



WESTERN AGENDA

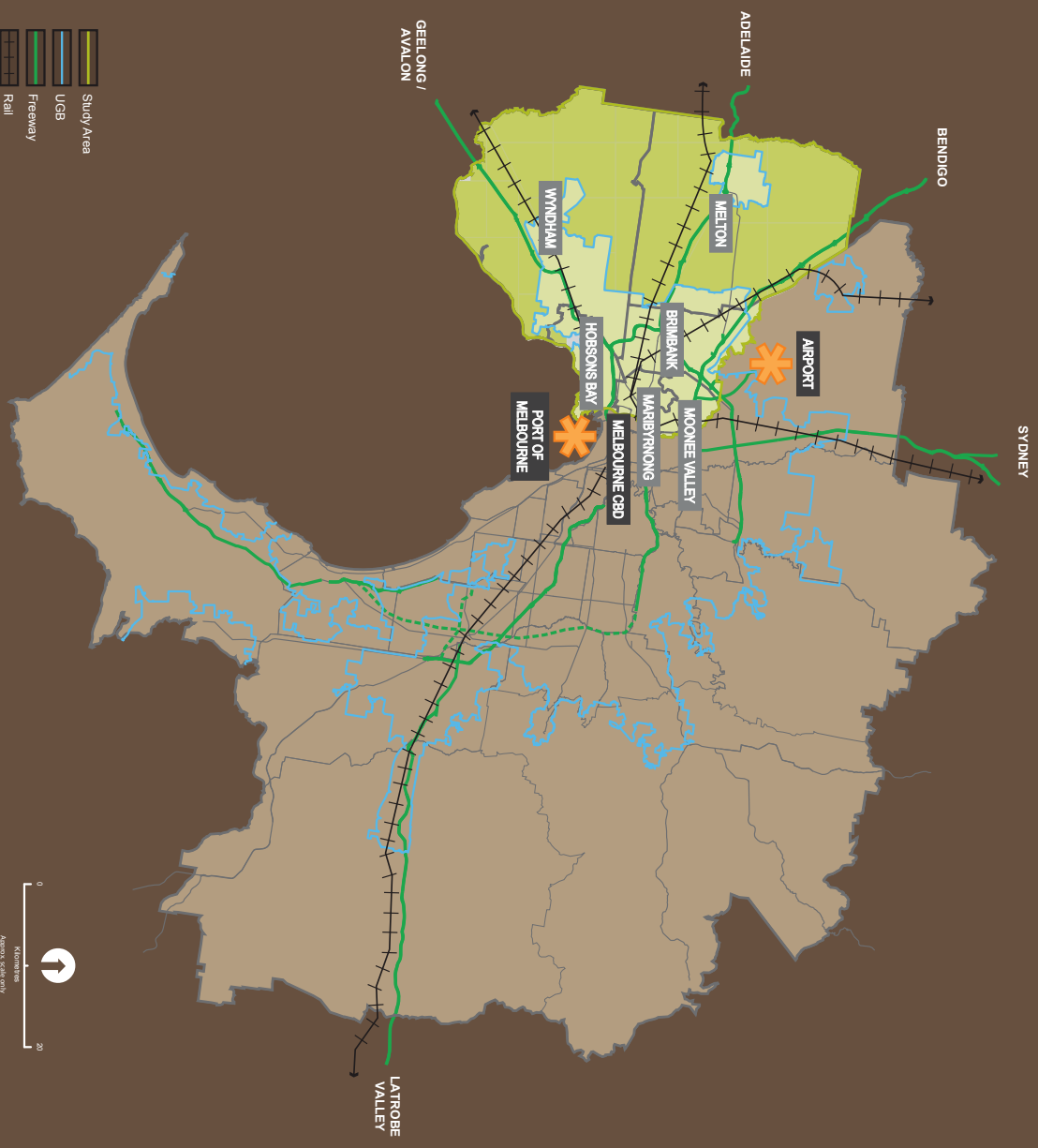
A STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN FOR MELBOURNE'S WESTERN REGION 2008 - 2011



MELBOURNE'S WEST IN CONTEXT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the LeadWest Chair	1
The Agenda at a Glance	2
A Profile of Melbourne's Western Region	4
THE AGENDA FOR THE WEST	7
> AGENDA ONE: Education and Skills	8
> AGENDA TWO: Economic Development and Jobs	10
> AGENDA THREE: Transport and Infrastructure	12
> AGENDA FOUR: Health and Community Development	14
> AGENDA FIVE: Environment, Planning and Image	16
> AGENDA SIX: Tourism, Arts, Culture & Recreation	18
> AGENDA SEVEN: Regional Leadership – LEADWEST	20





A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADWEST CHAIR, THE HON RALPH WILLIS

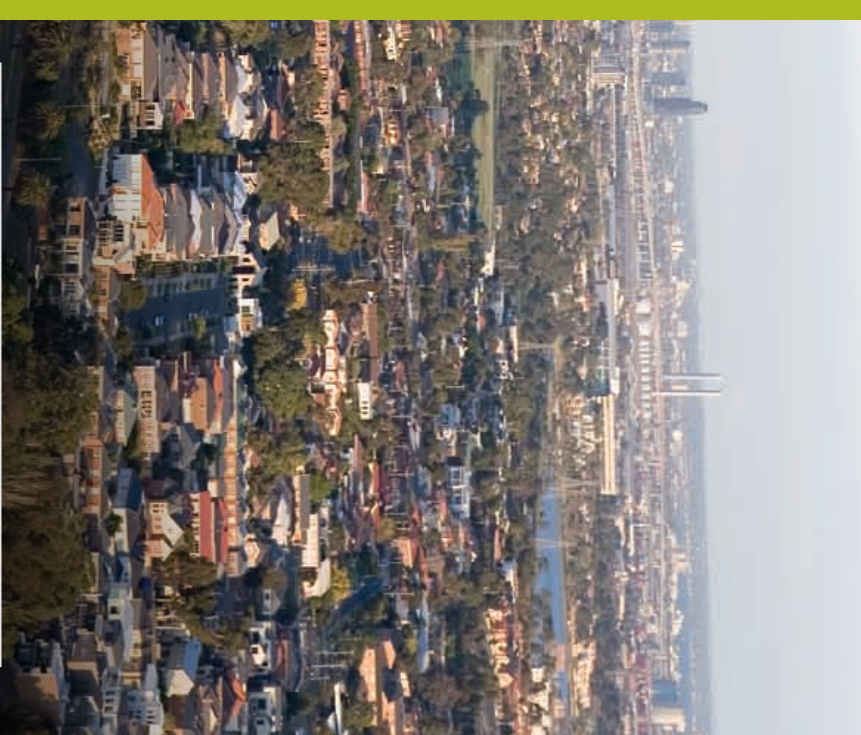
Melbourne's West is the fastest growing region of Melbourne and one of the fastest growing regions of Australia. At the same time, the rapid transformation of the Australian economy is eroding the West's traditional manufacturing industry base whilst the concentration of the new service industry opportunities is in the Melbourne CBD and the eastern suburbs.

Add to this the gross deficiency of the West's public infrastructure compared to that of the East, and its lower educational and health levels than the rest of Melbourne, and it is clear the West faces a number of challenges.

At the same time, the West enjoys several advantages, particularly its locational advantage in relation to major centres of economic activity, and with virtually all Melbourne's rail, road and air transport connections to the rest of Australia running through it or being adjacent to it.

LeadWest has been formed to provide leadership to the West in addressing its challenges and capitalising on its advantages, to be a representative voice for the West, especially to State and Federal Government, and ultimately to help the West realise its great potential as a dynamic, enjoyable and fulfilling place in which to live, work and visit. We invite you to join with us on this exciting project.

~ **The Hon Ralph Willis**
LeadWest Chair



***This AGENDA provides a roadmap
to focus and unite the work of
LeadWest and the many regional
stakeholders in creating a prosperous,
sustainable, healthy and fair region and
improving the lives of our people.***

THE AGENDA AT A GLANCE

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT means developing the full potential of a region and its people - economic prosperity, social cohesion, health and wellbeing, cultural richness, ecological sustainability and physical attractiveness.

The West's burgeoning population growth (twice the State average and the fastest growing urban corridor), pivotal geographic location and long history of regional collaboration offer wonderful opportunities, but a sustainable future depends on confronting and overcoming a number of significant and entrenched problems. Recognition by Government of the scale of growth and the urgent need for infrastructure is also vital.

Regional leadership requires an agenda and a strategy. This AGENDA provides a roadmap to focus and unite the work of LeadWest and the many regional stakeholders in tackling these challenges to create a prosperous, sustainable, healthy and fair region and improve the lives of our people.

The AGENDA profiles the West, documents the key issues facing the region as identified and agreed by regional stakeholders at the 2005 Regional Summit and the *Leadership for the West* report, and sets out priority actions for the next three years.

For ease of reference, the AGENDA is based around seven themes, but these need to be tackled together, in an integrated "joined up" approach because so many issues and actions impact across each other.

The establishment of
LeadWest marks the start of
a new future for our region.

1. THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS AGENDA

- Equip our people for the new economy and new jobs.
- Raise our level of education.
- Improve access to education and education choices.
- Increase school retention rates.
- Grow the number of tertiary graduates.
- Expand private school offerings.
- Increase Internet and computer usage.
- Deliver high speed broadband.
- Foster lifelong learning.

2. THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS AGENDA

- Reduce our high level of unemployment, especially youth unemployment.
- Increase the number of jobs, which lags behind population growth.
- Broaden the range of jobs and industries, especially in the advanced knowledge service sectors.
- Make the West less dependant on Inner Melbourne for jobs (and help reduce transport gridlock).
- Transform our significant concentration of freight activity into a world-class freight and logistics cluster.
- Increase the supply of industrial land.

3. THE TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE AGENDA

The lack of new infrastructure and the inadequacy of older infrastructure are seen as the biggest problem for the region and the greatest threat to its economic viability, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. Transport infrastructure is significantly under-developed in the West and urgent major investment is essential if economic and social “meltdown” is to be avoided with current growth.

FOR RAIL:

- More capacity on existing lines, additional stations, new cross-suburban lines.
- Electrification and duplication of the Melton line.
- Fixing the bottlenecks at Sunshine, Footscray and North Melbourne.
- For rail freight: we need additional lines and capacity to serve logistics activity.

FOR BUSES:

- Additional routes, higher frequencies and better timetabling connections with rail.

FOR ROADS:

- An additional main connection to greater Melbourne.
- Improved Westgate Bridge Capacity.
- Capacity and safety upgrades of the Western Ring Road.
- A (longer term) outer ring road.

4. THE HEALTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

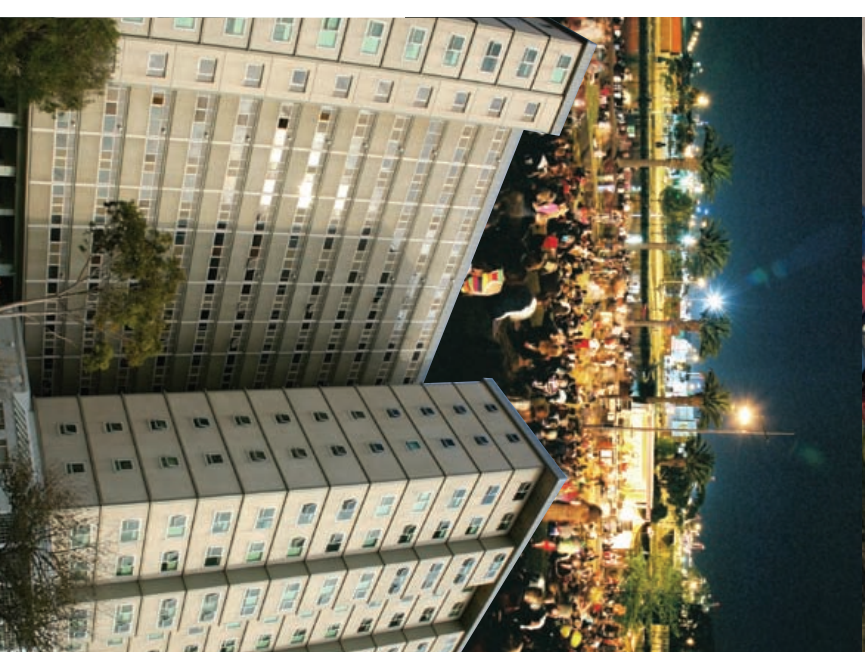
- Improved funding of the region's health and community services.
- Raising the level of health and wellbeing.
- Attracting more doctors and medical specialists.
- Developing the West as a centre of excellence in health.
- Addressing social dislocation and tension and strengthening communities.
- Dealing with problem gambling.
- More and better public housing.

5. THE ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND IMAGE AGENDA

- More sustainable and better integrated land use and transport.
- Fostering innovative new industries that respond to the challenges of global warming.
- More efficient use of water.
- Improve the physical appearance and visual attractiveness of the region through landscaping, public domain and transport corridor enhancements.
- Change the negative image and perception of the West.

6. THE TOURISM, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION AGENDA

Further develop tourism, arts and culture in the West – creating new attractions, making our existing attractions better, fostering creativity and making people aware of what we have by marketing the region.





A PROFILE OF MELBOURNE'S WESTERN REGION

POPULATION

Located immediately to the west of the central city and stretching to the urban fringe, Melbourne's Western Region encompasses the municipalities of Brimbank, Hobson's Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, Moonee Valley and Wyndham.

Covering 1,333 square kilometres, with a population of 650,856 (June 2007 estimate) the Western Region accounts for around 16% of the population of metropolitan Melbourne and 12.5% of Victoria's population. Between 1991 and 2003, the regional population grew by 1.6% - approximately double the rate for Victoria, including the remainder of the metropolitan area. The current population growth rate for the region is 2.83% - almost double the Victorian average of 1.5%.

At current trends the West is expected to significantly increase its share of the metropolitan population from 16% in 2005 to 26% in 2031. The region's resident population will grow by 38% from 616,000 persons in 2005 to over 850,000 persons by 2031.

RAPID GROWTH

Of Melbourne's six highest-growth municipalities, Wyndham ranks first both numerically and in growth rate - with a 2006-07 annual growth rate of 6.2% - and Melton ranks third both numerically and in growth rate - with a 2006-07 annual growth rate of 5.8%.

Of Melbourne's three growth corridors (northern, south-eastern and western), the West ranks number one for both numerical population increase and growth rate. The growth rate for 2006-07 was 6% - more than double that of the north (2.5%) and south (3.2%). Factors driving this trend include proximity to Melbourne, growing diversity of housing and relative affordability.

Within the Western region itself, Wyndham and Melton are absorbing most (over 80%) of the growth.

The West's share of household growth in Melbourne has climbed from around 11.5% in the 1960s to almost 25% today.

AGE STRUCTURE

Generally speaking the age structure of the region's population is similar to that of other metropolitan regions, with the older inner suburbs having an older population than the newer urban fringe municipalities with their higher proportion of younger families.

- Brimbank, Hobsons Bay and Moonee Valley have large numbers of people in both the young and more mature family age groups.
- Maribyrnong by contrast has 50% of its population under 35 years.
- Melton, with 82% of its population aged between 0-49 years, has a dissimilar age structure to the rest of the metropolitan area.
- Wyndham has an age profile typical of urban fringe communities founded on large, established townships, with a relatively balanced age structure.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural diversity is a feature of the Western Region, as successive waves of new immigrants have settled here.

There are now over 90 different nationalities represented in the region. Residents of Vietnamese, Italian and Maltese extraction form the largest groups. In recent times there have been large influxes of people from Africa and Burma, adding further to the cultural diversity. Brimbank is a particular focus for newly arriving migrants and refugees.

Around 35% of families in the Western region speak a language other than English in the home (compared with 20% for Victoria as a whole).



SNAPSHOT OF THE WEST

- 1,333 square kilometres.
- 651,000 people.
- Over 16% of Melbourne's population and 12.5% of Victoria's.
- 2.83% pa population growth rate – almost twice as fast as Victoria; and the West's population is growing faster than in any other region of Melbourne. Contains the fastest and third-fastest growing LGAs in Victoria and the most rapidly growing urban corridor.
- By 2030, 850,000 people – more than one in five Melbourneans – will live in the West.
- Culturally the most diverse Metropolitan region, with over 90 nationalities represented. 35% of families speak a LOTE.
- Lower levels of education than metro Melbourne: 70% of residents have obtained only year 12 or below, school retention rates are low, and the west has the lowest rate of tertiary qualified graduates in metropolitan Melbourne.
- Significant - and widening - gap between population and job numbers makes the West heavily dependant on Inner Melbourne for jobs. The resultant travel demand and poor transport infrastructure has resulted in frequent gridlock, damaging the State's economy. An environmentally and socially unsustainable situation.
- Compared to the State, employment in the advanced knowledge service sectors is lower; and employment in transport, production, clerical, sales and labouring is higher. The region has 12.3% of the State's manufacturing and transport jobs, but only 6.5% of the knowledge-based services jobs.
- Around 300,000 residents of the Western Region are employed... but more than 20,000 are unemployed.
- The unemployment rate of 5.5% is about 25% higher than the State and metropolitan rates. But unemployment in some parts of the West exceeds 11%. The region has the highest rate of youth unemployment.
- Job growth in the region lags well below population growth: Despite having 12.5% of Victoria's population, the region has barely 8% of the State's jobs.
- Fewer people use the Internet and computers – around 15% less than the metropolitan average.
- The West delivers 14% of Victoria's gross manufacturing output and 12% of the State's manufacturing jobs.
- Across the region, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley differ from Melton, Wyndham and Brimbank in growth rates, population profile and employment structure.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION

In comparison to other parts of Melbourne, Western Region residents have obtained comparatively lower levels of education. 69.6% of the region's residents have obtained Year 12.

Brimbank records the lowest levels of educational attainment of the LGAs in the region with 75.5% of its population only having attained year 12 or below as an educational qualification. By contrast Hobson's Bay has the highest proportion of highly qualified people.

Data reveals:

- Bachelor, higher degree, advanced diploma or diploma qualifications vary from around 12% in Brimbank, Melton and Wyndham to nearly 20% in Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay.
- Vocational qualifications range from 13 to 18% of the population depending on LGA.
- 38% of Western region residents went on to university compared to 45% for metro Melbourne.
- The proportion of region residents pursuing diplomas, certificates, apprenticeships and traineeships is not dissimilar to the metropolitan average.



OCCUPATION

2001 figures on occupational distribution show a lower than State average proportion of persons employed in the advanced knowledge service sectors (ie managers and administrators, professionals and para professionals), and a correspondingly higher proportion in intermediate transport and production, elementary clerical, sales and service and labouring occupations.

The professional occupations feature strongly in Hobsons Bay and Moonee Valley (higher than the Victorian average) and to some extent in Maribymong.

Clerical, sales and service workers, tradespersons, production and transport workers feature strongly in Brimbank, Wyndham and Melton

The largest three groups of occupations of Western Region residents were:

- intermediate clerical, sales and service workers (17.8%);
 - professionals (15.5%); and
 - tradespersons and related workers (12.9%).
- Melton had the highest number of residents working as tradespersons and related workers (29.2%), which given the high level of residential construction and expansion is not surprising.

EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRY

Approximately 300,000 residents of the Western Region are employed either on a full time or part time basis.

The Region's unemployment rate is 5.5%, higher than the Victorian level of 4.3% and the metropolitan rate of 4.6%. Brimbank and Maribymong record considerably higher levels of unemployment than the rest of the region (11.1% and 8.3% respectively).

In 2001 there were around 42,000 businesses in the Region.

In 2001 there were 177,400 jobs in the Region. Trended employment projections (by Ratio Consultants in the *Western Region Employment and Industrial Development Study* (WREIDS) show that the region is projected to contain 260,332 jobs in 2031, an increase of 47% from 2001.

The region has 12.3% of the State's manufacturing and transport jobs, but only 6.5% of the State's knowledge-based services jobs (ie technical business services, health, education, communications, finance and insurance sectors). The sectoral composition of employment indicates the dominance of manufacturing and absence of service-based industries in the region.

This is reflected in lower rates of use of computers and the Internet within the region – the proportion of people using the internet is 15% lower and the proportion using a computer is 12% lower in the Western Region than in the metropolitan area as a whole.

Western Region businesses provide 13.6% of Victoria's gross output in manufacturing and 11.6% of the State's direct manufacturing jobs.

The region is home to nearly one in seven Victorian firms with more than 50 employees.

While manufacturing is the major industry in the Western Region, building and construction, retail, property and business services, education and health and community services are also important industries. Transport, storage and distribution is an industry of growing importance to the region.

EXPORT OF LABOUR & JOURNEY TO WORK

The West is a large exporter of labour: Despite having 12.5% of Victoria's population, only around 8% of the State's jobs are located in the region. The rapid population growth means the gap between numbers of people and numbers of jobs is widening. The region's current rate of jobs provision remains low (315 jobs per 1,000 population) compared to the metropolitan average of 458. The sophistication of job range and distribution of jobs in the West is low compared to Melbourne's south-east regions.

Specifically Melton, Brimbank and Wyndham have very high labour force to jobs provision ratios. Maribymong is the only LGA with significantly more jobs than resident workers.

The under-provision of jobs in the West compels workers to commute to areas with large numbers of jobs, in particular Inner Melbourne: 31% of workers living in the West journey to work in Inner Melbourne and many others travel to work in the East.

The implication of this workforce movement pattern is that, combined with the high level of car-based commuting, inadequate public transport and the limited number of access points to Inner Melbourne, inter-regional through routes are regularly congested, reducing the efficiency of freight movements that are vital to the Western region's (and Victoria's) economy.

THE AGENDA FOR THE WEST

What are the key strategic challenges facing Melbourne's West... and what are the priorities for action?



As part of the "Leadership for the West" project in 2005, an extensive list of regional stakeholders was prepared and these stakeholders were asked individually to identify the key issues facing the West. There were over 100 expressions of issues. When these were considered collectively, they distilled down into six major themes, each embracing a number of key issues.

A Regional Summit was held in September 2005, at which the themes were further refined and issues prioritised. In addition, a review of previous regional strategies and research reports was undertaken.

There is a remarkable degree of convergence between the issues identified by stakeholders and those identified in the studies. This greatly assisted in reaching consensus on priority actions. The key issues and actions were further refined and updated in April 2008.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS



KEY ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

Western region residents ill equipped for the new economy and new jobs

The skills base of the region's community is low and building a strong skills base is the crucial issue.

The region has the lowest rate of tertiary qualified graduates in metropolitan Melbourne.

We need to equip our people for jobs in the new economy, raise education levels and choices, improve access to education, increase school retention rates, grow the number of tertiary graduates, expand private school offerings, increase Internet and computer usage, deliver high speed broadband and foster lifelong learning.

Added consequences of "importing" employees & skills

The skills shortage results in many western region firms having to draw employees from outside the region, with consequent added demand on the transport system and economic leakage. The west imports knowledge at the rate of about 2.8 billion dollars a day.

Youth unemployment and school drop-out rates

Many young people are dropping out of secondary education and this is reflected by the low school retention rates. Youth unemployment is higher in the West than other parts of Melbourne.

Access to education

There is a lack of access to education for Western Region people. Training courses may be available but are often not accessed by the people who need them. This is compounded by poor transport which makes access to university and colleges difficult for young people.

Lack of education choices

Apart from the Moonee Valley area, many parts of the region lack choice in primary and secondary education. More private and public schools are needed to attract managerial and executive level people to live in the West. Planning restrictions outside the urban growth boundary make it difficult for schools to plan new campuses and sporting facilities to cater for growth.

Access to the internet

Internet access for people in the West is inadequate but essential for education and skills development. High speed broadband is urgently needed.

Life-long learning

There is a need to foster a culture of lifelong learning amongst the region's people.

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

1. A concerted effort will be made to raise education and skill levels in the region, increase school retention rates and reduce the need to import skills.
2. Installation of high-speed broadband infrastructure.
3. Improve public transport to increase student access to education facilities.
4. Review planning provisions to assist the establishment and upgrading of school campuses and facilities.

JOINED UP THINKING:

Raising education and skill levels:

- Is vital to enable access to new higher paying jobs.
- Will increase peoples' sense of purpose and self worth, reduce poverty, crime and social dysfunction.
- Will equip people to look after themselves better and adopt healthier lifestyles, reducing dependence on welfare, health and community support services, with less cost to government.
- Raises appreciation of arts and culture and encourages growth in these industry sectors.
- Raises appreciation of environmental issues, leading to greater motivation to improve the environment, which in turn improves the sense of pride and the region's attractiveness for investment.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS



KEY ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

Need to grow and attract business and industry

There is a need to grow existing businesses and attract new industries of the right type. The recently completed *Western Region Employment and Industrial Development Study* (WREIDS) provides detailed guidance in this regard and a key priority is to implement agreed aspects of this Study.

Attract knowledge-based industries and professional jobs

There is a need to focus on attracting knowledge based industries and professional jobs. The region is not economically sustainable in its present form nor will it be if it continues to only attract transport, logistics and manufacturing jobs. The recently completed WREIDS Study provides detailed guidance in this regard and a key priority is to implement agreed aspects of this Study.

Reduce dependence on inner Melbourne job market

The number of jobs is lagging further and further behind population growth. We must reduce our high level of unemployment, broaden the range of jobs especially in the advanced knowledge sectors, and become less dependent on Inner Melbourne for jobs. We want to create a world-class freight and logistics cluster.

The Western Region is highly dependant on the inner Melbourne job market and has a much less well-developed and sophisticated range of employment opportunities and locations compared to Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs. This imbalance needs to be redressed in the interests of the region's economy and the pressure this places on an already overcrowded transport system.

Logistics cluster / inland port

The region already has the highest concentration of intermodal

freight and logistics facilities, with more growth planned. There is potential for this to be further developed into a "logistics cluster" or rail-focussed inland port of international standing and major importance in the Pacific region, based on research by Victoria University.

Industrial land supply under threat

Demand for continued housing growth is resulting in pressure for rezoning of industrial land for residential. This is a threat to the adequate supply of land for new business growth, urgently needed by the region to meet demand for jobs.

Lack of high speed broadband

The lack of high-speed broadband (fibre to node) infrastructure in the region is a major deficiency preventing investment. Broadband would, for example, enable the establishment of major call centre operations in the region providing significant employment.

Population growth outstripping job growth

Rapid population growth in the West is outstripping job growth. Victoria University research shows that ten years ago the region had 8% of Melbourne's population and 12% of the jobs, but now the situation is reversed: 16% of metropolitan population but only 8% of the jobs.

Business information and networking

Providing information, support and advice for businesses in the region is considered a high priority. Particular needs include regional socio-economic and industry data, business development advice, legal services, information about telecommunications technology and business incubation.

Escape expenditure

There is a significant amount of escape expenditure in retailing.

Conference facilities

The region has insufficient conference and related facilities, which acts as a disincentive to new business attraction.

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

1. Implement key aspects of the *Western Region Employment and Industrial Development Study* (WREIDS) to attract new types of businesses to the region. The key objectives are broadening the economic base (and range of jobs) in the region, increasing the number of jobs to keep pace with population growth, and reducing the region's dependence on the inner Melbourne job market.
2. Further develop and promote the concept of an internationally significant logistics cluster and rail-focussed inland port.
3. Installation of high-speed broadband infrastructure.
4. Increase the supply of industrial land.

JOINED UP THINKING:

Creating jobs and growing the region's economy is vital in order to:

- Redress the imbalance with population growth.
- Reduce escape expenditure.
- Reduce dependence (and therefore travel demand) on the Melbourne CBD for jobs.
- Increase peoples' sense of self worth, reduce poverty, crime and social dysfunction.
- Reduce dependence on welfare and community support services, with less cost to government.
- Reduce the need for travel to inner Melbourne and other regions, thereby reducing road and rail congestion.
- Underpin investment in new infrastructure.



TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Inadequate transport infrastructure is the greatest threat to the region's economic viability, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. Major, urgent investment in transport is essential even without further growth.

Development of our public transport is crucial, including new and upgraded rail lines for passenger and freight, elimination of bottlenecks, higher frequencies, and significantly better bus services.

The West's road system is unable to cope with the competing demands of commuter journeys, freight, logistics and through traffic, the system is overloaded and we need a second connection to greater Melbourne.

KEY ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

Rail transport issues

- » Most rail lines in the region are over capacity at peak times.
- » New cross-suburban lines and freight lines are needed, but no plans exist except for the Tarnet line recently foreshadowed in the Eddington Report.
- » Duplication and electrification of the rail line from Sunshine to Melton is urgently needed.
- » Footscray and North Melbourne stations are serious rail congestion bottlenecks and have outgrown their capacity.
- » Bottlenecks and capacity problems occur at Sunshine and between Sunshine and Footscray.
- » New rail stations are needed at Toolern, Caroline Springs, Williams Landing and other locations.
- » Werribee line suburban services are compromised by the need to accommodate increasing numbers of Geelong regional trains and by single track only on the Altona loop.
- » Higher frequencies are needed on all lines.
- » Additional "park and ride" (car parking) facilities are needed at key rail stations.
- » Growth in the Hume and Craigieburn corridors is adding pressure to the existing northern rail lines (which traverse part of the Western Region) and more capacity is urgently needed.
- » There is no public transport infrastructure for the major new *Essendon Fields* development.
- » A rail link to Tullamarine Airport, while not as urgent as other priorities, should remain on the agenda.

Road transport issues

- » The lack of capacity of the overall road system to cater for current and future densities of truck traffic, given the region's strategic role in logistics.
- » Inadequate capacity on the Westgate Bridge and the need for a second major road connection between the Western Region and greater Melbourne. Increasing Westgate Bridge capacity alone will not be sufficient to cater for demand due to the region's rapid growth.
- » The lack of alternatives to the Western Ring Road – an additional outer ring road will be needed in the longer term and preliminary planning on this issue has begun.
- » Tullamarine freeway tolls force additional traffic onto the Western Ring Road, which is already over capacity.
- » Upgrading of Calder Freeway Interchanges.
- » Significant traffic bottlenecks in several other locations.

Bus transport issues

- » There is a need for more frequent bus services and new orbital bus services.
- » There is inadequate government funding for new bus services, and delays in implementation despite recent budget allocations. In particular the implementation of new orbital bus routes needs to be accelerated.
- » There is a need to better integrate bus timetables with rail schedules to achieve seamless connections and reduce journey times.



Infrastructure issues

The lack of new infrastructure and inadequacy of older infrastructure are seen as the biggest problem for the region and the greatest threat to its economic viability, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

Particular aspects of this include:

- » Co-ordination between government departments in the planning and provision of infrastructure. The formation of the Growth Areas Authority is helping address this issue to some extent, but more effort is needed.
- » The lack of government response on infrastructure needs, given the region's rapid growth rates. The balance needs to be righted between population growth rates and infrastructure spending.
- » The need to renew older infrastructure, particularly in the municipalities of Hobsons Bay, Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong.
- » Inadequate community infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, community and learning hubs.
- » The need for improved internet access and high-speed broadband for residential, commercial and industrial users.
- » The need for improved utility infrastructure.

Land use - transport nexus

The crucial relationship between land use planning and transport infrastructure is not adequately addressed in the region



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

1. Substantially improve public transport (both rail and road-based) in the region. Particular focus will be on the following:
 - a. Sunshine to Melton rail duplication & electrification;
 - b. Significantly increased rail capacity between Sunshine and Footscray;
 - c. Overcoming rail bottlenecks at Footscray and North Melbourne;
 - d. Increased capacity on the Werribee line and northern lines;
 - e. Stations at Caroline Springs, Williams Landing and Toolern;
 - f. New cross-suburban lines and freight lines;
 - g. Improved bus services including increased frequencies, acceleration of new routes including orbital routes and improved inter-modal scheduling connections.
2. Achieve the following priority road network improvements:
 - Increased capacity on the Westgate Bridge;
 - Significant progress towards a second major road connection between the West and greater Melbourne;
 - Improved capacity and safety on the Western Ring Road.
3. Achieving recognition by Government of the region's rapid growth rates and the urgent need to increase and accelerate funding for enabling infrastructure (both hard and soft).



JOINED UP THINKING:

Better transport, particularly high quality public transport, is vital to:

- Enable students to access university and college campuses.
- Enable travel to jobs.
- Reduce isolation and poverty and enable access to services.
- Overcome gridlock, which imposes a significant cost on business and the economy.
- Reduce dependency on cars and fossil fuels, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, stimulate vibrant activity centres, cope with the growing travel demands and improve the environment.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Compared to other regions, the West's health and community services are significantly under-funded, our people have poorer health and wellbeing, there is a shortage of doctors, higher unemployment; and large concentrations of disadvantaged people and newly arrived migrants. Strengthening our communities is paramount.

KEY ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

Under funding

Under funding of Western Region human services compared to other metropolitan regions is seen as the most critical issue. Full development of the Western Health Sunshine Hospital project and tertiary teaching facility is urgently needed to provide the West with a top level hospital to provide for acute health needs.

Poor health

The health of the Western Region's population is poorer than other regions as evidenced by a number of indicators. Diabetes and obesity feature strongly. Over time this will impose a significant cost burden on Government unless the issues are addressed.

Shortage of doctors

There is a lack of doctors and specialists such as psychiatrists (the lowest number of GPs per head of population) in the region due to medical professionals preferring to live in the inner and south-eastern suburbs. Increasing GPs, specialists and allied health services in the West is paramount and the West should become a centre of excellence in health services.

Population growth exacerbating problems

The high rate of population growth - and especially the number of new families with young children – is placing added demand on family services.

Concentrations of disadvantaged groups

Brimbank and Maribyrnong contain concentrations of people with low socio-economic status, high unemployment and low skill levels. These groups include newly arrived migrants who often feel disenfranchised and disengaged from the community, generating racial hostility and tension. There is evidence the concentration of disadvantage is moving from Maribyrnong to Brimbank as gentrification occurs in Maribyrnong.

Gambling

Problem gambling is a significant issue for the community. There are high concentrations of poker machines, and the lack of publicly funded community centres in the region results in gaming venues becoming de-facto community gathering places.

Social/public housing

More public/social housing is needed in the region.



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

1. Achieve Stage 2 redevelopment of Sunshine Hospital and a commitment to full redevelopment by 2018.
2. Increase the number of general practitioners, specialists and allied health services in the region and work towards the West becoming a centre of excellence in health services.
3. Increase overall levels of health and community services funding to the region.
4. Support ongoing initiatives to assist concentrations of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable people in the region.
5. Continue to press for gambling reforms to reduce problem gambling.



JOINED UP THINKING:

Improved health and stronger community development will:

- Mean that people are more able to obtain jobs, build successful lives and contribute to the economic and social improvement of the region.
- Reduce demand on scarce public funds.
- Raise community morale and provide the support fabric necessary for people to pursue learning and jobs.
- Proper facilities and services are an essential component of sustainable and cohesive new communities.
- Improved and more specialised health services will help attract more professionals to live in the region.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING & IMAGE

The region faces challenges and opportunities in waste generation, biodiversity, global warming, the looming energy crisis and its low rainfall.

Much could be done to improve the physical appearance and visual attractiveness of our region – especially in the public domain. Changing the negative image of the West is a high priority.

KEY ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

ENVIRONMENT

Global warming and biodiversity

The region faces challenges and opportunities with waste generation, biodiversity and global warming.

Energy and the rising price of oil

The region needs to retro-fit its transport infrastructure to respond to the looming world energy crisis and the rising price of oil.

On the positive side, the West provides most of the landfill sites for greater Melbourne and there are opportunities to trap methane gas, reducing carbon emissions and potentially creating energy.

The West also has opportunities to develop or attract new industries that provide alternative energy sources, such as, for example, an ethanol plant.

Water re-use

There are opportunities for significant water re-use from the Werribee treatment plant. The suggested *Western Ring Main for Recycled Water* could pipe recycled water from Werribee to Melton, Sunbury, Keilor and Laverton, with a range of benefits including watering of sports grounds and parks.

Rain shadow

The region is in a rain shadow compared to the rest of Melbourne; and the relative disadvantage has increased with the recent drought. New approaches to landscaping need to be developed to respond to this situation.

Landscape quality

The presentation and appearance of the physical landscape requires urgent attention.

Environmental amenity

There are many opportunities for “sprucing up” public infrastructure to create a greater feeling of pride & prosperity.

Coastal development

There are no clear planning strategies to deal with the interface issues of water front development.

URBAN GROWTH

Urban growth a major issue in the West

Melbourne's urban growth patterns are changing. The Western region has now overtaken the southeast corridor as the fastest growing metropolitan region. Growth is being fuelled by new household formation and a trend for inner West residents to relocate to the outer parts of the region to enjoy space and lifestyle.

Regional stakeholders feel that Government agencies do not recognise or comprehend the scale of growth and the implications including the need to massively upgrade transport and community services infrastructure.

Socio-economic implications of urban growth boundary

The *Melbourne 2030* urban growth boundaries have the potential to influence house and land prices with resultant effects on social equity.

Land use - transport nexus

The crucial relationship between land use planning and transport infrastructure is not adequately addressed in the region.

IMAGE

Improvement of the region's image is vital. The perception of the West has begun to change, especially with recent high quality residential developments and now the proposed Werribee Marina, but much more effort is needed.

Upgrading the visual image of freeways is necessary – they do not compare well with those in other parts of Melbourne. Regional marketing is also important.



PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

1. Continue to improve the image and brand of the West.
2. Influence and foster progress towards environmental sustainability of the region and ensure the West's environmental credentials are enhanced.
3. Foster the innovation and development of new industries and technologies based on renewable energy and emission reduction. The trapping of methane from landfill is one such opportunity.
4. Foster and support investment in water re-use, such as the use of recycled water from Werribee treatment plant.
5. Continue to improve the landscape quality of the region.
6. Facilitate improvement of the visual image of the region's freeways.



JOINED UP THINKING:

A quality environment and good planning will:

- Create "competitive places" attractive for new business and research investment.
- Create new pride, sense of wellbeing and encourages the building of stronger communities.
- Is a prerequisite for encouraging regional tourism.

Fostering innovative projects around energy and water creates employment, broadens the skill base and helps make the region more sustainable for the future.

Land use planning and transport infrastructure must be totally integrated.



TOURISM, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION





KEY ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

TOURISM

Under-developed and under-recognised tourism product

Tourism product in the Western Region is under-developed and under-recognised; and could generate significant job opportunities.

The potential for greater use and appreciation of the Maribyrnong River is just one example of the many opportunities.

ARTS AND CULTURE

A focus on cultural development is essential

VU research highlights that investment in the creative and performing arts has the potential to improve the opportunities and facilities available to Western communities and create an attractive environment for a broader range of high skilled workers.

The 2004 State of the Regions report argues

“to be a successful knowledge based region, regions need to have a high concentration of high skilled global knowledge workers. These workers tend to migrate to regions with scale and diversity of social and community infrastructure and cultural and lifestyle choices.”

The West needs some iconic arts and culture projects. Building an understanding among both the region's people and the wider Melbourne population that the region does have significant culture and art is important.

RECREATION

Regional approach to recreation facilities planning

Taking a regional approach to the planning and development of major recreation facilities would bring financial savings, allow the development of better facilities and reduce duplication.

PRIORITY ACTIONS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

1. Continue to develop and market the West's tourism opportunities, especially through the work of the Western Melbourne Tourism Board.
2. Continue to take initiatives that will develop and enrich the region's depth in arts and culture.

JOINED UP THINKING:

Why Tourism, Arts, Culture and Recreation is important for our region:

- Tourism, arts and culture are vital “new economy” growth sectors with considerable potential for new jobs.
- A rich arts and cultural sector makes the region more attractive to higher socio-economic groups and managers and attracts new high value-added business investment.
- Fostering the arts and culture helps develop stronger communities.
- Arts and cultural facilities enhance the attractiveness of new urban development.
- Creating eco-tourism experiences can be a catalyst for improving the environment.

We need to further develop tourism, arts and culture in the West – creating new attractions, improving what we already have, fostering creativity and marketing the region.

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

*"Regional leadership is vital...
...the key to successful development of
a region is to have all of the key players
working together, for the region to
have a united view of its strengths and
opportunities; and to develop a
common vision and plan of action"*



ABOUT LEADWEST

LeadWest is the newly formed regional organisation for Melbourne’s West.

The objective of LeadWest is to foster and undertake actions that will support sustainable growth and development of the region.

LeadWest will build on the existing social, economic and environmental capacity of the region, and plan and create a sustainable future for the wellbeing of the regional communities. This will be achieved through:

Leadership: Providing leadership (at both organisational and political levels) within the region through identifying issues and taking action in relation to those issues that are of key importance to the well-being of the region and its people.

Planning: Development and regular review of a regional strategy plan that sets out strategies, objectives and actions.

Co-ordination and integration of regional planning to minimise duplication and overlap of initiatives and programs.

Advocacy on behalf of the region to secure funding and influence planning and policy decisions.

Promoting and marketing of regional issues and initiatives.

Implementation of regional plans and projects.

Performance measurement: setting and monitoring of regional performance indicators, targets and measures.

Research: promotion and commissioning of research on the region.

Reporting to the region and members.

EVERYTHING LEADWEST DOES WILL BE UNDERPINNED BY THESE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES:

Sustainability: LeadWest will foster regional development in the broadest sense, focussing on a “quadruple bottom Line” approach to the region’s development.

Community engagement: The diversity of needs and individual differences between communities in the region will be respected.

Community wellbeing and capability: Outcomes will be sought that add to the overall wellbeing and capability of the regional community.

Communication: LeadWest will foster open communication to ensure understanding, coordination, alignment of purpose and outcomes.

Building partnerships: A key driver of LeadWest is building relationships to enhance collaborative and coordinated regional planning.

Efficiencies: LeadWest will ensure an efficient and effective approach to the utilisation of regional funds through avoidance of overlaps and duplications between existing bodies.

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

LeadWest Ltd is constituted as a company limited by guarantee without share capital.

Any organisation whose operations are in the region may apply for membership.

LeadWest is governed by a ten-member Board of Directors comprising five local government representatives (one each from the cities of Brimbank, Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham), four elected by the organisational/ business members and an independent chairperson.

Independent Chair: Hon Ralph Willis

Ms Anne Barker: City West Water

Mr John Cameron: Moonee Valley Racing Club

Cr Ken Capar: City of Brimbank

Prof Peter Creamer: Victoria University

Cr Kim McAlinney: City of Wyndham

Mr Mick O'Donnell: Nufarm

Cr Ben Opie: City of Moonee Valley

Cr Chris Papas: Shire of Melton

Ms Kerry Thompson: City of Maribyrnong

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WESTERN AGENDA was commissioned & published by LeadWest Ltd
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Published May 2008, Copyright LeadWest Ltd

Designed by CAN Design
T: 03 9682 6277

Printed by William Troedel and Co Pty Ltd
T: 03 9562 8888

