

Leadwest – Draft Business / Operational Plan

Melbourne's Western Region has a long history of regional co-operation – whether that be in the area of economic development - as was primarily the case with the Western Region Commission (WRC), the Western Region Economic Development Organisation (WREDO) and the Melbourne West Area Consultative Committee Inc - or in community services, as in the case of the Western Regional Council for Social Development and others.

A number of previously completed studies focusing on the Western Region have been reviewed by the Leadwest Board with some key elements chosen because of their region-wide and strategic focus and their strong cross stakeholder linkages.

A wide range of issues has been canvassed in both the Leadwest Strategy Day and the various studies reviewed. These have been categorised into six broad groups as follows:

- Education and skills;
- Economic development and jobs (including business support and attraction);
- Transport and infrastructure;
- Health and community development;
- Tourism, recreation, arts and culture; and
- Environment and planning.

In addition, there are a number of recurring themes for Leadwest that are of vital importance. These are:

- Partnership and collaboration;
- Fragmentation, lack of co-ordination and strategic direction; and
- The presence of a number of regional organisations with a broad spread of membership/representation. However, none of these appear to be acknowledged universally as leader organisations in the region.

As such the clear purpose / charter of Leadwest was seen as providing Leadership within the region by identifying issues & taking appropriate action (via partnerships) that are of key importance to the wellbeing of the region & its residents.

Key focus:

- Advocacy for the region – voice of the region
- Comprehensive planning strategy for development
- Facilitate Networks & Partnerships (compliment role of others)
- Co-ordination of critical strategic activities & issues
- Promotion & marketing of the region – inc. Investment attraction
- Encourage public & private investment
- First Port of Call for Regional Information
- Influence Government Policies for the region
- Capture /secure Government funding opportunities

1. Operational Environment

- Unique opportunity to leverage off the West's representation with both State & Federal Labour governments – Leadwest Leadership role in regional advocacy
- Critical for Leadwest to partner with other regional bodies to capture maximum benefits from a renewed focus on “regionalism”
 - Networking & relationships are vital - harnessing energy & focus of these regional groups
 - Western Transport Alliance, MWACC, GWCCI, Western Health, Learning & Innovation West, Western Melbourne Tourism Inc, AgriWest, LLENs, etc.

- Greater focus on “sustainability agenda” eg Climate change, Water conservation, environmental impacts
- Strong Growth pressures particularly in Melton, Wyndham & Brimbank
 - Need for local jobs creation
 - Economy in transition –decline in manufacturing, logistics centre, small service sector
 - Infrastructure shortfalls /challenges – public transport inadequacies, huge freight growth
 - Skills Agenda, Education & training & re skilling for jobs of the future
- Under Investment in “enabling” infrastructure in the West – particularly transport (road & rail) & telecommunications
- Promotion of Decentralisation & Satellite City concepts (bigger Activity Centres – attract service sector)
 - Public Sector relocation into satellite locations & out of CBD
 - Transit City
- Poor image of the west
 - Crime
 - Poor arts, culture, tourist & recreation credentials etc
- Stressed Health & Human Services Sector with significant under investment
 - Health issues –diabetes, Obesity etc
 - Ageing population
- State & federal government accountability issues
 - Monitor of promises made – keeping a score card
- Investment / business attraction & winning the battle to attract the “creative class”
 - Improving the regulatory environment particularly Local & State government
 - Facing & beating competition in a borderless landscape - benchmarking the best

2. Prioritised 5 Year Objectives

Leadwest will provide leadership on the following key issues:

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

- Western region residents ill equipped for the new economy and new jobs
- The skills base of the region’s people is low and building a skills base is the crucial issue.
- The region has the lowest rate of tertiary qualified graduates in metropolitan Melbourne.
- Added consequences of "importing" employees and 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 unemployed 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 not being rolled out to the people who need them. This is compounded by poor transport which makes access to university and colleges difficult for young people.
- Access to The Internet. Internet access for people in the western region is inadequate but essential for education and skills development.
- Life-long Learning. There is a need to foster a culture of lifelong learning amongst the region’s people.

BUSINESS SUPPORT AND ATTRACTION

- A key priority is to Implement agreed aspects of the WREIDS study
- Need to grow and attract business and industry. There is a need to grow existing businesses and attract new industries and of the right type.
- We must attract knowledge-based industries. We need to focus on attracting knowledge based industries. The region is not sustainable in its present form nor will it be if it continues to only attract transport and logistics jobs.
- Industrial land supply under threat Secure & grow Leadwests funding base
- Establishment of an Intermodal Freight Terminal (In Land Port) focused on Rail
- Demand for continued housing growth is resulting in pressure for rezoning of some industrial land for residential. This is a threat to the adequate supply of land for new business growth, which is urgently needed by the region to meet demand for jobs.
- Business information and networking. Providing information, support and advice for businesses in the region is considered a high priority. Examples of particular needs include regional socio-economic and industry data, business development advice, legal services, information about telecommunications technology and the lack of a business incubator in the region.
- Escape expenditure. There is a significant amount of escape expenditure in Retailing & professional services and this needs to be addressed.
- Conference facilities. The region has insufficient conference and related facilities, which acts as a disincentive to new business attraction.
- Improving the image & brand of the west and being able to attract the “creative class” to reside & work in the region

EMPLOYMENT AND JOBS GROWTH

Population growth outstripping job growth. Rapid population growth in the west is outstripping job growth. VUT research shows that ten years ago the region had 8% of Melbourne’s population and 12% of the jobs, but now it is the other way round 12% of population growth but only 8% of the jobs.

- The enormous growth occurring in Wyndham and Melton highlights one dimension of this problem requiring new services to support domestic and business growth; however transport infrastructure is grossly inadequate for existing communities.

RAIL TRANSPORT ISSUES

- Substantially improved in public transport option in the West
- Most rail lines in the region are at or over capacity already.
- No plans for any new rail lines or freight sidings, but new cross-suburban lines and freight lines are needed.
- Footscray station rail junction is a serious bottleneck and has outgrown its capacity.
- The Ballarat line is single track west of Deer Park.
- Bottlenecks and capacity problems occur at Sunshine.
- New rail stations are needed at Toolern Vale and Caroline Springs
- North Melbourne is a serious bottleneck and congestion point.
- Werribee line suburban services will be impacted on by new regional fast rail services.
- Higher frequencies are needed on all lines.
- More & improved capacity needed on park & ride at Rail Stations

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 intermodal logistics.
- The need for the Deer Park bypass.

- Tullamarine freeway tolls force additional traffic onto the Western Ring road which is already over capacity.
- Inadequate capacity on the Westgate bridge. Eddington Report on East / West Traffic
- Begin planning for the development of an outer western ring road
- Achieve major Improvements to capacity on the Western Ring Road.
- Upgrading of Calder Highway

BUS TRANSPORT ISSUES

- The need for better coordinated bus services.
- The need for more frequent bus services.
- Integration of bus timetables with rail schedules
- The inadequate government funding for new bus services, despite recent budget allocations.

INFRASTRUCTURE ISSUES

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. Particular aspects of this include:

- Righting the balance between population growth expectations of the west & state government funding of enabling infrastructure (both hard & soft)
- Delivery of high speed broadband connectivity to both residential, commercial & industrial users
- The poor level of co-ordination between government departments in the planning and provision of infrastructure.
- The lack of government response on infrastructure needs, due it seems in part, to disbelief about the region's rapid growth rates.
- The need to renew older infrastructure, particularly in the municipalities of Hobsons Bay, Moonee Valley and Maribyrnong.
- The capacity constraints of the current Westgate bridge.
- Inadequate community infrastructure such as schools health facilities, community hubs and learning hubs.
- The need for improved internet access.
- 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.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES ISSUES

- **Under funding** of western region human services compared to other metropolitan regions is seen as the most important issue in this category. The region is under-funded in comparison with other regions. eg Completion of the redevelopment of the sunshine Hospital & commitment to Stage 2
- **Poor health.** The health of the region's population is poorer than other regions on a number of indicators. Over time this will impose a significant cost burden on government unless the issues are addressed.
- **Shortage of doctors** and specialists (the lowest number of GPs per head of population) in the region due to their propensity to prefer the more affluent inner and south eastern suburbs. Increasing GP's & specialists & allied health services in the west is paramount & the west must be seen as a centre of excellence in health services
- High rates of **Population growth exacerbating problems** 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.
- **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** - Public/social housing is needed in the region. This could be a growth industry and possible source of employment.

TOURISM, ARTS AND CULTURE & RECREATION

- **Under-developed tourism product**
Tourism product in the western region is under-developed and could generate significant job opportunities.
- **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.
- **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.

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & IMAGE ISSUES

- **Urban growth is a major issue in the west.**
Melbourne’s urban growth patterns are changing. The western region and to a lesser degree the northern region have now overtaken the southeast corridor as the fastest growing metropolitan regions. Melton’s growth rate is now the highest in Victoria.
Growth is being fuelled by new household formation and a trend for inner western 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 this growth and its implications including the need to massively upgrade transport and community services infrastructure.
Residential growth is resulting in pressure to rezone industrial land for residential, which would further erode the supply of industrial land at a time when the region desperately needs to increase its employment to balance population growth.
- **Socio-economic implications of the urban growth boundary**
The Melbourne 2030 urban growth boundaries have the potential to influence house and land prices with resultant effects on social equity. What happens in Melton and Wyndham will have a major flow-on effect to the inner west.
- **Land use - transport nexus**
The crucial relationship between land use planning and transport infrastructure is not adequately addressed in the region.
- **Global warming and biodiversity**
The region faces big challenges 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.
The West 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.

- **Landscape quality**
The region is in a rain shadow compared to the rest of Melbourne. New approaches to landscaping need to be developed to respond to this situation.
The presentation and appearance of the physical landscape requires urgent attention.
- **Environmental amenity**
There are many opportunities for "sprucing up" public infrastructure to create greater feeling of pride & prosperity.
- **Coastal development**
There are no clear planning strategies to deal with the interface issues of water front development.
- **Improvement of the region's image** is vital. The perception of the region's image has begun to change, especially with recent high quality residential developments.
- Upgrading the visual image of freeways would help – they do not compare well with those in the east.
- Regional marketing & branding is important. Good regional marketing material is vital

3. Leadwest Priorities for 2008

Leadwest will endeavour to have achieved all or part of the following: **(not in order of priority)**

1. Rationalise & clearly determine Leadwest role in WREIDS study initiatives
2. Achievement of Hobsons Bay membership of Leadwest
3. Promotion of Leadwest's existence (& its charter) & build enduring stakeholder relationships and partnership
4. Production of Marketing material (collateral) in both hard & soft form – with links
5. Secure Funding for Leadwest & expand membership appropriately
6. Establish Business Plan For Leadwest
7. Launch Event for Leadwest – Open for Business (sponsored event option !) – carefully crafted guest list
8. Establishment of Leadwest Office (domicile) & staff recruited
9. Advocate western region priorities to both State & Federal government - influence budget bids!
10. Identify State & Federal government policy announcements / opportunities to advance the west
11. Communications strategy for Leadwest both Internally (Councillors & staff) & Externally
12. Gap Analysis / Data Gathering on key issues facing the west (produce a "fast facts" for the west
13. Hold Regional Strategy Forum & AGM – possibly jointly (possibly early 2009?)

4. Next 3 months achievements

- Business Plan Development underway for next 12 months
- Office secured & fit-out commenced . Staff recruitment well under way
- Leadwest Launch Event successfully held (council VIP lists required)
- Production of Leadwest marketing collateral underway – council media/ marketing units to assist
- CEO Visit & contact program underway
- Meeting with State & Federal Governments to influence budgets
- Commencement of data / gap analysis project – Council Eco + Planning units to assist. VU to assist