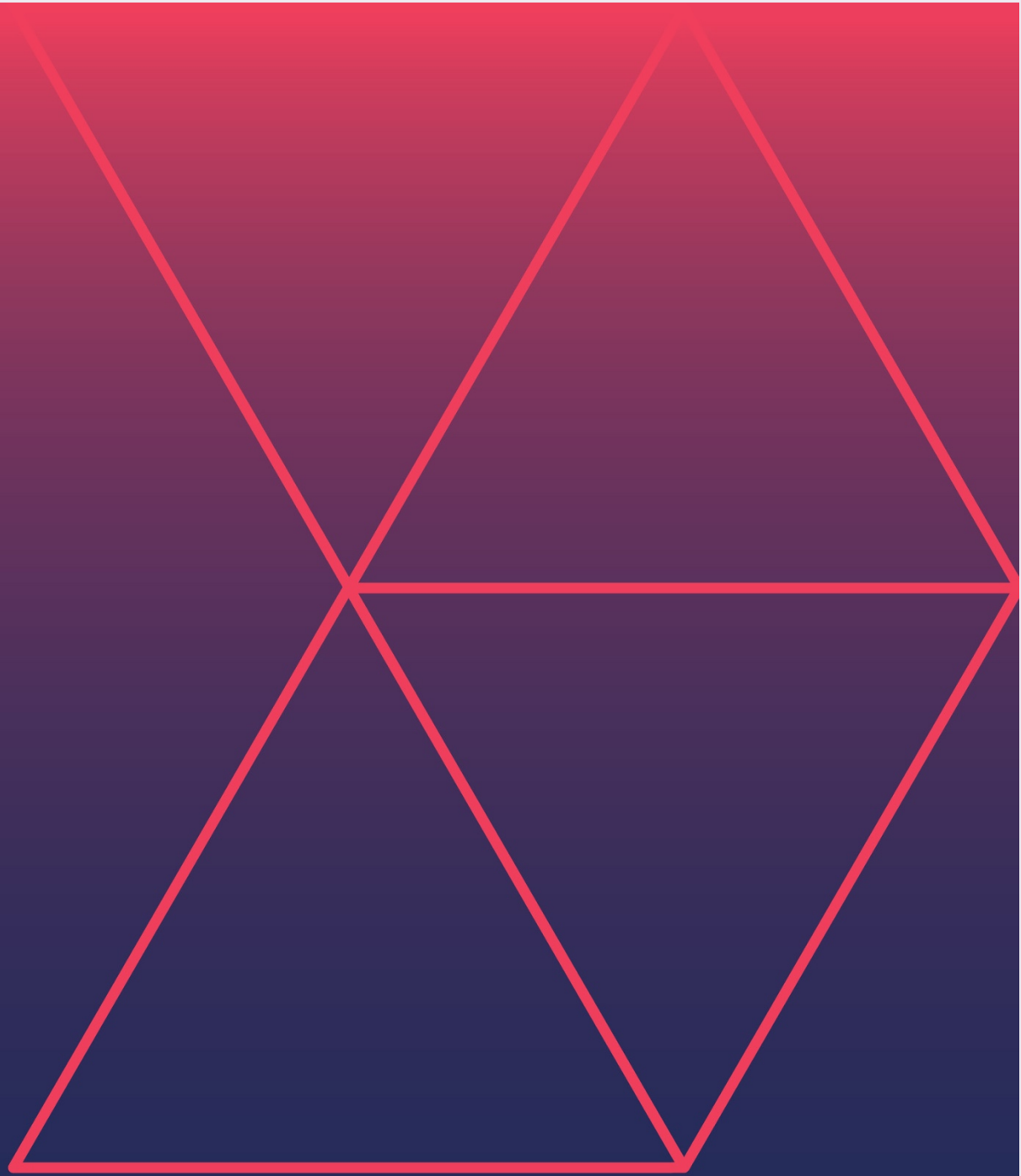
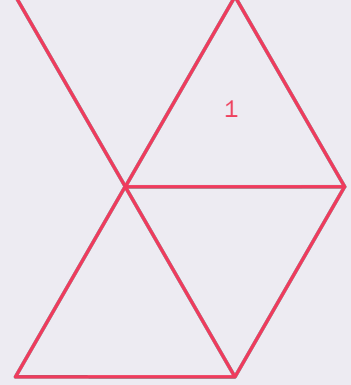




WOMEDA'S IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES FOR THE WEST OF MELBOURNE

AUGUST 2026



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO JOBS IN MELBOURNE'S WEST

The West of Melbourne is the fastest growing metropolitan area in Victoria and Australia. Home to nearly a million people, that number will double to 1.8 million by 2050 as the population boom continues at pace.

WoMEDA seeks to foster private and public investment in our region to ensure this booming population leads to a booming economy, and especially more local jobs¹.

In consultation with Invest Victoria², Infrastructure Victoria³ and local leaders, WoMEDA is seeking to identify priority projects that will remove employment barriers, attract investment and lock in higher living standards for this rapidly growing community.

Currently, about half the region's workers must leave the West to reach their workplace. Excessive commuting, with heavy reliance on roads and car travel, is greatest in the outer metropolitan areas of Wyndham and Melton. The lack of local jobs is a drag on productivity, liveability and household budgets.

For this surging workforce and thousands of young families making their home in the West of Melbourne, easier, faster access to a bigger range of local employment and study options is urgently needed.

Harnessing the energy and ambition of these communities will pay strong social and productivity dividends for our state and national economies.

Strategic public and private investment will enable existing industries to expand their operations in the West and help attract new local enterprises in all sectors, generating many more place-based jobs and skills training much closer to home.

¹ This paper has benefitted from discussions at the 2025 West of Melbourne Summit at which WoMEDA released its paper, *Western Growth - Unlocking Melbourne's Economic Engine: Strategic Foundations Paper to initiate the Western Growth Dialogue to Supercharge the Economic and Social Future of Melbourne's West*.

² WoMEDA is partnering with Invest Victoria in holding Investment Attraction Roundtables, at which strategies to attract private investment in the region are being discussed.

³ In developing this paper, WoMEDA was strongly influenced by Infrastructure Victoria's 30 year plan *Victoria's Infrastructure Strategy 2025-2055*.

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO JOBS

An annual average population growth rate of three percent for the Western Region since 2011 is placing enormous strain on all transport modes, especially in the outer West⁴.

Roads and trains are choked at peak hour, especially for workers needing to commute to and from jobs, inside and outside the region.

Under any plausible scenario, pressure on the transport system will become unsustainable as the population continues to boom. The Victorian and Commonwealth governments have recognised this with funding pledges confirmed for the Sunshine super hub, Melbourne Airport Rail Link and Western Freeway.

These projects will help modernise and expand the West's public transport and road network. WoMEDA welcomes this positive action. In particular, the Melbourne Airport Rail Link is a highly strategic project for the West of Melbourne and will elevate the importance of Sunshine at the heart of our region. We encourage the Victorian Government to prioritise and expedite this project.

In the short term, additional rail and bus improvements need to be prioritised to provide a viable alternative to car travel. These initiatives will improve commute times for workers and students.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- ▶ **Prioritise and expedite construction of the Melbourne Airport Rail Link**
- ▶ **Expedite the electrification of the Melton line** Rapid growth in Melton is already straining V/Line services. Frequent Metro services are required to meet demand as soon as possible.
- ▶ **Re-allocation of V-line trains from the electrified Melton line to the Wyndham Vale line** to increase carrying capacity and frequency. This would be an interim measure until electrification proceeds.
- ▶ **Increased services and redesigned bus networks** to more directly connect major workplaces, education and other activity centres to train stations, shopping centres and other significant transit destinations, especially in peak hour.
- ▶ **Establishment of rapid transit bus lanes**, particularly in the outer West, to carry peak hour commuters within and outside the West to reduce reliance on car travel.

If the Suburban Rail Loop project is to proceed, WoMEDA advocates for planning of **the SRL's western end** to commence. An extension of the Werribee line to connect with an electrified Wyndham Vale line could be built at limited additional cost. Longer term transport plans should include **Melbourne Metro 2 (MM2)** subject to a cost-benefit analysis.

⁴ Department of Transport and Planning's (DTP) analysis of Census data for Melbourne's Western Region

BUILDING LOCAL JOBS FOR A BOOMING POPULATION

WoMEDA strongly advocates the case for building major local employment hubs to strengthen the West's economy and benefit the whole region.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- ▶ **Develop and implement a coherent “West of Melbourne Precincts Plan”** to stimulate private and public investment in the region's precincts and create a foundation for ongoing prosperity in the West.
- ▶ **Within that plan, clarify job growth as the central focus of precincts** and confirm that precincts in Sunshine, East Werribee and Footscray remain designated areas of concentrated commercial and industrial activity designed to create a substantial range of local job opportunities and stimulate economic growth across the West.
- ▶ **Recognise Cobblebank as an emerging priority precinct in Melton**, noting major construction is already underway for the future Melton Hospital and a new TAFE.

WoMEDA advocates for expedited planning for three region-boosting projects which would position the Western suburbs as a major goods gateway.



Bay West Port

(currently slated for 2040 at the earliest)



Outer Metropolitan Ring Road & Rail

(30-to-50-year plan,
commencement tbc)



Western Intermodal Freight Terminal

(No timeline committed)

GETTING PEOPLE INTO JOBS

To drive a boom in local jobs and investment, residents of Melbourne's West need greater access to vocational training and higher education, especially in the outer western suburbs.

WoMEDA applauds the Victorian Government's investment in education in Melbourne's West including commitment to a new TAFE in Melton, a new tech school in Brimbank and to Victoria University's Centre of Excellence in Paramedicine in Sunshine. WoMEDA hopes that this investment signals a wider expansion of the skills training sector for communities of the West.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- ▶ **Expand tertiary education in Werribee to meet strong local demand.** Wyndham's secondary school graduates are now going on to tertiary education at a higher rate than the Victorian average. WoMEDA strongly advocates for a doubling of TAFE training places in Wyndham, building on VU TAFE's long-standing skills training presence in Wyndham and, more recently, that of The Gordon.
- ▶ **Attract significantly more childcare services** to the outer West to address the 'childcare desert' problem and support the workforce participation of parents. Plan for new childcare services to be adjacent to new primary schools where possible
- ▶ **Develop mechanisms to close early childhood service gaps** in locations where market provision is insufficient. This could include incentives, gap funding and government land release.

IMPROVING LIVEABILITY AND INCLUSION

The latest official estimates of residential population reveal that the West of Melbourne is now the most populated and fastest growing area of Greater Melbourne. With rapid growth projected to continue, 10,000 dwellings will need to be built every year through to 2036 to meet demand, mainly in Wyndham and Melton.

Currently, the supply of private dwellings is being outpaced, driving up prices and reducing affordability for renters and home buyers. In particular, a lack of housing for key workers with reasonable proximity to large employers, such as the region's major hospitals, is creating another barrier to employment and good quality service delivery.

Melbourne's West has the lowest proportion of social housing in Australia according to research by the Community Housing Industry Association and UNSW City Futures Research Centre. Research by LeadWest shows homelessness rates in Melbourne's west are 50 per cent higher than the Australian average. The impact is most evident in the City of Brimbank where more than 3,800 people are experiencing homelessness, the highest incidence in Greater Melbourne.

WoMEDA acknowledges the complexity of the housing shortage and efforts by both State and Commonwealth governments to address the challenge. The shortage is compounding existing socio-economic disadvantage in the western suburbs and WoMEDA believes a targeted focus is necessary to avoid entrenching hardship and lower living standards in many of our communities.



IMPROVING LIVEABILITY AND INCLUSION

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES

- ▶ **Develop a “West of Melbourne” housing strategy** to co-ordinate and support LGA strategies already developed to meet housing targets set by the Victorian Government’s Plan Victoria.
- ▶ **Use the region-wide framework to align municipal targets and match diverse housing types** with major infrastructure investments, employment precincts and activity centres to meet booming job and housing demand.
- ▶ **Remove barriers to delivery** and unlock housing capacity already identified.
- ▶ **Build and plan for more social housing** close to wraparound services where possible, to reduce homelessness.
- ▶ **Enable development of affordable and specific key worker housing** close to major employers.

Additional initiatives



Continue planning and funding more schools and libraries in the outer west.



Plan, fund and build more sporting grounds and facilities, including aquatic centres.



With renewed effort, continue to address the West’s historic lack of tree canopy which currently provides little relief from the hot, dry conditions that prevail on Melbourne’s western plains.

A SHARED VISION

Our vision for the booming West of Melbourne requires action from all of us – public and private investors, local, state and federal governments and local leaders.

We need to establish new industries, build local jobs, skills and credentials and support our communities to confidently take their place in a modern, prospering workforce and region.

Contact: Giulia Baggio, WoMEDA Executive Director: 0409 141 038

About WoMEDA

WoMEDA is an alliance of significant public and private institutions across the West of Melbourne, engaging in activities that benefit business and the welfare of the wider community across the region. It seeks to foster private and public investment in our region to ensure this booming population leads to a booming economy, and especially more local jobs.

In consultation with state government, businesses and community leaders, WoMEDA is seeking to identify the priority initiatives that will grow our industries, attract investment, create more local jobs and lock in long-term prosperity for this rapidly growing region.

Acknowledgement of Country

WoMEDA acknowledges the Wurundjeri, Bunarong and Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we live and work. WoMEDA pays its deep respects to Elders past and present.

Disclaimer: This is a paper of WoMEDA and does not necessarily reflect the views of all members.

