

Unsealed Roads Factsheet

Cassowary Coast Regional Council is responsible for maintaining over 514 km of unsealed roads and has annual budgets of approximately \$1.8 million dedicated to unsealed road re-sheeting and 1.6 million on maintenance grading. Unsealed roads are a highly dynamic asset as the condition of the road can change rapidly due to traffic movement, weather, and variability in terrain. Soil types and gravels also add to the complexity of maintaining unsealed roads.

Council has four grading crews that are used for maintenance grading, re-sheeting, and road reconstruction works. We also regularly hire contractors to supplement our fleet.

ROUTINE INSPECTIONS

Council conducts frequent routine inspections on our unsealed roads based on the road class highlighted in the table below. An inspection is undertaken to identify any defects/hazards. This information is used to determine if the road has met the intervention level for maintenance grading and/or if isolated gravel patching is required. During an inspection, the roughness, and ultimately the safe driving speed of the road is considered.

ROAD CLASS	INSPECTION FREQUENCY	HIERARCHY RISK
A	6 Weekly	High
B	8 Weekly	Medium
C	3 Monthly	Medium
D	4 Monthly	Low
E	Half Yearly	Low
F	Yearly	Low

UNSEALED ROAD CLASS

To help manage Council's unsealed road network, Council has divided its roads into segments. Each unsealed road segment is classified into a road class based on criteria that dictates the level of service that the road provides to the community. This also forms a risk-based approach to maintenance which allows Council to prioritise works according to the risk profile. Roads that are used at a higher frequency generally deteriorate more quickly and therefore require intervention more frequently.

MAINTENANCE GRADING

The main purpose of a maintenance grade is to provide a good running surface and to reform cross fall in the road so that water runs off and does not pool or cause scouring and potholing. This process includes the use of a grader, roller, and water truck. If the road is too wet, the grader can cause more damage to the road. On these occasions, it is beneficial for the grader to leave the road unfinished, though in a safe and passable condition, and return once the weather permits.

For more information on Council's grading program, please visit Council's Unsealed Roads Webpage www.cassowarycoast.qld.gov.au/unsealedroads

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Understand the nature of unsealed roads

Over time, unsealed roads become corrugated, potholed, rough, muddy, and/or dusty. All of these are normal and unavoidable conditions that change often.

Drive to suit the conditions

Drivers must remain vigilant when driving on unsealed roads and are responsible for their own safety and that of other users of the road, i.e., travel at lower speeds and expect the unexpected.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why don't we seal all unsealed roads?

The cost of sealing an unsealed road is approximately \$1,000,000/km. To seal all remaining unsealed roads would cost Council over half a billion dollars and could only be funded with the equivalent of a 19% rate rise. The ownership and maintenance costs of sealed roads are \$12,000/km more than that of unsealed roads per year.

Why isn't traffic control used when grading roads?

When planning to undertake maintenance on any of our roads, Council undertakes a risk assessment to aid in the development of a specific Traffic Management Design (TMD) for the task to be undertaken. This assessment will consider traffic volumes, road conditions, weather conditions, traffic volumes and visibility. Where risks of specific tasks are assessed as high, traffic control will be employed and implemented in line with the TMD.

Why aren't additional culverts installed to prevent scouring?

Effective draining is a priority when designing or maintaining our unsealed roads. Council addresses the road areas that would benefit from the installation of culverts through our Capital Works Program.

Why isn't my road graded more frequently?

Grading is undertaken when the road meets intervention and is based on the road class. The higher the road class, the more frequently the road will be inspected and receive grading maintenance. The value of rates drawn from ratepayers for unsealed roads doesn't determine grading frequency.

Why don't you grade other nearby unsealed roads when in an area?

Grading roads that do not require grading just because we are in an area is not efficient nor cost-effective and prevents the grader from moving to other roads that require intervention. Grading is undertaken when the road meets intervention and is based on the road class.

Why doesn't Council put loose gravel on the roads?

The practice of putting gravel on unsealed roads has been discontinued because while roads perform well to reduce slipperiness during rain, the ability to resist raveling and corrugation, has been shown to be significantly below the performance of the current specification. Over the last decade, councils have been moving towards improved practices with the testing and selection of suitable materials for unsealed roads.