



LeadWest

Advocacy Priorities

2026 State Election

*Invest in a Liveable,
Connected and
Sustainable West*



HOBSONS
BAY CITY
COUNCIL



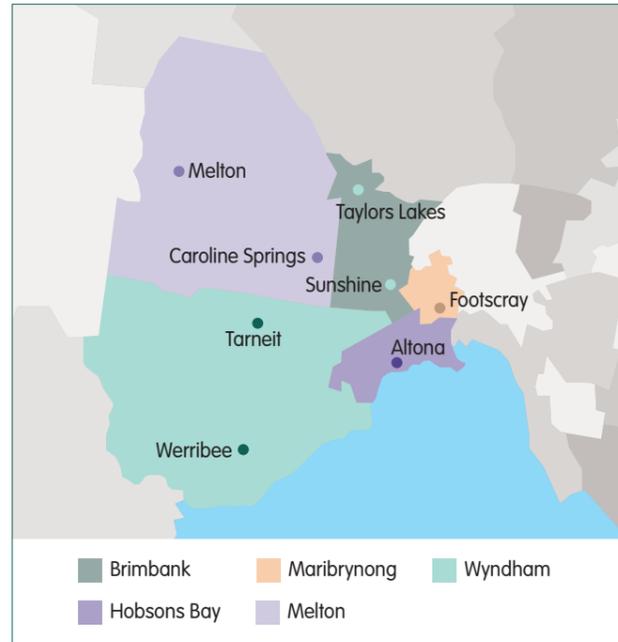
Maribyrnong
CITY COUNCIL



About LeadWest

LeadWest is an advocacy alliance representing Melbourne's Western Councils of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham.

We represent the fastest growing region in Australia with over one million residents, or 20% of Greater Melbourne's population.



LeadWest represents Melbourne's West to:

-  Strengthen local economies
-  Support sustainable population growth
-  Improve transport connectivity
-  Scale up community services to meet the current and future needs of our people

Acknowledgement

LeadWest respectfully acknowledges and recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples and traditional custodians of the land and waterways on which we live. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging

LeadWest has identified five priorities:

Priority 1 – An Enterprising Region

Create vibrant public and private enterprise precincts offering high value-adding and export-oriented products, jobs and skills development.



Priority 2 – A Vibrant Community

Highlight and further develop a remarkable mix of key sporting, leisure, arts/culture, and tourism opportunities in our region that contribute to economic progress and social inclusion whilst acknowledging our rich indigenous history and cosmopolitan community.



Priority 3 – A Connected West

Leverage the region's unique mix of air, sea, road and rail infrastructure and facilities, advocate further major improvements in major transport and communications projects, and seek significantly improved transport connectivity that increases efficiency, productivity and delivers quality liveability.



Priority 4 – A Healthy and Resilient West

The provision of new levels of preventative, acute and community health and wellbeing, building innovative research capacity, with particular focus on the needs of at-risk cohorts.



Priority 5 – A Liveable and Sustainable West

Become a national leader in sustainable prosperity by significantly reducing our carbon footprint and better engage with and enlist our local communities, businesses and households.



Top Five Employment Sectors

Health care and social assistance	12.01%
Retail trade	9.48%
Construction	8.94%
Transport, postal and warehousing	8.35%
Professional, scientific and technical services	7.92%

Top Five Business Industries

Transport, postal and warehousing	23.18%
Construction	16.60%
Professional, scientific and technical services	10.18%
Rental, hiring and real estate services	7.65%
Administrative and support services	7.02%

Investment in transport infrastructure will unlock commercial investment for job creation in the key precincts of Cobblebank, Footscray, Sunshine, Werribee and the Western State Significant Industrial Precinct. Investment is vital to breaking the cycle of high unemployment, traffic congestion and poor public transport options.



Executive Summary

Why is investment needed?

LeadWest is advocating for a commitment to 'Invest in a Liveable, Connected and Sustainable West' to capitalise on the opportunities created with growth.

Melbourne's west is a large and diverse region. It is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia and the gateway between key regional cities and the Melbourne CBD.

There has been a shift in key employment industries from the traditional manufacturing sector to a broader range of industries including supply chain and logistics, health, education and construction. Investment is creating significant job and economic development opportunities.

To unlock these opportunities, we are seeking State Government investment in supporting infrastructure and services to increase liveability, productivity, and wellbeing.

Melbourne's west has been left behind for a long time. We want to unlock investment, provide our residents with equity in health care, education, access to jobs and improve wellbeing.

By 2046 the region's population will grow to

1.6 million



Our region represents

20%



of Greater Melbourne's Population

1,080

Babies born each month in our region



394,500 jobs

- 12,591** - Truck Drivers
- 56,059** - Healthcare workers
- 8,092** - Registered Nurses
- 50,624** - Retail Workers
- 33,648** - Manufacturing Workers
- 36,713** - Education and Training



96,608

Local businesses in our region



LeadWest's State Election priorities and asks

A Liveable and Healthy Community

Homelessness

We are seeking equitable funding for:

- dedicated homelessness assertive outreach services in Melbourne's west.
- a local government coordination model that brings together homelessness, health, mental health and AOD services in areas of greatest need.
- drop-in and mobile services for people experiencing homelessness to access essential services, including showers, alcohol and other drug use related health support, health care referrals, and social work case management support, across the west.

Investment in Mental Health

We are calling for:

- the State Government to commit to funding more Mental Health Service Hubs across the west.
- investment in specialist alcohol and other drug and mental health outreach services to respond to increasing complexity and unmet needs in the region.

A Better-Connected West

Western Rail Plan

We are calling for investment in Melbourne's rail network with new train stations and line electrification to attract investment, unlocking job opportunities to get people to jobs, increasing productivity and reducing disadvantage.

Outer Metropolitan Ring - Road and Rail (OMR)

We are calling for:

- State and Federal governments to acquire the land as reservation for the OMR and make a financial commitment to build the OMR with timelines for delivery.
- \$20 million funding for a Detailed Business Case to assess the financial viability and benefits of the OMR.

Outer Western Roads Package

For the project to deliver a combination of road widening, duplications and intersection upgrades on arterial roads in the western suburbs.

Melbourne Airport Rail (MAR) and Sunshine Station Masterplan

We are calling for:

- the State Government to construct the MAR ahead of the Airport's third runway becoming operational in 2031.
- the timeline for implementing the Sunshine Station Masterplan to occur concurrently with the works to upgrade the station to minimise overall disruption to surrounding businesses and the community, and to maximise broader investment while these works are being undertaken.

Western Intermodal Freight Terminal (WIFT)

That the State Government ensures the Western Intermodal Freight Terminal (WIFT) remains a priority, including protecting land at Truganina for when the WIFT is needed.

Bus Network Reform

That the State Government delivers a frequent, direct and accessible bus network for all of Melbourne's west.

A Sustainable and Vibrant West

Creative West

That the State Government commit funding to support the construction phase of Creative West, to be matched by the Federal Government and Maribyrnong City Council.

Wetlands Centre Altona Meadows

That the State Government commits a financial contribution to building an innovative, regional wellbeing and environmental centre, adding to Hobsons Bay Council's existing commitment of \$5 million to this unique project.

A Greener, Cooler West

We seek ongoing program funding to provide more shade and green space from the State Government.

A Liveable and Healthy Community

Homelessness

Melbourne's west is one of Australia's fastest growing populations and one of Australia's homelessness hotspots.

Being homeless includes people living on the street or in cars (rough sleeping), staying temporarily with other households (couch surfing), or living in severely overcrowded dwellings.

Brimbank has the highest incidence of homelessness in Melbourne with a 35% increase in homelessness since 2011. In Maribyrnong's suburb of Footscray, homelessness affects 86 people in every 10,000, which is unfavourably compared to the Victorian average of 42 per 10,000 people.

Research conducted by the Community Housing Industry Association in February 2024 showed Victoria has the lowest proportion of social housing in the country, with Melbourne's west the lowest.

According to the Western Homeless Network, the growing number of people experiencing homelessness in the west is a direct result of the housing crisis we are experiencing both in terms of supply and affordability, exacerbated by entrenched disadvantage experienced by many communities in the western region. Victoria does not have enough housing.

When it comes to homelessness, Victoria's councils are left managing many of the problems, with few levers to respond. More could be done if there were greater cooperation and collaboration with the State and Federal governments and the homelessness sector.

The recent MAV Report on Homelessness recognised the important role of local government in keeping other levels of government in touch with what's happening on the ground. As the closest level of government to the community, communities are turning to local government to act as homelessness and rough sleeping becomes increasingly common in public parks, at Council facilities and on footpaths. The report also identified the need for public education for communities, with councils having an influential role in raising community awareness, building empathy and enabling collaborative responses.

LeadWest's ask:

We are seeking equitable funding for:

- dedicated homelessness assertive outreach services in Melbourne's west.
- a local government coordination model that brings together homelessness, health, mental health and AOD services in areas of greatest need.
- drop-in and mobile services for people experiencing homelessness to access essential services, including showers, alcohol and other drug use related health support, health care referrals, and social work case management support, across the west.

Investment in Mental Health

One in three of our region's population will suffer depression or an anxiety disorder.

In Melbourne's west, mental health and wellbeing services for young people are characterised by significant and growing demand, lengthy waitlists, poor local access to low-and-no-cost specialist supports, service gaps for at-risk groups, and a complex and fragmented service system that is difficult to navigate.

Mental health support for young people in the west is at acute levels. There is a shortage of accessible services to meet growing demand.

Youth mental health services in Melbourne's west are at capacity with wait times for clinical appointments often being greater than three months. There is a significant shortfall of infrastructure, with many young people across the west lacking access to a service hub. Service uplift at existing youth mental health hubs is needed.

Mental Health Service Hubs in Wyndham and Maribyrnong are at capacity and can't cater for the needs of the wider western metro region. Hobsons Bay Youth Services provide the only dedicated free and in-person counselling for 12-25-year-olds across Hobsons Bay. In 2024, their waitlist ranged from 2-8 weeks across the year.

LeadWest's ask:

We are seeking funding for:

- the State Government to commit to funding more Mental Health Service Hubs across the west.
- investment in specialist alcohol and other drug and mental health outreach services to respond to increasing complexity and unmet needs in the region.



A Better-Connected West

More government investment is needed in transport infrastructure projects in Melbourne's west to address the inconsistent and inequitable provision of services and resources that is vital to break the cycle of challenges such as high unemployment, traffic congestion and poor public transport options.

Across Melbourne's west 80% of all trips are made by car because of the lack of public transport and inefficient active transport networks.

Western Rail Plan

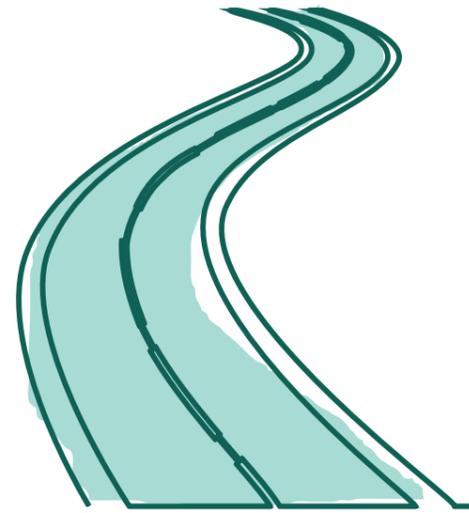
The Western Rail Plan was initially announced during the 2018 Victorian state election by the State Government. It includes the electrification of two existing regional lines to Melton and Wyndham Vale. The plan was developed through funding from the Victorian and Federal governments; however, there has not been any funding commitment to implement the recommendations. Regional trains from Geelong and Ballarat into Sunshine Station are at capacity before they even enter metropolitan Melbourne.

The Western Rail Plan sets out a range of objectives needed to deliver a faster, high-capacity rail network servicing the fast-growing west and regional cities. The plan has received considerable funding for the business case, however there is still no financial commitment for its implementation.

A recent funding announcement of \$300 million towards the first steps required to enable the electrification of the Melton line has been welcomed, but strong evidence supports the need for the additional electrification of the Wyndham Vale line to reduce congestion, move towards net zero and increase productivity.

LeadWest's ask:

We are calling for investment in Melbourne's rail network with new train stations and line electrification to attract investment, unlocking job opportunities to get people to jobs, increasing productivity and reducing disadvantage.



Outer Metropolitan Ring - Road and Rail (OMR)

The OMR is an intergenerational project. A 100-kilometre-long reservation connecting the Princes Freeway near Werribee in the west to the Hume Freeway near Beveridge in Melbourne's north, and includes both a proposed multi-lane freeway, and a reservation for up to four rail tracks.

This will provide an integrated transport corridor to get people and goods moving whilst relieving traffic congestion from the Western Ring Road which is currently at capacity.

It also includes the proposed E6 road connecting the Hume Freeway in Beveridge to the M80 Ring Road in Thomastown.

We understand the OMR Corridor is expected to be delivered and expanded in multiple stages over a 30 to 50-year plus period.

A Preliminary Business Case for the OMR Corridor Road was completed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) in early 2021.

The Outer Metropolitan Ring and E6 Transport Corridor was reserved via a Public Acquisition Overlay in 2010 by VicRoads.

LeadWest's ask:

We are calling for:

- State and Federal governments to acquire the land as reservation for the OMR and make a financial commitment to build the OMR with timelines for delivery.
- \$20 million funding for a Detailed Business Case to assess the financial viability and benefits of the OMR.

Outer Western Roads Package

Several major arterial roads in Melbourne's outer west are in urgent need of upgrades to improve capacity, safety, and traffic flow. These roads perform the function of an arterial road, have significant congestion leading to slow times and risks that result in significant crash stats.

The Outer Western Roads Upgrade will transform the arterial road network in the western suburbs by boosting capacity and significantly improving road pavement conditions and network infrastructure. The project needs to deliver a combination of road widening, duplications and intersection upgrades on arterial roads in the western suburbs, including:

- Hopkins Road (extension of Derrimut Road), Truganina
- Palmers Road Corridor north of the Western Freeway (Robinsons Road, Westwood Drive and Calder Park Drive)
- Taylors Road.

With the investment in the Western Freeway and the need to consider feeder routes, Taylors Road and Palmers Road Corridor are clear priorities to improve traffic safety and travel times in this high demand area of Melbourne's west.

LeadWest's ask:

For the project to deliver a combination of road widening, duplications and intersection upgrades on arterial roads in the western suburbs.

Melbourne Airport Rail and Sunshine Station Masterplan

Melbourne's west has a unique opportunity to break the cycle of inter-generational unemployment and disadvantage by maximising the benefits the Melbourne Airport Rail (MAR) will provide.

LeadWest welcomed the Federal Government's announcement in February 2025 of an additional \$2 billion to transform Sunshine Station into a transport superhub, as part of the first stage of the MAR project. This was followed by the State Government's announcement at the 2025-2026 Budget that \$2 billion of State funding will be brought forward to commence works on the Sunshine Superhub in 2026. This supplements the \$10 billion already committed from both levels of government, including a \$5 billion contribution from the State Government to MAR projects which includes the transformation of Sunshine Station into a superhub.

With the additional runway at Melbourne Airport set to increase the number of airline travellers, and consequently airport staff, the Tullamarine Freeway is likely to become gridlocked without a rail option once the third runway opens.

The construction of MAR prior to the opening of third runway in 2031 is necessary to address the expected surge in traffic congestion.

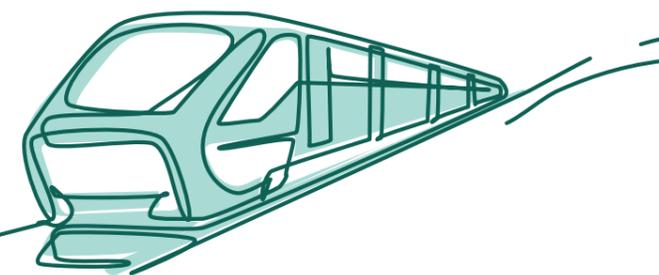
Given the passage of the MAR through Sunshine Station, the project presents a catalytic opportunity to reposition Sunshine as a key visitor economy hub. Investment in the MAR and the Sunshine Precinct will unlock one of Melbourne's largest urban renewal opportunities, up to \$8 billion in private economic development opportunities, and the potential to create 29,000 jobs and attract 43,000 new residents by 2051.

Central to Sunshine's transformation is the implementation of the Sunshine Station Masterplan that was announced by the State Government ahead of the 2022 State Election along with a \$143 million commitment to implement the first stage of the Masterplan. The Masterplan includes three large State Government development sites, as well as new station entries, public realm improvements, a new bus interchange, and new pedestrian and cycling connections over the railway.

LeadWest's ask:

We are calling for:

- the State Government to construct the MAR ahead of Melbourne Airport's third runway becoming operational in 2031.
- the timeline for implementing the Sunshine Station Masterplan to occur concurrently with the works to upgrade Sunshine Station to minimise disruption to surrounding businesses and the community, and to maximise broader investment while these works are being undertaken.





Western Intermodal Freight Terminal

LeadWest's ask:

That the State Government ensures the Western Intermodal Freight Terminal (WIFT) remains a priority, including protecting land at Truganina for when the WIFT is needed.

Bus Network Reform

Buses are critical to improving accessibility for a wide range of services including health, employment, education and wellbeing. The benefits of transforming the bus network in Melbourne's west are comparable to any one of Victoria's big road and rail projects – and at much less cost.

While LeadWest welcomed recent announcements of significant funding for new and improved services in Wyndham, Melton and Brimbank, we seek an ongoing commitment to improve the network across the whole of Melbourne's west. There is a demand for bus services with connected routes to get people to where they need to go safely and reliably. In the west almost 80 per cent of trips are made by car because of insufficient public transport options.

We support the State Government's commitment to transition to electric buses guided by Victoria's Zero Emission Bus Transition Plan, and look forward to seeing this transition occur across the west.

LeadWest's ask:

That the State Government delivers a frequent, direct and accessible bus network for all of Melbourne's west.

A Sustainable and Vibrant West

Creative West

Creative West will be a large-scale cultural venue that nurtures creative industries in Melbourne's west, further establishing Footscray as a thriving area to live, work, do business, and play.

Creative West is now in the Detailed Design Phase, which will deliver a full business case. LeadWest will advocate for a funding commitment from the State and Federal Government for the project's construction, to be matched by Maribyrnong City Council.

The proposed development in Central Footscray will include a regional performing arts centre, a library, creative arts and cultural spaces and an interactive open space/civic green.

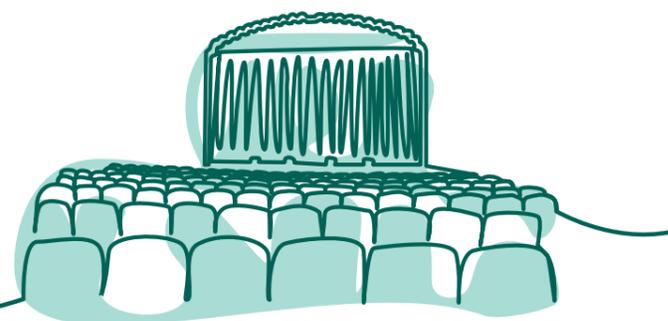
Investment in Creative West will establish the first 500-plus seat purpose-built theatre within the LeadWest area and provide much-needed spaces for learning, art and entertainment. It will create a beautiful and high-quality space that will drive foot traffic to transform central Footscray and leverage and grow creative industries across the west.

LeadWest calls on the State Government to invest in Creative West to drive much-needed precinct economic activation, create community spaces and places and support creatives, artists, audiences and people of the West alike.

The Creative West project is a regional advocacy priority, not just for the Maribyrnong City Council but all LeadWest municipalities.

LeadWest's ask:

That the State Government commits funding to support the construction phase of Creative West, to be matched by the Federal Government and Maribyrnong City Council.



Wetlands Centre - Altona Meadows

LeadWest is looking to secure a joint investment from the State and Federal governments of \$11 million to build an innovative, regional wellbeing and environmental centre for all ages.

This inclusive and interactive space will include an eco-tourism centre located adjacent to the Cheetham Wetlands – an internationally recognised Ramsar wetland.

With features ranging from research facilities, indoor and outdoor public spaces, a café and accessible walking trails and boardwalks, the benefits of a Wetlands Centre to the western region are considerable.

This unique project will offer premier learning from Kinder to PhD, visitor and research facilities, and a place for people to be inspired to connect with nature, aiding in improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Wetlands Centre will boost Victoria's west by creating local jobs, attracting nature-based tourism, and supporting a green economy through education, research and environmental innovation.

The wetlands are connected to local, regional, and international wetlands and are crucial for shorebird migration.

LeadWest's ask:

That the State Government commits a financial contribution to building an innovative, regional wellbeing and environmental centre, adding to Hobsons Bay Council's existing commitment of \$5 million to this unique project.

A Greener, Cooler West

LeadWest has partnered with Greening the West and supports their vision to enable sustainable, liveable and healthy communities through urban greening.

We support a regional initiative to enrich communities in Melbourne's west through the development of green spaces.

Green spaces have proven benefits for the environment and for mental and physical health. They filter and improve the air we breathe, keep cities cool and provide shade for our houses and streets.

In developing areas, green spaces aren't prioritised. Melbourne's western suburbs are some of the fastest growing in Australia and have the lowest green canopy in metropolitan Melbourne. Four of the five LeadWest member councils have the lowest levels of green canopy cover in



Melbourne. Maribyrnong also ranks eighth lowest among all Melbourne suburbs. These areas receive less rainfall than much of Melbourne, making them drier and more prone to warmer daytime temperatures.

The west has the greatest urban heat island effect across metropolitan Melbourne.

As the population increases, so too does pollution, heat stress and pressure on the environment. Urban greening in the west is a low-cost strategy that will bring high impact results – economically, environmentally, and for the health and wellbeing of the residents who live here.

LeadWest's ask:

We seek ongoing program funding to provide more shade and green spaces from the State Government.

Thank you from LeadWest

In 2024/2025 LeadWest worked hard advocating to the Federal Government for key advocacy asks crucial to the west. The recent wave of infrastructure funding announcements by the Federal Government has been warmly welcomed and we thank the State Government for its contribution towards these projects:

- ✓ \$2 billion for Melbourne Airport Rail - delivery of the Sunshine Station Masterplan as the first stage of the Melbourne Airport Rail project.
- ✓ \$1.1 billion upgrade to the Western Highway between Caroline Springs and Melton.
- ✓ \$300 million cash injection to prepare the Melton line for electrification in the future.
- ✓ \$85 million West Link Stage 2.
- ✓ \$5 million for Footscray's Creative West Arts and Cultural Hub.
- ✓ \$300 million to Fix the Calder diamond interchange at Calder Park, including \$50 million from the State Government.

The State Government plays an integral delivery role and we look forward to seeing these projects come to fruition, making Melbourne's west a better place to live, work and raise families.



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