



LeadWest

# Advocacy Priorities

2025 Federal Election



*Invest in  
Melbourne's West*



HOBSONS  
BAY CITY  
COUNCIL



Maribyrnong  
CITY COUNCIL



# About LeadWest

LeadWest is an advocacy alliance representing Melbourne's western region 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



Improve transport connectivity



Support sustainable population growth



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.



Population to grow to:

**1.6 million**  
by 2046



**20%**

of Greater Melbourne's  
Population



2024:

**382,385**

2046:

**601,839**

Building new homes



**96,608**

Local businesses



**\$57 billion**

Gross regional product



**532,800**

Workforce



**394,500**

Local jobs



# Why is investment needed?

LeadWest is advocating for a commitment to 'Invest in Melbourne's 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, delivering some of the most affordable housing. The Federal Government has a target to build 1.2 million new homes by 2029, and Melbourne's west is critical to meeting these objectives.

Almost 20% of Melbourne's population live in the western suburbs, but the area has been neglected by successive governments, resulting in lower service levels and infrastructure. Melbourne's west is one of the more disadvantaged regions in metropolitan Melbourne.

There has been a shift in key employment industries in Melbourne's west 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 Federal 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.

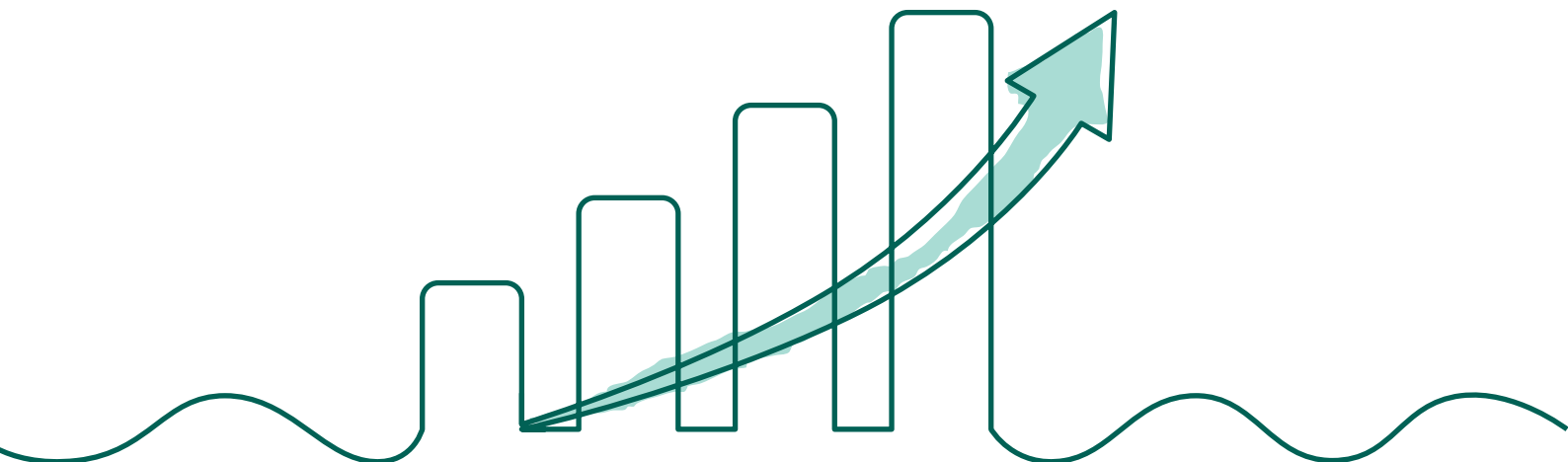
## Top Five Employment Sectors

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 Businesses 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.





## Major Project

- Western Highway
  - Calder Highway
  - OMR
- Western Rail
  - Melbourne Airport Rail Link
  - Hobsons Bay Wetlands Centre
- Creative West
  - Western Aquatic and Early Years Centre
  - Plumpton Aquatic and Leisure Centre

## Local Government Areas

- Melton
- Brimbank
- Wyndham
- Maribyrnong
- Hobsons Bay

## Precincts

- Cobblebank Metropolitan Activity Centre
- East Werribee Employment Precinct (E.W.E.P)
- Sunshine Precinct and station
- Western Intermodal Freight Precinct (W.I.F.T)
- Footscray

## Ports

- Melbourne Airport
- Essendon Airport
- Port of Melbourne
- Proposed Bay West
- Avalon Airport
- Part of Geelong



# A Better Connected West

Government investment in transport infrastructure projects in Melbourne's west is vital to breaking 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 insufficient public transport and inefficient active transport networks.

## Sunshine Precinct and Melbourne Airport Rail (MAR)

LeadWest calls on the State and Federal Governments to fulfil their joint commitment to construct the MAR via the Sunshine Precinct.

The MAR will pass through the heart of the west in Sunshine and provides direct and fast airport links for the regional centres of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. It also provides a critical transport option for airport staff to travel to their workplace, one of the State's largest single-site employers. The need for MAR has become more urgent following the Federal Government's recent approval of a third runway at Melbourne Airport. Set to become operational by 2031, this additional runway will result in an increased number of airline passengers and airport staff. In the absence of MAR, the traffic congestion on the already busy road network in Melbourne's west will be further exacerbated.

Investment in the Sunshine Precinct will unlock one of Melbourne's largest urban renewal opportunities, and up to \$8 billion in private economic development opportunities, attracting businesses, creative industries and tourists to Melbourne's west.

LeadWest seeks Federal Government funding for the full delivery of the Sunshine Station Masterplan as the first stage of the Melbourne Airport Rail project. 'No regrets' works must progress without further delay, including the delivery of the adjacent development sites to unlock the Sunshine Precinct as the CBD of Melbourne's west.

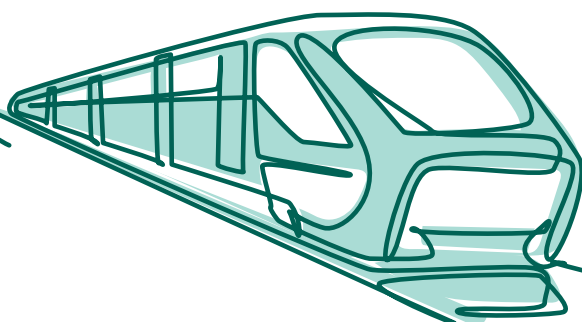
## Western Region Rail Plan

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 State 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 strong evidence base supports the need for the electrification of the Melton and Wyndham Vale lines to reduce congestion, move towards net zero and increase productivity.

LeadWest calls for investment in Melbourne's rail network with new train stations to attract investment, unlocking job opportunities increasing productivity and reducing disadvantage.



## Western Highway

The Western Highway is a critical national road link with over 86,000 vehicles travelling the section between Melton and Caroline Springs each day. This figure is expected to rise to approximately 113,000 by 2031. The Western Highway is also the second-largest freight carrier of any national highway, carrying more than 5,400 trucks a day.

It is an aged and rural-standard highway with direct property accesses and at-grade interchanges at numerous points. The lack of interchanges and overpasses present a significant safety risk to road users.

Planning approval for seven additional residential suburbs directly adjacent to the Western Highway will see an estimated 200,000 residents move in by 2051. The State and Federal Governments have invested in a business case for the Western Highway which is due for completion.

LeadWest will advocate to the Federal Government for the Western Highway to be upgraded to an urban standard, and for the construction of interchanges to connect the highway to new residential and employment precincts.

## Fix the Calder

LeadWest calls for urgent action by State and Federal Governments to fix the Calder Freeway, one of Australia's most dangerous and congested roads.

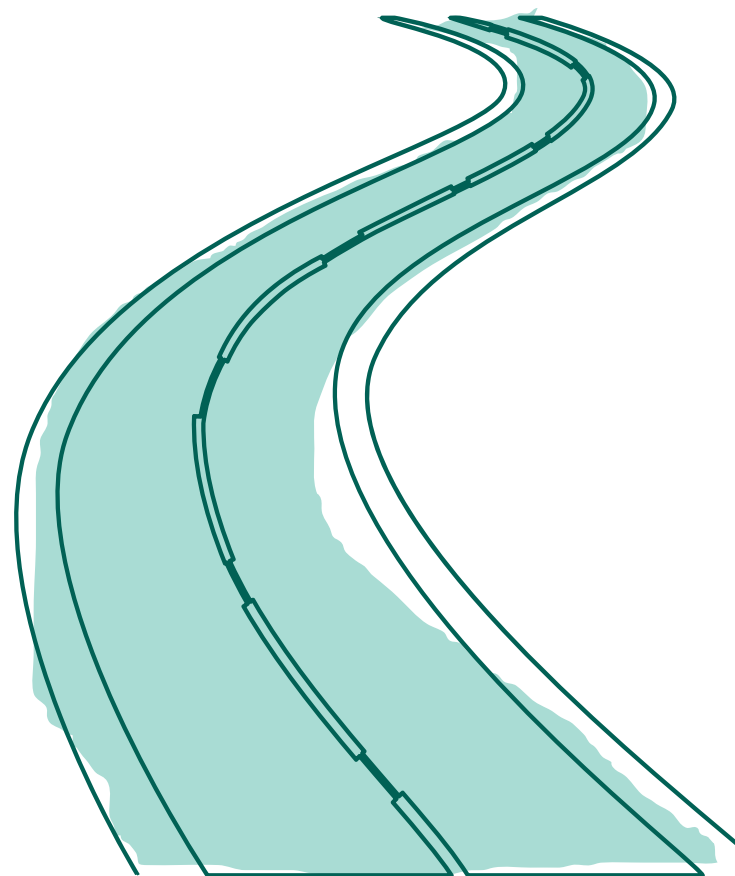
The \$50 million for Calder upgrades promised by the Federal Government in 2019 was withdrawn in late 2023 after its infrastructure spending review. We're seeking that the previously committed funding be reprioritised towards the construction of a full diamond interchange at the intersection of the Calder Freeway and Calder Park Drive. This intersection is dangerous and leads to heavy traffic congestion.

## Outer Metropolitan Ring Road and Rail (OMR)

LeadWest is calling on State and Federal Governments for funding to acquire the reservation for the OMR and announce timelines for its delivery.

The OMR is an intergenerational project. A 70-kilometre long reservation stretching from Little River in Melbourne's west to Kalkallo in the north, with provision for up to four rail tracks and six road lanes. 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.

The OMR will connect some of Australia's fastest-growing municipalities, connecting the Hume Freeway, Calder Highway, Western Highway and Princess Freeway to freight transport hubs and employment precincts.





## Western Intermodal Freight Terminal (WIFT) and Precinct

Melbourne's west is home to 50% of existing interstate freight rail customers. The WIFT, in the Western State Significant Industrial Precinct, is Victoria's largest.

The WIFT is supported by the supply chain and logistics industry as a critical investment need. It will increase productivity, create approximately 1,360 jobs during construction, 2,000 ongoing jobs and be the catalyst for commercial investment to create 39,000 jobs.

In 2021, the State and Federal Governments completed a joint investment case that recommended the development of a new interstate freight terminal in Truganina (known as the WIFT). The investment case also recommended protecting land at Beveridge for a future terminal (BIFT).

The Federal Government has prioritised delivery of BIFT in the short term. On that basis the State Government has decided to defer the development of WIFT in the short term, at least until additional capacity is required.

LeadWest asks the State and Federal Governments to ensure the WIFT remains a priority, including protecting land at Truganina for when the WIFT is needed.

## West Link Stage 2

West Link Stage 2 is a critical road link that will connect two fast-growing suburbs in Wyndham.

The new road link, will commence at the intersection of Ballan, Hobbs and Armstrong Roads in Wyndham Vale, providing a continuous connection through to Tarneit at Sayers Road.

The project builds upon existing infrastructure, extending a vital corridor that links key industrial and residential areas with Melbourne's CBD and surrounding regions. There will be regional economic growth through improved transport infrastructure that will attract new industries for the region. The construction of this much needed road will also enhance freight efficiency.

In preparation for a Stage 2 construction, Wyndham City Council has funded the development of a concept design which provided functional layout plans, hydraulic review, preliminary flora and fauna and cultural heritage reviews, which also identified properties that will need to be compulsorily acquired.

**Funding request:** \$87 million from the Federal Government to construct West Link Stage 2, to connect Ballan Road in Wyndham Vale to Sayers Road in Tarneit. This is in addition to a previous commitment of \$57 million towards the first stage of the Wyndham West Link.



# Climate and Environment

## A Greener, Healthier 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 out of our five LeadWest member councils have the four lowest levels of green canopy in Melbourne. Maribyrnong is also ranked eighth of all Melbourne suburbs. They receive less rainfall than other parts of Melbourne, meaning they're drier and can experience 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 seeks ongoing program funding to provide more shade and green spaces, including from the Federal Government.



## Wetlands Centre

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, supported by LeadWest, will offer premier learning, visitor and research facilities and a place for people to be inspired to connect with nature, aiding in improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

Early works at the site have started and include earthworks to create sculpted mounds using existing materials on site, making way for approximately 14,000 native plants to be planted.

LeadWest asks the Federal Government to commit \$6 million to the Wetlands Centre Project.

# Liveability & Wellbeing

LeadWest advocates for equity in access for Melbourne west's sports-based health needs.

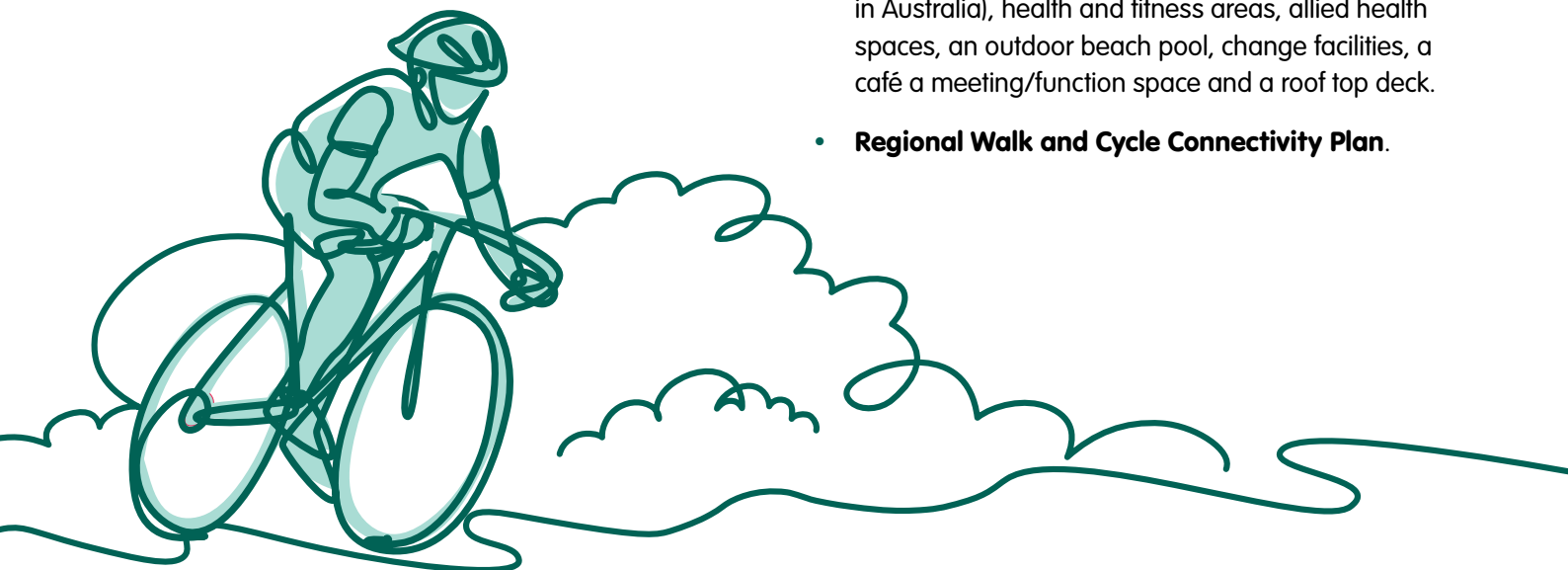
According to the Western Public Health Unit, Melbourne's west has high levels of avoidable chronic conditions like coronary heart disease, diabetes, tooth decay and cancers and associated higher rates of premature mortality, as well as low rates of participation in cancer screening programs. Interventions to prevent and manage these diseases can have significant health and economic benefits.

Active sport and recreation are a valuable part of community life. It promotes active lifestyles, helps develop valuable social networks and contributes to the liveability of communities improving physical and mental health, reducing the risk of obesity and lifestyle-related illnesses. Research shows that the benefits of physical activity extend to mental health, community wellbeing, social capital, productivity and performance.

Councils need to deliver sporting and recreation and mixed-use facilities. In Melbourne's west, councils require funding support to deliver stadiums and pools as well as outdoor recreation facilities. Councils cannot deliver this critical infrastructure alone.

LeadWest supports improved sports and recreation facilities and services to lift participation rates and address community health needs in Melbourne's west. We seek funding to establish facilities to play, exercise, connect and seek support from allied health professionals including funding to deliver a contribution towards the:

- **Performing arts and cultural hub in central Footscray (Creative West).** The proposed development will include a large-scale performance venue, a library, a learning and innovation hub, a civic open space, and integrated spaces for arts, community groups and gatherings. The initiative will support greater economic development, employment opportunities, urban renewal and local small businesses in Melbourne's west.
- **Western Aquatic and Early Years Centre.** Hobsons Bay Council has invested \$1.9 million to finalise the Centre's masterplan and development design and is ready to partner with the State and Federal Governments to deliver the centre. With the potential to deliver services for up to 100,000 people within 5km, the Centre will offer inclusive facilities like an 8-lane pool, a wellness centre, child water-play areas and early years provisions, ensuring accessibility for all.
- **Plumpton Aquatic and Wellness Centre (Melton).** Land has been acquired for this project and the masterplan developed. The Centre will feature indoor pools, splash play areas, water slides, spas, a sauna, sensory aquatic space (the first of its kind in Australia), health and fitness areas, allied health spaces, an outdoor beach pool, change facilities, a café a meeting/function space and a roof top deck.
- **Regional Walk and Cycle Connectivity Plan.**



## Addressing Homelessness

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

Homelessness takes many forms. It includes people living on the street or in cars (rough sleeping), staying temporarily with other households (couch surfing), or living in severely overcrowded dwellings.

As the housing and public housing crisis in Victoria continues to worsen, research shows the western suburbs of Melbourne are being impacted more than any other region.

A recent RMIT study found that 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 unfavourable compared to the Victorian average of 42 per 10,000 people.

Research conducted by the Community Housing Industry Association (CHIA) in conjunction with the UNSW City Futures Research Centre in February 2024 shows Victoria has the lowest proportion of social housing in the country, with Melbourne's west the lowest. Rooming house accommodation is another area of great concern, which many find as the only housing option, but which often exacerbates mental health problems and other vulnerabilities of residents.

The State Government recently announced its Big Housing Build worth over \$5.3 billion. This program aims to deliver 12,000 new social and affordable homes across the state but falls short of the 60,000 new social and affordable homes required to support Victoria's lower income population according to the CHIA.

The 2024 June quarter rental report from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing shows median rents rose significantly with an increase of \$120 per week in Maribyrnong, \$110 per week in Hobsons Bay, \$100 per week in Wyndham, \$82 per week in Brimbank and \$80 per week in Melton. Private rental availability is at 1% and rents have risen 19% in the last year, forcing many into homelessness.

Allied services (such as family violence, health and settlement services) report that they cannot help people address the difficulties they are facing, in securing a safe, stable place to live. There is a critical shortage of emergency accommodation funding.

According to the Western Homeless Network (WHN) 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. Victoria does not have enough housing.

LeadWest asks the State and Federal Governments to commit to jointly building at least 60,000 additional, appropriate social homes to meet current need in Victoria with a focus on public housing.





## Contact Us

**E** [leadwest@brimbank.vic.gov.au](mailto:leadwest@brimbank.vic.gov.au)

**M** 0429 567 362

Brimbank Community and Civic Centre  
301 Hampshire Road Sunshine VIC 3020

**[www.leadwest.com.au](http://www.leadwest.com.au)**