

LeadWest News

September 2025

An update from the Chair

I'm happy to present the latest quarterly instalment of LeadWest News with a full overview of our recent activities.

LeadWest's focus over recent months has been on preparing our advocacy strategy for the 2026 State Election.

The Advocacy Officers Advisory Group worked together to recommend a list of advocacy asks for the State Election. They aligned advocacy asks to the LeadWest Strategic Plan and identified current issues we should focus on. The next step was for committee delegates to review and finalise the advocacy asks.

The final 2026 State Election Priorities brochure, titled *Invest in a Liveable, Connected and Sustainable West* was endorsed at our September meeting, with some final input from members.

We have identified 11 priorities to champion in the lead up to the 2026 election – you'll find more details within this newsletter update.

Our approach to the State Election will be very much in keeping with our successful Federal Election campaign. We found the 2025 Federal Election Advocacy Priorities brochure a valuable tool in our MP advocacy meetings.

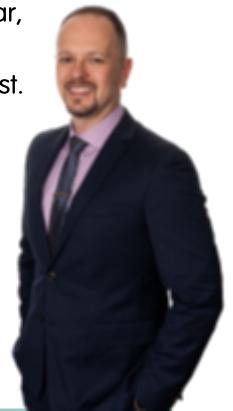
Throughout the year we received extremely positive feedback from MPs, especially Ministers, about the presentation materials we have used at meetings. Federal Minister Catherine King especially congratulated us on the brochures and said they were very useful. In fact, I was delighted when at the launch of the Western Highway funding she used direct quotes from the brochure.

I am sure our 2026 State Elections Priorities brochure will be a valuable tool for our advocacy ahead of next year's election.

And finally, I'm proud to have led LeadWest as Chair throughout 2025. It's been a wonderful experience and a privilege. I'd like to thank Deputy Chair, Cr Katharine Nikolic for her support and work throughout the year, as well as former Executive Officer, Hillary Hastings, who retired in August.

I look forward to the continued success of the LeadWest alliance into the future.

Cr Dr Phillip Zada
LeadWest Chair



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2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities

Invest in a Liveable, Connected and Sustainable West

At our 3 September 2025 meeting, the LeadWest Committee endorsed the 2026 State Election Advocacy Priorities brochure – *Invest in a Liveable, Connected and Sustainable West*.

The brochure outlines 11 priorities in the lead up to the November 2026 elections under the themes of:

- A Liveable and Healthy Community
- A Better-Connected West
- A Sustainable and Vibrant West.

Here is an overview of our asks:

A Liveable and Healthy Community

Homelessness

We are seeking equitable funding for:

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

Investment in Mental Health

We are calling for:

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

A Better-Connected West

Western Rail Plan

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

Outer Metropolitan Ring - Road and Rail (OMR)

We are calling for:

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

Outer Western Roads Package

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

Melbourne Airport Rail (MAR) and Sunshine Station Masterplan

We are calling for:

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

Western Intermodal Freight Terminal (WIFT)

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

Bus Network Reform

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

A Sustainable and Vibrant West

Creative West

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

Wetlands Centre Altona Meadows

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

A Greener, Cooler West

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

What's next?

Copies of the brochure will soon be shared with key stakeholders with an official launch event being planned for November (TBC). An action plan has been developed to guide LeadWest's advocacy approach over the coming year.

Ministerial Meetings

Minister Melissa Horne

In June, LeadWest representatives met with Minister for Ports and Freight, Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Minister for Health Infrastructure, the Hon Melissa Horne, to discuss priorities for the west including the Outer Metropolitan Ring (OMR), WIFT, Creative West, Better Buses for Melbourne's West, and the Wetlands Centre. We also discussed the wins from our federal election key advocacy asks.

At the meeting were LeadWest Chair Cr Dr Phillip Zada, Deputy Chair Cr Katharine Nikolic, Cr Susan Yengi, Brimbank Director Chris Leivers, and Executive Officer, Hillary Hastings.

As a result of this positive meeting, Minister Horne requested to present to the Committee at our meeting in September.



From left: Cr Susan Yengi, Minister Horne and Chair, Cr Dr Phillip Zada

Minister Gabrielle Williams

In July, LeadWest Chair Cr Dr Phillip Zada, Brimbank CEO Fiona Blair, Melton CEO Roslyn Wai and Executive Officer, Hillary Hastings, met with Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Public and Active Transport, the Hon Gabrielle Williams.

At the meeting we discussed the Outer Metropolitan Ring Road and Rail, Sunshine Superhub and Melbourne Airport Rail, electrification of Wyndham and Melton Lines, Better Buses for Melbourne's West, including a SMART bus service from Sunshine Interchange to Melbourne Airport, Regional Active Transport Plan and Western Highway Upgrade.



From left: Fiona Blair, Roslyn Wai, Minister Williams and Chair Cr Dr Phillip Zada

September meeting overview

The LeadWest Committee meeting was held on 3 September, hosted by Brimbank City Council.

The Hon Melissa Horne joined the meeting as a guest to present to the committee. She acknowledged the successful advocacy work of LeadWest and its shared vision for the western suburbs. The Minister's presentation provided an overview of major projects and opportunities/benefits for the west including the completion of the West Gate Tunnel Project; introduction of no truck zones; Sunshine Station works including first steps of Melton line electrification; the new Footscray Hospital; Melton Hospital; and other road, rail, port and freight projects.

The committee also received an update on the Sunshine Superhub, including Melton line upgrade, by VIDA Rail which is the organisation delivering rail projects including the Level Crossing Removal Project, Regional Rail Revival and Melbourne Airport Rail.

Key outcomes:

- The committee endorsed the LeadWest 2026 State Election Priorities brochure.
- The committee endorsed amendments to the LeadWest Instrument of Delegation and Terms of Reference, which will now proceed through member Council Meetings. It was agreed to undertake a full review of the committee's Terms of Reference within the next 12 months.
- The Chair presented the 2024/2025 Annual Report.

What's next?

The next LeadWest Committee Meeting is scheduled for 3 December and will be hosted by Wyndham City Council.

Provided all member councils have appointed a councillor delegate by this date, the 2026 Chair and Deputy will be elected at this meeting.

Working together - WOMEDA

West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance (WoMEDA) is an alliance of significant public and private institutions across the West of Melbourne, working in tandem with local government and engaging with industry.

The LeadWest Chair has been invited to be a panel member of the closing session at the WoMEDA West of Melbourne Summit (presented by WoMEDA in partnership with The Age) on Thursday 23 October.

At the conference WoMEDA will be launching its refreshed West of Melbourne Economic Development Strategy. The Premier and Prime Minister have been invited to speak at the Summit about their visions for the future of the West of Melbourne.

In brief

Executive Officer update

In August, LeadWest welcomed new Executive Officer, Simone Kemp, following Hillary Hasting's retirement.

LeadWest in the media

Links to some recent media coverage:

- [The Age – 14 July 2025 - \\$350m spent buying land, a call for urgency, but no sign of Melbourne's mega-road](#)
- [The Age – 14 August 2025 – Marelen wastes thousands of hours commuting to work. She wants two things to change](#)
- [ABC Radio – Drive with Ali Moore – 28 August 2025](#)



From left: Deputy Cr Katharine Nikolic and Chair Cr Dr Phillip Zada in *The Age* on 14 July 2025 (Source: *The Age*)

Our People

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LeadWest Joint Delegated Committee

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Cr Katharine Nikolic (Deputy Chair)
CEO Fiona Blair

Hobsons Bay
Cr Diana Grima
Interim CEO Kerry Thompson

Maribyrnong
Cr Susan Yengi
CEO Celia Haddock

Melton
Cr Dr Phillip Zada (Chair)
CEO Roslyn Wai

Wyndham
Cr Peter Maynard
CEO Stephen Wall

LeadWest Executive Officer
Simone Kemp