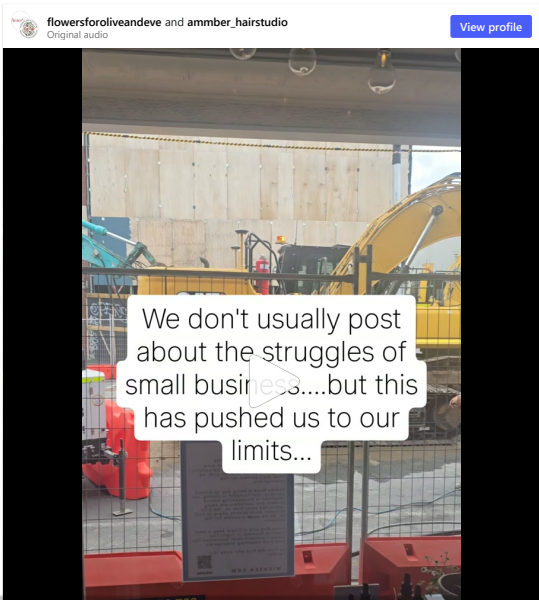
Their plight was summed up by [an Instagram video](#) posted this week by florist Flowers for Olive & Eve on the corner of Sydney Road and Peveril Street. The shop said the construction work had “pushed us to our limits”.

Over footage of the construction works taking place just metres from the shop's front window, captions explained the dire situation for some businesses:

“The signs around the precinct say it's ‘business as usual’. But for us, and other small business in the area, this couldn't be further from the truth.

“We understand construction is often necessary ... but we entered into leases without be told works were scheduled and would impact us for a third of the calendar year.

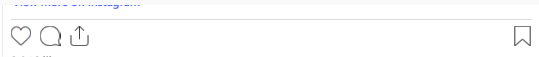
"The road is closed. The footpath is closed. Customers have no way of getting to us. And the noise is unbearable. But the bills keep coming."



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The florist is a tenant in a [building owned by the state government agency VicTrack](#) next to the tram depot (owner Beatriz Miralles-Lombardo declined to be interviewed by *Brunswick Voice* citing ongoing discussions about their lease with the landlord).

Staff at some nearby shops have worn ear muffs to block out the noise for part of the week, while a few dozen metres away some residents whose homes look directly onto or are close to the construction works have been provided with alternative accommodation paid for by Yarra Trams.

The manager of the Sydney Road Brunswick Association, Troy Stuchbree, said he had great sympathy for businesses near the construction works who had been dealing with disruption for several months.

"They have definitely been acknowledging that it's tough and it's been a hard couple of months on the back of a continued lack of consumer spending," he said.

"There's been a flow on effect all down Sydney Road where the tram line has been disrupted.

"We've had some conversations with businesses in the area to see how long the slow period has been going for and how much of it is due to the Yarra Trams works or how much to consumer spending."

Stuchbree said the SRBA began meeting regularly with Yarra Trams in mid-June to plan for the street closure and how to mitigate the impact on traders.

One of the initiatives has been the distribution of \$10 discount vouchers, paid for by Transport Victoria, to encourage people to continue to shop in the precinct.

The SRBA has also been advertising on Facebook and Instagram to inform shoppers that "the precinct is still open and businesses are still open and people should come down and help support businesses where they can", Stuchbree said.

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For its part, Yarra Trams held four community pop up sessions and doorknocked businesses in Sydney Road, Moreland Road and Cameron Street before the works began.

A trader support package has been enacted to help businesses remain visible and accessible, including maintaining pedestrian access, wayfinding signage and 'businesses open' messaging on illuminated signs and posters.

"Since May, we've undertaken an extensive community engagement program, including direct written notifications, door knocking, community information sessions and ongoing discussions with businesses and residents about the impacts of the works," a spokesperson said.

"Yarra Trams thanks the community for their patience and support while these essential upgrades are carried out."

Yarra Trams does not usually financially compensate businesses operating within the vicinity of works required to maintain the light rail network in Melbourne.

The track and overhead wire replacement works began on August 21 and are the culmination of a four-year, \$115 million project to upgrade and modernise the Brunswick tram depot, including reopening it for trams to exit directly onto Sydney Road.

Buses have replaced trams along most of the #19 route, in some sections, detouring through back streets some distance from shops. Sydney Road will remain closed to tram, motor vehicle and bike traffic between Davies and Mitchell streets until September 4.

Once the Sydney Road works are completed, part of Moreland Road will be closed from September 12 to October 2 to replace tracks and overhead wires and build a new accessible tram stop.

The works have also impacted the #58 tram route along Melville Road with replacement buses in operation. This is because trams from the Brunswick depot have to be temporarily stabled in Royal Park, which makes up part of the #58 route.



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"There's always going to be some burdens but there should be some allowances for small businesses," says Sam Nyhof of Vyron Electric Bikes, pictured at the Upfield shared path which is closed for construction works metres from his shop.

Construction works at the rear of the tram depot in Cameron Street have also impacted local businesses.

Sam Nyhof's [Vyron Electric Bikes](#) has been dealing with disruption in Cameron Street since May and there will be no let up until the completion of the Moreland Road works in October.

In addition to the replacement of tracks that come out from the depot into Cameron Street along with new signalling and overhead wires, parked vehicles and construction equipment have regularly blocked the entrance to his shop.

But for a bike shop which benefits from passing traffic, the biggest impact has been from the closure of the Upfield path between Moreland Road and Tinning Street, which has diverted cyclists onto Colebrook Street on the other side of the railway line.

While his sales have been steady, Nyhof said he has had to increase advertising spending to compensate for the disruption, which has hit his bottom line.

"It's made it very hard," he said.

"It's reduced traffic through my business and therefore potential sales. It's cost more money in advertising just to keep it afloat, and there's been no offer to help with signage or to help customers find me, and access [to the shop] has been limited.

"There's always going to be some burdens but there should be some allowances for small businesses."

Stuchbree said it was likely the SRBA would need to fund a new marketing and promotional campaign to lure shoppers back to the precinct.

"I think it definitely warrants a conversation with our committee of management and to get more feedback from the street more broadly, and probably we would be looking to tie something into the festive season as it becomes more critical," he said.

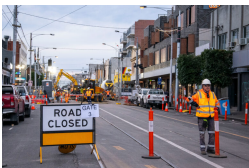
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