Mobilising Climate Just and Resilient Communities in Melbourne's West

Collaborative Action Plan

November 2022

Jesuit Social Services
Building a Just Society

Centre for **JUST Places**
Resilient, inclusive & regenerative communities

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Bunurong, Wadawurrung, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands on which this project took place.

We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend this acknowledgement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who continue to care for Country, community, and culture in the west of Melbourne and beyond.

Jesuit Social Services: Who we are and what we do

Jesuit Social Services has been working for more than 40 years delivering practical support and advocating for improved policies to achieve strong, cohesive and vibrant communities where every individual can play their role and flourish. We are a social change organisation working with some of the most marginalised individuals and communities, often experiencing multiple and complex challenges. Jesuit Social Services works where the need is greatest and where we have the capacity, experience and skills to make the most difference. Our services span Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory where we support more than 57,000 individuals and families annually.

Our service delivery and advocacy focuses on the following key areas:

- **Justice and crime prevention** – people involved with the justice system.

- **Mental health and wellbeing** – people with multiple and complex needs including mental illness, trauma, homelessness and complex bereavement.

- **Settlement and community building** – recently arrived immigrants and refugees, and disadvantaged communities.

- **Education, training and employment** – people with barriers to sustainable employment

- **Gender and culture** – providing leadership on the reduction of violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and building new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe.

- **People and place** – leadership, research, action and advocacy on place-based approaches to address disadvantage and build resilient, inclusive, regenerative communities.

- **Ecological justice** – inviting discussion on what practices, policies and actions can be taken by governments, individuals, organisations and the community services sector within Australia, to build an ecologically just society.

Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places

The Centre for Just Places was established by Jesuit Social Services, with seed funding from the Gandel Foundation and Victorian Government, to enable and support place-based approaches nationally through research, collaboration, engagement and knowledge exchange.

Vision

Enabling resilient, inclusive and regenerative communities.

Mission

Enable and support place-based approaches nationally through research, collaboration, engagement and knowledge exchange.

Pillars: Research – Action – Advocacy

- Demonstrate leadership in research and advocacy on place-based inequities and injustice.

- Focus on addressing the root causes of social, economic and environmental inequity and injustice.

- Promote a social and ecological justice lens in place-based research and action.

- Collaborate and partner with communities and cross-sectoral stakeholders to support and enable effective place-based approaches.

Project thanks

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Project funding and support

Project partners

Project contributors

Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities	Koling wada-ngal Aboriginal Corporation
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre	Koroit Creek Neighbourhood House
Borderlands Cooperative	Latitude: Directions for Young People
Brotherhood of St Laurence	Living Melbourne
cohealth	Maidstone Community Centre
commUnity+	Network West
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	NorthWestern Mental Health
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	North West Metro Local Aboriginal Network
Department of Health	Salvation Army
Djerriwarrh Health Services	The Youth Junction Inc
Drummond Street Services	Victorian Public Tenants Association
Edmund Rice Services – Mt Atkinson	VolunteerWest
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria	Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
Friends of Koroit Creek	WEstJustice
Grange Community Centre	Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action
Greater Western Water	Western Homelessness Network
IndianCare	

Project team

For further information:

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Section 1:
Plan overview

About this plan

This Collaborative Action Plan outlines a shared vision for the actions required to mobilise community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) around climate justice and community resilience in the west of Melbourne. Here, the west of Melbourne - Bunurong, Wadawurrung, and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country – is defined using the HealthWest Primary Care Partnerships catchment: Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton, and Wyndham.[1]

Funded by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, this Plan is part of a larger project, *Mobilising Climate Just and Resilient Communities in Melbourne's West*. Over the past 12 months, we worked with over 44 CHCSOs to deepen a tested model of place-based collaboration and action that supports community members at greatest risk of climate change impacts.

The plan indicates where CHCSOs and communities are currently connected, and what is needed to strengthen those connections. It is intended as a guide to build upon the significant networks and activities already occurring in the west of Melbourne, and provide strategic direction in progressing the region's collective aspirations around climate action.

This plan is intended to reflect and build on the diverse contributions of individuals and organisations already working at the interface of climate change, health, and social justice but equally, as a starting point for those looking to develop their capacity in this space.

We acknowledge, however, that there are many more that were either missed or unable to participate. We recognise that for organisations working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, young people, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness in particular, there is more to be done to listen and learn from these diverse communities.

Corresponding with the objectives of the plan, five summary briefs detail the elements of our pilot approach and method for *place-based health equity and climate change adaptation planning*, culminating in a framework to guide strategic action in **Section 3**:

- **Summary brief 1** – Concepts and the policy and legislative context
- **Summary brief 2** – Profiling the west of Melbourne
- **Summary brief 3** – Strategic planning and priorities
- **Summary brief 4** – Organisations, networks and collaborations
- **Summary brief 5** – Co-designing priorities and actions for climate justice

Overview: Place-based action on climate justice and the role of community health and service organisations

Climate change will exacerbate existing social inequities and disproportionately impact people experiencing marginalisation and disadvantage. It will act as a 'threat multiplier', disproportionately increasing social, economic, and environmental stressors for already marginalised groups.[2]

Community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) are essential for strengthening local resilience – these organisations provide critical support services, and have strong networks and relationships within communities. However, the sector itself is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, posing risks of flow-on implications to the communities they work with and support.

We know that many CHCSOs are not prepared to adapt or respond to climate change impacts.[3] Heat, for example, poses a critical challenge for CHCSO's service infrastructure with many buildings and service delivery models not designed for current or projected climate impacts.[4] Aligned with learnings from COVID-19, this places CHCSOs at risk of not being able to respond to increased service demand. This risks the health, safety and wellbeing of Victoria's largest workforce.[5]

This plan serves as a first step towards shared action on climate justice and community resilience, through supporting CHCSOs and other organisations who support health and wellbeing operating in the west of Melbourne. Its first aim is to, build an understanding of key health, social service, and climate change networks and of shared climate change risks, vulnerabilities, strengths, and needs. Its second, is to identify ways to collaborate around building capacity for action.

Summary of climate risks for CHCSOs

Climate change has been described by the World Health Organization as the biggest threat to public health in the 21st century.[6]

There are three primary exposure pathways through which climate change impacts on health:

- Direct exposure to increasingly severe and frequent extreme weather events (such as heatwaves);
- Indirect exposure mediated through natural and human systems, including worsening air and water quality; and
- Exposure mediated through economic and social disruption (such as food production and mental stress).[7]

As **Figure A** illustrates, these exposure pathways are strongly mediated by environmental, social, and health determinants which in turn, produce a range of health and organisational outcomes. Social determinants including income, early childhood experiences, gender stereotypes, education, employment, urban design, housing, environmental quality, and health systems all interact in complex ways to shape the distribution of health outcomes in ways that are uneven and unjust.[8]

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this is made even more unacceptable by the failure to consider how climate change exacerbates ongoing experiences of oppression and racism, and disrupts the spiritual and cultural connections to Country that are core to health and wellbeing.[9]

Overview: Place-based action on climate justice

Climate change

Vulnerability

Exposure pathways
- Extreme weather events
- Heat stress
- Air quality
- Water quality and quantity
- Food security and safety
- Vector distribution & ecology

Vulnerability factors
- Demographic factors
- Geographic factors
- Biological factors & health status
- Sociopolitical conditions
- Socioeconomic factors

Health system capacity & resilience
- Leadership & governance
- Health workforce
- Health information systems
- Essential medical products & technologies
- Service delivery
- Financing

Climate-sensitive health risks

Health outcomes

Injury and mortality from extreme weather events · Heat-related illness · Respiratory illness · Water-borne diseases and other water-related health impacts · Zoonoses · Vector-borne diseases · Malnutrition and food-borne diseases · Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) · Mental and psychosocial health

Health systems & facilities outcomes

Impacts on healthcare facilities · Effects on health systems

Figure A Climate-sensitive health risks, exposure pathways and vulnerability factors for health. Note that health risks go beyond individual or physical factors to systemic considerations, such as governance. Source: WHO (2021).

In Victoria, there has already been over 1.0°C of warming since official records began in 1910.[10] Without rapid action on climate change, it is projected that very hot days will double by 2050, with longer fire seasons and more intense downpours. The interactions of these increasingly intense and variable impacts with existing social, political and cultural stresses make this an urgent and tangible challenge for CHCSOs.

From COVID-19, we know that planning for these impacts is not a straightforward task. Recent years have highlighted gaps in the management of crises within the sector, with limited capacity, processes, and resourcing designed to address risks that emerge slowly and over time.

Reporting from VCOSS and RMIT's Climate Change Exchange found that few Victorian CHCSOs had put in place plans to address climate change risks and vulnerabilities.[11] It is critical that this sector is climate-resilient to help ensure that at-risk communities remain safe particularly as needs that drive service demands become more complex under a changing climate.

Collaborative action on climate change and social justice

Embedded within communities, CHCSOs form a critical part of social infrastructure, with knowledge and networks essential for responding to climate change and reducing risks. But CHCSOs do not operate in isolation. Interdependencies with other organisations – whether participants, referral pathways, or service delivery models – require CHCSOs to not only understand and articulate their own risks and responsibilities but also understand how this intersects with that of many other organisations. Beyond service delivery, this also includes understanding interdependencies with organisations that drive determinants of health such as emergency management, urban design, and transport.

Local, place-based responses to climate change are vital to addressing the intersections of climate change and health, as "while the causes of climate change are global, health impacts are inherently local—they happen where people live, work, learn, play and travel."[12] A place-based response is one that is ideally characterised by long-term co-design, co-governance, and co-production processes between community and stakeholders within a defined geographic location **(Box A)**. In the context of climate adaptation, such approaches attempt to shift the status quo from top-down approaches to one where those at greatest risk are equipped with the power and resources necessary for effective and equitable climate action. Crucially, through national and state leadership, policy and resourcing that strengthens capacity and enables locally-led action to address drivers of risks and vulnerability in place.

Overview: Place-based action on climate justice

Box A Place-based approaches and Principles for Locally Led Climate Change Adaptation

From the perspective of the Victorian Government, a place-based approach is one that works towards systemic, long-term change. Government, local communities, and organisations are brought together to jointly create and implement initiatives that respond to complex, intersecting drivers of inequity in place.[13]

Specific to climate change adaptation, a coalition of over 50 international organisations developed a set of Principles for Locally Led Climate Change Adaptation.[14] An emphasis on local, collaborative spaces to share progress and learnings resonates with the cross-regional and cross-sectoral role of CHCSOs in the west of Melbourne. These Principles include:

- **Devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level:** Increasing direct access to finance and decision-making power for local communities and organisations.

- **Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled, displaced, Indigenous peoples, LGBTIQ+ and marginalised ethnic groups:** An intersectional lens to ensure that communities who experience structural inequities lead adaptation decisions.

- **Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily:** Financing over at least seven years to develop local governance processes and capacity.

- **Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy:** Building the capabilities of local organisations to respond to risks, uncertainties and solutions.

- **Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty:** Integrating a range of knowledges with everyday experiences of climate vulnerability.

- **Flexible programming and learning:** Flexible and robust monitoring and learning systems, financing, and program development.

- **Ensuring transparency and accountability:** The design, financing, and delivery of programs is transparent and accountable to local stakeholders.

- **Collaborative action and investment:** Cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaboration to minimise funding and program duplication, enhance efficiencies, and promote best practice in working with at-risk communities.

Overview: Place-based action on climate justice

Developing a framework for action

Over the past 12 months, the Centre for Just Places has engaged with over 44 community health and community service organisations across five municipalities to identify key networks and organisations; collect data and case studies that amplify community needs; and facilitate opportunities to collectively strategise on advocacy and actions in response.

This work builds on prior collaborations established through an existing project funded by the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, the Hot Spots Initiative, as a model of place-based and cross-sectoral engagement to understand the capacity building needs of government agencies and CHCSOs in supporting communities most vulnerable to extreme heat risk.[15] The purpose of this report is to advance the discussion on defining climate justice (i.e. fairer outcomes as our climate continues to change), and to engage with a broader cross-section of organisations to further understand:

1. What are the localised, systemic drivers of vulnerability for CHCSOs and the communities they work with in the west of Melbourne?

2. What methods and approaches address these systemic drivers of vulnerability and enable strategic opportunities for collaborative action?

In this report, findings are consolidated from several research and consultation methods and processes that were used to inform and develop a place-based Collaborative Action Framework. First, we introduce and define key concepts, frameworks and principles to contextualise climate justice for CHCSOs **(Summary Brief 1)**. Point-in-time data and strategic analyses are used to identify trends, build a profile of demographic and other characteristics, as well as map existing strategies, activities and key gaps in the west of Melbourne **(Summary Briefs 2 and 3)**. Insights from a range of collaborative activities expand these analyses to consider the specific strengths and needs of CHCSOs, and leverage points for shared action **(Summary Briefs 4 and 5)**.

This extensive research and engagement identified a range of different issues and actions that are captured in the Collaborative Action Framework. **(Section 3)** These include place-based knowledge, supports and programs *(Context)*, relevant and evidence-based information flows *(Coordination)*, enabling governance and operational arrangements *(Capacity)*, meaningful engagement *(Communication)*, and integrated planning and processes (Consolidation).

The Collaborative Action Framework is designed to inform short to medium-term planning to align with several processes including Community Health - Health Promotion planning (previously Integrated Health Promotion planning) and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing planning. As well, to enable the strategic input of the sector into other planning processes, such as Victorian Health and Human Services Adaptation Action Plan and the Greater Melbourne Regional Adaptation Strategy.

Overview: Place-based action on climate justice

Notes

[1] Following the review recommendations of the Primary Care Partnerships (PCP) Program in 2020, HealthWest functions were transitioned to the Western Public Health Unit located within Western Health.

[2] IPCC, *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty* (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 55.

[3] VCOSS, *A Climate of Fairness: Making Victoria's Climate Change Transition Fair & Equitable* (Melbourne, 2019), 43-47.

[4] DH and DFFH, *Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–2026* (Melbourne: State of Victoria, 2022), 30-32.

[5] ABS, *Healthcare and Social Assistance Our Largest Industry* (Canberra, 2017), accessed 25 July 2022, https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mediareleasesbyReleaseDate/B611DFF5E8590F8ACA2581BF001F743B?OpenDocument.

[6] "Climate Change and Health." World Health Organization, 2021, accessed 28 June 2022, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health.

[7] IPCC, *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge, UK and New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 716.

[8] World Health Organization, *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health* (Geneva, 2008), 1, https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-IER-CSDH-08.1.

[9] HEAL Network and CRE-STRIDE, *Climate Change and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. Discussion Paper* (Melbourne, 2021), 1, https://www.lowitja.org.au/content/Image/Lowitja_ClimateChangeHealth_1021_D10.pdf.

[10] DELWP, *Victoria's Climate Science Report 2019* (Melbourne: State of Victoria, 2019).

[11] Naomi Rubenstein et al., *Climate Justice on the Frontline: The Role of Community Service Organisations in Adapting to Climate Change* (Melbourne: RMIT University, 2020), 3.

[12] Mary Fox et al., "Integrating Public Health into Climate Change Policy and Planning: State of Practice Update," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 18 (2019), 2, https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16183232.

[13] State Government of Victoria, *A Framework for Place-Based Approaches: The Start of a Conversation about Working Differently for Better Outcomes* (Melbourne, 2020), 9.

[14] Marek Soanes et al., *Principles for Locally Led Adaptation: A Call to Action* (London, UK: IIED, 2021), 5.

[15] "Hot Spots", Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, accessed 1 August 2022, https://bit.ly/3dqWoXi.

Section 2:

Concepts, context and collaboration in Melbourne's west

Summary brief 1:

Concepts and the policy and legislative context informing health equity and climate justice

Considering the role of community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) first requires understanding the complex and multidirectional ways in which social inequities and climate change interact in place to produce climate injustices.

To reduce vulnerability, it is critical to understand and address its multiple and interrelated causes. However, literacy about climate change vulnerability, impacts and adaptation varies across and within CHCSOs. There is also an identified gap in information tailored to CHCSOs and communities; information which is necessary to build capacity.[1]

This brief expands on terminology common to climate change literature, and its application to the role and responsibilities of CHCSOs. It also provides an overview of the Victorian policy and legislative context relevant to these intersections. It does this to first, support organisations in integrating social justice aims with the drivers of and responses to climate change, and second, to engage with the causes of climate change as rooted in social and economic inequities, and understand how these are enacted across time and at different scales – especially within a region as large and diverse as Melbourne's west.[2]

Climate change concepts

Establishing a shared understanding and vocabulary around climate change and social justice starts by acknowledging that the terminology is neither static nor uncontested. This is because definitions, such as vulnerability, can reinforce power imbalances that imply certain groups are helpless and in need of external intervention.[3] That is, who is at risk and who should respond.

A justice orientation emphasises the building of a shared understanding as an inclusive process. More specifically, a shared understanding that is based in place and able to respond to changing needs and diverse voices, account for different scales (household through to the region), and pays attention to both social and ecological systems.[4] Below are key definitions and explanations relevant to understanding and communicating issues of climate change and social justice in relation to CHCSOs.

Risk

Climate change risk is produced through the interactions of hazards (such as heat) with socioeconomic processes (such as governance) which inform exposure (where people live – floodplains, places with high urban heat island effect) and vulnerability (due to inequities across determinants of health such as chronic health conditions or living in poor quality housing).[5] As **Figure 1.1** illustrates, this means socioeconomic processes and governing decisions play a key role in how communities and CHCSOs experience climate-related hazards: where people live, their socioeconomic position, and health status all contribute to climate change risks.
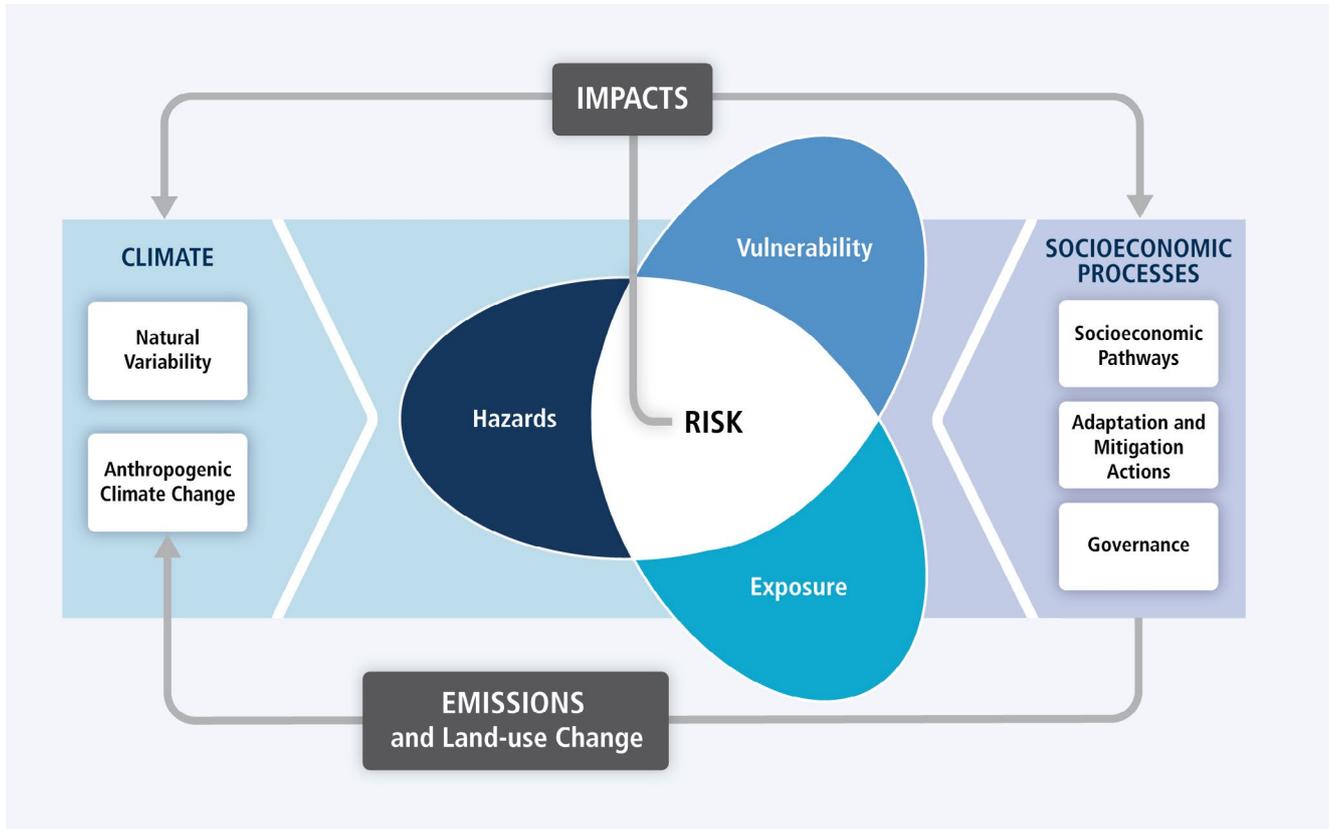
Figure 1.1 Climate change risk framework. Source: IPCC (2014, p. 3).

Vulnerability

Vulnerability refers to the susceptibility of a group, system, place or sector to the negative impacts of climate change. Identifying vulnerable populations and how they can change over time is an important part of public health planning for climate change. Being 'at risk' to climate hazards like heat, for example, is not evenly experienced with certain sub-groups more vulnerable such as the very young, the elderly, the chronically ill, those with disabilities, those who are homeless or rough sleepers, the socially isolated and outside workers.[6]

Changing social, political, economic, and ecological conditions influence the vulnerability of individuals and groups to climate change in place and over time. For example, heat health vulnerabilities can be further exacerbated by bushfires, changes in air quality, the urban heat island effect, power outages affecting air-conditioner usage and so on.

It is important to recognise that while some groups may be categorised as vulnerable, CHCSOs and health authorities need to critically engage with and consult communities to better understand how different groups identify with the categorisation of vulnerability. With some groups not identifying as vulnerable, this can influence their response or take-up of health messaging or information.[7] Another key consideration for CHCSOs is not only identifying and responding to diverse and intersecting community vulnerabilities, but understanding how climate impacts and conditions might also make their services, infrastructure and staff vulnerable.

1: Concepts, policy and legislation

Adaptation

Adaptation describes a process of adjusting to actual or anticipated climate change impacts. For CHCSOs, this includes actions to reduce vulnerability to climate change for their organisations and their communities and adaptation measures that build adaptive capacity over time. This can include plans that address climate change impacts in policy reviews or the development of new programs or advocacy campaigns.

A key consideration is ensuring that adaptation actions do not reinforce – or create – experiences of marginalisation by failing to address questions of justice for individuals and groups. For example, in failing to include a cultural or LGBTIQ+ lens when designing cool spaces for extreme heat events. Adaptation planning and actions to address the drivers of risk and vulnerability across communities and places is a whole of government and cross-sectoral challenge.

Resilience

Resilience can be thought of at the individual level – people's ability to respond to and cope with adverse events or challenges – as well as at the level of community and infrastructure – involving place-oriented approaches to adapting and transforming in response to shocks and stresses.[8] Both require CHCSOs to understand how individuals, communities, and organisations can support each other in times of crisis; understand and address how determinants of safety and wellbeing, such as infrastructure and service connectivity, influence vulnerabilities; and ensure a diversity of participation in decision-making and planning around preparedness and response, resilience building, and adaptation.

The role of the CHCSOs in building community resilience is critical and has always been a core focus of their work. VCOSS have highlighted the importance of focusing on disaster risk prevention and preparation through better connecting the work of CHCSOs and emergency management, where "by leveraging the resources, knowledge, skills of community organisations, the emergency management sector can significantly enhance Victorian communities' resilience before emergencies and disasters strike".[9]

1: Concepts, policy and legislation

Climate justice

Climate change is a social justice issue with climate change unevenly impacting our social and ecological systems. Communities experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation are often most at risk because they have fewer resources to cope, adapt and recover.[10] As we transition to a zero carbon economy, we need to ensure that no one is left behind.

Climate justice brings a human rights lens to the interactions of ecological and social justice, directing attention to the power relations and decision-making processes that produce inequities, and the actions required to shift them – including the work of CHCSOs.[11]

A focus on climate justice therefore reveals that it is largely existing experiences of inequity and injustice that shape the health implications of climate change **(Box 1.1).** Understanding these complex and dynamic factors not only enables CHCSOs to directly support communities, but to work towards climate change responses that are just and inclusive – both now and for generations to come.

There are four key elements to climate justice:

- **Procedural –** acting on the systemic drivers of social, economic, cultural, political, health, and institutional inequity that intersect to position certain groups as vulnerable to climate change

- **Intergenerational –** addressing how drivers of injustice interact over both time and scale to reinforce vulnerability

- **Distributive –** tackling the roots of vulnerabilities in organisational adaptation and mitigation practices and responses, especially for those groups limited in social and economic capital or excluded from decision-making

- **Recognition –** centring the voices and experiences of marginalised groups in climate change responses, requiring actions that respond to multiple and often intersecting drivers of disadvantage.

Box 1.1 Groups most at risk from climate change impacts in Greater Melbourne.

People with disabilities and particular health conditions such as:

- Heart and lung disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer or kidney disease, lymphoedema, fibromyalgia, poliomyelitis

- Certain neurological illnesses (e.g. Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, motor neurone disease)

- Mental illness

- Illness or infection that causes dehydration or fever

- Conditions that impair sweating including dehydration, skin disorders (sunburn, prickly heat, burn scarring), congenital impairment of sweating, cystic fibrosis, quadriplegia, scleroderma

- Addiction to alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs

- Cognitive impairments

- Limited mobility

- Obesity

- Low cardiovascular fitness

People taking medications that may affect the way the body reacts to heat:

- Allergy medicines (antihistamines)

- Some blood pressure and heart medicines (beta-blockers and vasoconstrictors)

- Seizure medicines (anticonvulsants)

- Thyroid medications (thyroxine)

- Water pills (diuretics)

- Antidepressants

- Antipsychotics

People in inequitable social and economic circumstances

- People who are homeless, especially those sleeping rough

- People living in rooming houses, transitional accommodation, cars, caravans, tents, or insecure housing

- People living in public or private social housing

- People with low socioeconomic status who have restricted means of coping with extreme weather

- People who are living alone and/or who are socially isolated

- People with low proficiency or literacy in English (and/or other languages)

- New arrivals and visitors unfamiliar with our climate and/or associated social practices to manage extreme weather

- People exposed to prejudice, discrimination and other systemic barriers such as racism, sexism, ageism and ableism

- People exposed to greater risk of violence such as women and children, drug and alcohol users, people in insecure accommodation or sleeping rough

People outdoors during extreme heat

- Working or being physically active outdoors (e.g. gardeners, athletes and labourers).

This list, from the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action's (NAGA) *Exploring Vulnerabilities Desktop Review* (2021), is based on groups listed in the *Heat Health Plan for Victoria 2021* with the inclusion of further groups from interviews and surveys undertaken by NAGA.

1: Concepts, policy and legislation

Roles and responsibilities in the Victorian policy and legislative context

This section introduces some of the key policies and legislation that inform the roles and responsibilities for CHCSOs in relation to climate change. In Victoria, requirements for collaborative engagement, continuous improvement and preventative responses emphasise the critical role that CHCSOs have to play in supporting the health and wellbeing of their local community in a changing climate.

Legislative context

State level

There are shared but distinct roles and responsibilities for CHCSOs and related organisations in relation to climate change adaptation **(Table 1.1).** [12]

These are largely informed by two legislative frameworks:

• Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic)

• Climate Change Act 2017 (Vic)

The Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 is also listed under schedule 1 of the Climate Change Act 2017. This means that, under the Climate Change Act 2017, state and local governments are required to account for climate change risks in public health and wellbeing planning.[13]

Local level

Local governments must also give effect to a number of governing and supporting principles in performing their role under the Local Government Act 2020 (Vic). Of these, the most relevant to CHCSOs are:

• Giving priority to achieving the best outcomes for current and future generations of the municipal community

• Promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks

• Engaging the municipal community in strategic planning and decision-making

• Pursuing innovation and continuous improvement

• Taking into account regional, state and national plans and policies in strategic planning and decision-making.

Table 1.1. Responsibility for climate change adaptation in the health and human services. Source: DHHS (2019, p. 19)

Entity	Responsibilities in climate change adaptation
Department of Health and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	• Implement the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2017. • Lead on the development and implementation of an Adaptation Action Plan for the health and human services system. • Provide direction and guidance on adaptation to funded agencies. • Ensure that adaptation requirements are incorporated into relevant policy, plans, guidelines and standards. • Ensure that adaptation needs are considered in funding for capital works, operations and services. • Work to minimise the impact of emergencies on the health and wellbeing of communities and individuals, especially those most at risk. • Ensure the community is protected from new and increased threats to health and wellbeing.
Hospitals and health services	**Manage climate change risks to their assets, services, clients, and staff.**
Community service organisations	**Manage climate change risks to their assets, services, clients, and staff.**
Local government	• Manage climate change risks to their assets, services, clients, and staff. • Incorporate consideration of climate change into municipal public health and wellbeing plans. • Facilitate emergency management planning at the local level and coordinates relief and recovery support for affected communities.

1: Concepts, policy and legislation

Policy context

These roles are also mediated by a range of relatively recent policy frameworks. These frameworks include:

Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023

Lead: Department of Health

The Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan is produced every four years as a requirement under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (Vic). It is developed by the Department of Health in consultation with other government agencies, statutory bodies such as VicHealth, and the sector to guide strategic priorities and coordinate action on public health and wellbeing.[15] The plan also informs the Community Health – Health Promotion program which funds mostly community health organisations to deliver prevention and health promotion initiatives.

'Tackling climate change and its impact on health' is a focus area of the 2019-2023 plan, with strategic actions including understanding and assessing the risks of climate change to public health, promoting community adaptation, and assessing the health co-benefits of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022–2026

Lead: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Department of Health

The Victorian Government's 5-year plan to respond to climate change risks in the health and human services system.[16] CHCSOs play a critical role in the implementation of this plan. Not only do many receive core funding from the Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing – which jointly lead the plan – but CHCSOs play a key role in reporting on and responding to changing community needs.

Sector capability is identified as one of three strategic actions in the sector plan, with a focus on place-based climate adaptation, cross-sectoral partnerships, and the development and promotion of targeted resources, tools, and initiatives specific to CHCSOs emphasising the critical role of networks and knowledge sharing to deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

1: Concepts, policy and legislation

Greater Melbourne Regional Adaptation Strategy

Lead: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Outlines 12 strategic action areas for adaptation and resilience building, informed by local communities and stakeholders in Greater Melbourne.[17] The actions respond to major systems elements within Greater Melbourne, and the application of their interactions to reducing climate change impacts.

Building skills and resources, focusing on issues and locations with broader system implications, and supporting at-risk individuals and communities are key areas applicable to CHCSOs. Some priorities relevant to CHCSOs include:

- Capacity building and funding for climate adaptation, particularly targeting at-risk sectors

- Building the resilience and business continuity of community service organisations to minimise disruptions to service delivery

- Shared knowledge and learnings through a Community of Practice (i.e. currently convened by Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places).

Municipal public health and wellbeing planning

Lead: Local Governments

Municipal public health and wellbeing planning is required to respond to the state public health and wellbeing plan to strengthen collaboration between state and local governments. Each council is required to prepare a Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan every 4 years. These plans can be stand-alone (for example, Wyndham) or incorporated into the council strategic plan (for example, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Melton).

All plans for the west include statements about local partners and partnerships. In the 2021 plans, the most common local partners named were the (now redundant) Primary Care Partnerships and community health organisations.[18] Across these plans, indicators relating to the intersections of climate change and health are largely focused on reducing urban heat island effects (including urban greening and conservation activities), reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and community education (see **Summary Brief 3** for further analysis).

Findings and emerging opportunities

While there is support from Victorian legislative and policy frameworks to develop the understanding and capacity of CHCSOs in relation to climate change adaptation and climate justice, there are also critical gaps. Funding for climate change responses decreased in the last state budget, with limited funding to climate change adaptation.[19]

Moreover, many of the policy frameworks have yet to set out implementation processes or report on outcomes. Questions of how the activities of CHCSOs are informing the planning, implementation, and evaluation, including where possibilities for knowledge sharing might exist, are important.

Key findings and considerations:

- **Understanding intersecting risks and vulnerabilities –** There needs to be a shared and evolving understanding of the intersecting and compounding risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change within communities and over time.

- **Potential of maladaptation –** Climate change responses may be maladaptive when they exacerbate experiences of complex intergenerational trauma, socioeconomic disadvantage and political marginalisation, or when they add greenhouse gas emissions or shift the risks to others. For example, in displacing low-income communities through the gentrification that may occur from investment in urban greening initiatives.

- **Building capacities and capabilities –** As place-based organisations, CHCSOs have a key role to play in ensuring that climate change responses address the different risks, opportunities, and capacities in the communities they work with.

- **Co-benefits of public health and climate change adaptation planning –** Proposed changes to Community Health – Health Promotion Guidelines integrate environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation, and health considerations as co-benefits to the focus areas of healthy eating and active living. These guidelines may narrow the scope of climate justice issues addressed by community health in the medium-term.

- **Leveraging existing work –** A heightened focus on sector capability at the state level suggests an opportunity to leverage the existing work of CHCSOs, particularly during the pandemic, to build and invest in sector capability and strengthen the role of CHCSOs in addressing climate change.

Key opportunities:

- **Mechanisms for learning –** Consider mechanisms that leverage the relationships and trust held within CHCSOs to inform sector capability planning around health equity and climate adaptation, particularly at the state level.

- **Strengthen shared understandings –** Strengthen sector understandings of the intersections between health inequities and risks and vulnerabilities to climate change within the west of Melbourne, both at an LGA and regional level.

- **From mitigation and sustainability to adaptation in health prevention and promotion –** Target health protection and health promotion to support communities at greatest risk of climate change, going beyond mitigation and sustainability considerations to include specific guidelines and indicators around climate adaptation.

1: Concepts, policy and legislation

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Summary brief 2:

Profiling climate justice issues in the west of Melbourne

Adopting a climate justice lens in community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) requires a grasp of where climate change and social inequities are experienced – in place.

As the pandemic has shown, in areas with multilayered and persistent disadvantage, crisis conditions mean life and death for certain communities.[1] Brimbank, for example, is Melbourne's second-most disadvantaged LGA and has experienced the highest rates of COVID-19 deaths, disproportionately impacting people from migrant backgrounds.

Over the past decade, rapidly growing population and development intensification have also led to significant shifts in the socio-demographic profile of Melbourne's west, increasing health and climate impacts. Newly urbanised areas in Brimbank, Melton and Wyndham are at high risk from heat waves, intensified by a lack of vegetation cover and socioeconomic factors that undermine people's individual's capacities to stay safe.[2] In addition, a range of health risks, likely to be compounded by rising temperatures, flood and fire risks, and poorer air quality, are projected for the region **(Box 2.1).**

This brief develops a profile of the climate change risks and sociodemographic characteristics of the five LGAs – Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melton and Wyndham – to inform planning, decision-making and the design of collaborative interventions for CHCSOs in the region. Full details about the datasets used are available in **Appendix 1.**

2: Profiling climate justice issues

Box 2.1 Key statistics relevant to climate change implications for health in the west

- Climate change is increasing temperature extremes, increasing the likelihood of hospitalisation and mortality for people with chronic diseases such as diabetes. Areas with low socioeconomic status such as Brimbank and Maribyrnong have avoidable **death rates from diabetes at least 1.5 times higher than the Australian average.**[3]

- Peri-urban and growth areas such has Melton and Wyndham have **higher rates of key precursors to chronic disease**, including being overweight, tobacco usage, and having low rates of exercise,

- Population projections estimate that there will be a **more than 95 percent increase in the number of people aged over 70 by 2031**. In the west, this growth is forecast to be concentrated in Brimbank, Melton, and Wyndham. More than 90 percent of people in this age bracket have **two or more chronic conditions**, with significant implications for health service demands.

- Melbourne recorded **374 and 167 excess deaths** during heatwaves in 2009 and 2014 respectively. Heatwave induced **deaths are expected to more than double by 2050**.[4]

- Climate change is intensifying the allergenic effects of pollens and fungi, and their interaction with air pollution and events such as thunderstorms. Two of Victoria's air pollution 'hot spot' suburbs, Yarraville and Brooklyn, are located in the inner west and rank **seventh and eighth in Australia for air pollution concentrations**.[5] This LGA, Hobsons Bay, also reports respiratory death rates higher than the state and national average.

- Residential land has a relatively **high risk of flood and storm surge events** in the west of Melbourne compared with other land use types. The region has experienced a **flood or storm most years since 2009**.[6] The frequency of such events is projected to rise with climate change, exposing residents to hazards such as floodwater, debris, and damaged buildings and infrastructure resulting from flash flooding.

2: Profiling climate justice issues

Profiling sociodemographic change in the west of Melbourne

A growing working age population

Since 2009, the proportion of younger, working age residents in the west has increased. In 2019, the average age of residents 15 years and over was marginally lower in the west than the rest of Melbourne but with a higher working age population (26 percent versus 18 percent).[7]

This represents a significant shift from a decade earlier. In 2009, residents aged 14 to 24 years held the greatest share of the population (26 percent) and seniors the lowest (7 percent). By 2019, the 25 to 24-year age bracket held the greatest share, suggesting that the youngest cohort are not being replaced at the same rate. However, this distribution is not even across the 5 LGAs, with the proportion of residents aged 65 and over largely concentrated along the coast and areas in the inner west.

An ethnically and culturally diverse population

There is a notable difference in the ethic and cultural diversity of the west relative to other areas in Melbourne and Victoria **(Figure 2.1a)**. More than one third of households in the west are born overseas and largely clustered in Wyndham (Tarneit, Truganina and Point Cook), Maribyrnong (Maribyrnong, Footscray, Braybrook) and across Brimbank.[8] These rates remained consistent in 2009 and 2019.

Relative to metropolitan Melbourne, the west is also home to many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Areas including Wyndham Vale, Melton, Melton West, and Rockbank- Mt Cottrell are home to the largest proportion of Aboriginal community members in the west **(Figure 2.1cb)**.

Uneven improvements in social inequities

The decade between 2009 and 2019 saw overall improvement in educational attainment and occupational status across the west, albeit in selected areas. For residents aged over 25, the proportion with a Bachelor's degree or higher doubled between 2009 to 2019. While the share of people in managerial or professional roles is overwhelmingly higher in inner city and eastern areas of Melbourne, the share of people in leadership roles in the west in the same period increased from 8 percent to 11 percent.

Income levels in the west, however, remain unevenly distributed. The proportion of people in the top 60-80 percent of the wage distribution increased from 14 percent to 20 percent between 2009 and 2019. On the flip side, the share of persons in the bottom 20-40 percent of the wage distribution also increased from 21 percent to 27 percent over the same data period. Middle and outer suburbs have significantly lower income levels than those along the coast **(Figure 2.1c)**,

Rising housing stress

Across the west, home ownership rates remained relatively consistent in 2009 and 2019. Some three-quarters of households are homeowners, with a marginal decrease in those with mortgages in the same time period (from 2.2 percent to 6.6 percent). Over the same timeframe the proportion of public housing tenants in the west fell from 10 percent to around 3 percent, bringing it closer to the share in the rest of Melbourne. Private rental tenure experienced a modest increase during this period, accounting for around 22 percent of all housing tenure in 2019. This may reflect an overall decline in the provision of public housing.

As **Figure 2.1d** highlights, however, the regional pockets outlined above resurface when considering housing affordability. Going beyond cost to income ratios, measures of poverty after housing costs highlight the trade-offs that low-income households face in being able to pay for housing and cover the basic costs of living.
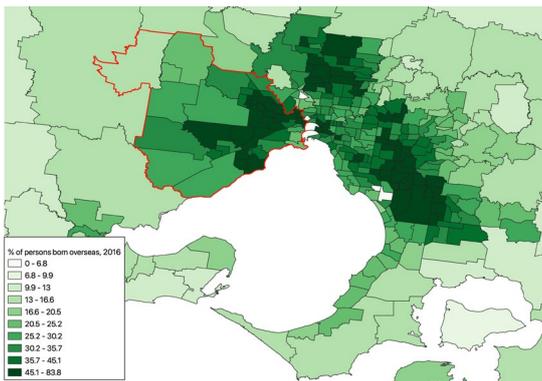
Figure 2.1a. Share of population who are born overseas, 2016. As indicated by the dark green areas, the greatest proportion of people born overseas is in Brimbank, as well as Wyndham (Tarneit, Truganina, Point Cook) and Maribyrnong (Maribyrnong, Footscray, Braybrook).
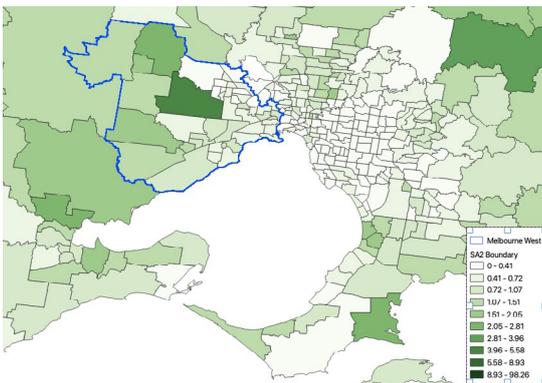
Figure 2.1b. Share of population who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 2016. Melton and Rockbank-Mt Cottrell (darker green areas) have the greatest share of people who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
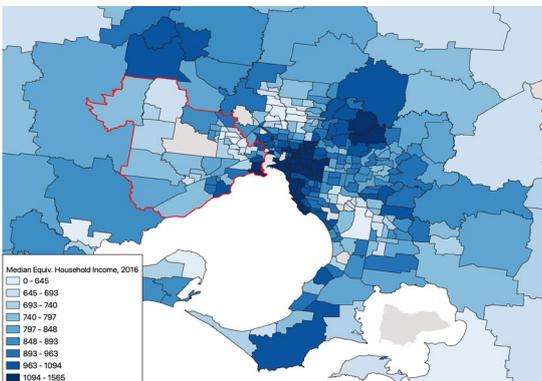
Figure 2.1c. Median equivalised household income by SA2, 2016. Lighter areas on the map signal greater income inequity is largely concentrated in the outer growth areas of Melton and northern pockets of Brimbank.
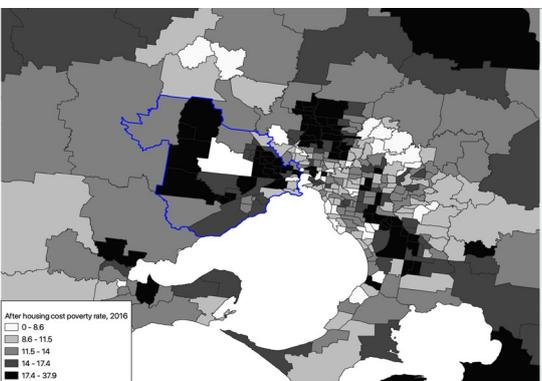
Figure 2.1d. Poverty after housing cost rate, 2016. Black areas on the map indicate areas where households are below the poverty line after paying their housing costs, including much of Brimbank and Melton, as well as Truganina, Altona North, Footscray and Maidstone.

Figure 2.1 Profiling the west of Melbourne. Source: Authors' own illustrations using data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017): SA2-G03 Place of Usual Residence on Census Night by Age-Census 2016 **(Figures 2.1a and 2.1b)** and National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, (2018): NATSEM - Social and Economic Indicators - Synthetic Estimates SA2 2016 **(Figures 2.1c and 2.1d)**.

2: Profiling climate justice issues
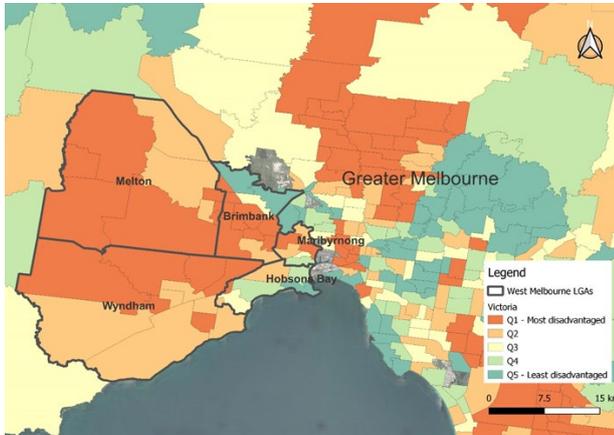
Figure 2.2a. Housing stress
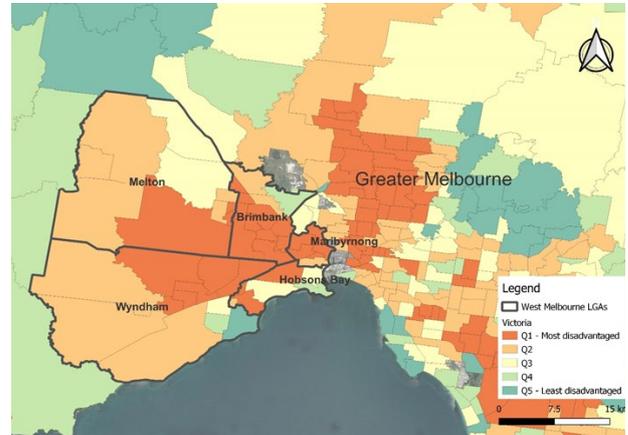
Figure 2.2b. Overcrowding
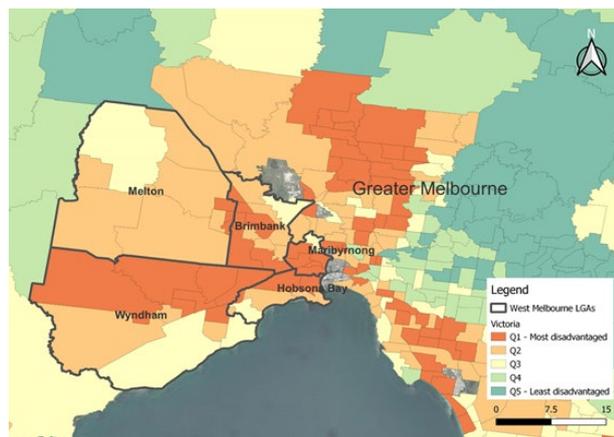
Figure 2.2c. Canopy cover

Figure 2.2 The intersections between housing stress (2.2a), overcrowding (2.2b) and canopy cover (2.2c) in the west of Melbourne. Note the overlapping areas of disadvantage (dark orange) in Brimbank and bordering areas in Wyndham and Maribyrnong. Additional layers at the SA2 level can be accessed at the ***Dropping off the Edge 2021 website.*** Source: Authors' own illustrations using data from *Dropping off the Edge (2021)*

The convergence of social and climate risks

Contextualising some of the underlying drivers of risk and vulnerabilities illustrates that there are a number of issues that converge in this region. Jesuit Social Services' 2021 *Dropping off the Edge* report, which includes over 37 indicators of disadvantage on multiple fronts including environmental risk, shows that this region experiences significant challenges in terms of overcrowding and housing stress.

While environmental factors are often not front of mind when we consider disadvantage, it is clear from the data that there is a strong relationship between poorer quality natural environments (for example, where air pollution is high) and other indicators of disadvantage. There is, for example a strong relationship between heat stress (exacerbated by low levels of canopy cover) and experiences of housing stress and overcrowding in certain areas **(Figure 2.2)**.

For CHCSOs, and the communities themselves, this has critical implications, including:

- The ability to meet existing and future service needs as they are impacted by compounding and cascading events, such as heat waves and the rising cost-of living pressures
- The consequences for health and well-being outcomes and needs in a region that is rapidly growing and diversifying, and where demand for adequate infrastructure and services in outpacing provision.

2: Profiling climate justice issues

Low affordability and appropriateness of housing

Housing affordability and appropriateness of housing interact with climate change and health in many ways. For example, the prevalence of thermally inefficient homes with dark roofs, poor solar orientation, oversized project homes, and small backyards (limited private open space) contribute to more solar radiation being absorbed and less climate efficiency in new housing estates in the west.[9] In turn, there are increased threats to the health of residents from elevated overnight temperatures (strongly correlated with heat related deaths), and from additional costs of having to both cool and heat these homes.

Demand for larger homes in middle and outer growth areas of the west is driving more individuals and families into mortgage and rental stress. The affordability of housing is being worsened by poor transport connectivity, a low density and diversity of housing mix, and inequitable choice in and access to employment opportunities particularly for the significant proportion of residents working in the services and industrial sectors.[10]

Inadequate precinct planning and infrastructure provision

Melton and Wyndham are two of the fastest growing municipalities in Australia. Around 38 percent of all Melbourne's new dwellings are built in growth corridors in these LGAs which is significantly higher than the 30 percent target outlined in the State Government's planning strategy. Melton is predicted to more than double its population by 2051, growing from a forecast of 216,389 in 2022 to 450,823.[11] In these growth areas in particular, housing, employment, health services, transport, and retail are segregated. Consequently, these subdivisions are characterised by high car dependency, shopping centres that offer limited or poor amenity, and relatively low waged employment.

The more recent trend of declining block sizes and increasing densities is driving greater demand for services such as hospitals, schools and transport.[12] Inadequate planning and the mismatch between growth in housing and provision of critical infrastructure is a driver of risk and vulnerability in these areas in the context of climate change.

In terms of biodiversity and ecological damage, this poorly designed urban expansion has led to the decimation of the region's native grasslands, with less than 0.5 percent remaining.[13] Continued degradation and delays in the acquisition of land to develop reserves as offsets for vegetation clearing are also contributing to flood risks, due to the lack of porous ground surfaces to absorb heavy rainfall.

Limited urban green space and canopy cover

Urban greening is often emphasised as a strategy to improve community health, reduce heat stress, and promote social inclusion under a changing climate in the west. This is largely in response to the relatively low canopy coverage and high rates of vegetation clearing. All 5 LGAs have canopy cover lower than the metropolitan average, which means these areas are significantly impacted by the urban heat island effect (see below).

There are, however, few studies that longitudinally examine the health and wellbeing outcomes of urban greening initiatives for communities experiencing disadvantage. That is, evidence to support that the provision of greenspace in the west necessarily translates to better mental and physical health outcomes.[14] For example, despite Brimbank and Maribyrnong having similar levels of accessibility to greenspace, a lower proportion of residents in Brimbank visit greenspaces at least once a week.

2: Profiling climate justice issues

Socioecological 'hotspots'

Modelling from the Clean Air and Urban Landscapes Hub indicates that Brimbank, Melton, Maribyrnong and Wyndham have an average summer urban heat island (UHI) reading 8 to 11 degrees hotter than non-urban areas **(Figure 2.3)**.[15] However, the distribution of these heat effects is geographically uneven. Moreover, higher heat effects seen in areas with high social vulnerability (low levels of economic development), such as St Albans, Tarneit and Altona North. As reporting across a range of socioecological indicators has shown, these 'hotspot' suburbs are largely those with a history of industrial land use, active polluting land-uses, and with ongoing industrial expansion, urbanisation and significant infrastructure projects that further compromise health and wellbeing.[16]

Local Government Area	UHI reading (°C)
Brimbank (C)	10.75
Casey (C)	10.70
Melton (C)	10.70
Moonee Valley (C)	9.63
Whittlesea (C)	9.40
Maribyrnong (C)	9.35
Greater Dandenong (C)	9.26
Hume (C)	9.23
Cardinia (S)	9.22
Moreland (C)	9.20
Wyndham (C)	9.18
Kingston (C) (Vic.)	9.05
Glen Eira (C)	8.63
Darebin (C)	8.53
Monash (C)	8.43
Yarra (C)	8.27
Banyule (C)	8.25
Frankston (C)	8.23
Manningham (C)	7.95
Hobsons Bay (C)	7.94
Melbourne (C)	7.94
Whitehorse (C)	7.93
Stonnington (C)	7.56
Knox (C)	7.52
Boroondara (C)	7.50
Port Phillip (C)	7.40
Bayside (C)	7.36
Maroondah (C)	7.03
Nillumbik (S)	6.68
Yarra Ranges (S)	5.18
Mornington Peninsula (S)	4.66

**Figure 2.3.** 2018 Urban Heat Island reading (°C) by Local Government Area for Greater Melbourne.
Source: Sun et al. (2019, p. 7).

Findings and emerging opportunities

While this analysis shows significant cross-over between indicators across the region, such as housing stress, populations born overseas and heat risks, there are also differences. This data profile does not capture access or availability of physical and social infrastructure and services, for example, how far people have to travel during heatwaves to access affordable or in-language services to stay cool. Those working in such places, such as CHCSOs, can provide more insights into the lived experiences of different communities and ideas for addressing the drivers of heat vulnerabilities.

Key findings and considerations:

- **Improving outcomes –** Analysing point-in-time data shows an improvement in multiple indicators of disadvantage across the west, particularly around educational attainment. This potentially reflects population movements as younger, working professionals have moved to the region.

- **Uneven disadvantage –** Multilayered and persistent disadvantage is apparent across all LGAs, although largely concentrated at the boundaries of Melton, Brimbank, and Wyndham in newly urbanised suburbs, as well as those experiencing industrial and residential expansion.

- **A better understanding of interdependencies is needed –** Point-in-time data does not account for interdependencies between variables nor the lived experience of those represented. For example, this data does not pick up gaps between the reported proximity of services and the cultural appropriateness of services.

- **Impact of COVID-19 –** Lags in datasets do not yet account for the impact of COVID-19 on such trends. In particular, the disproportionate impacts on individuals and communities in the west with job losses, displacement from rising housing costs, and the flow on effects from deferred debt and rising interest rates.

- **Understanding the diversity of communities –** Recognising the diversity of the region is essential for planning for climate justice, in understanding the risks but also the strengths, capabilities, and possibilities of different communities in providing culturally diverse and appropriate responses. For example, the bilingual and bicultural supports offered by ethno-cultural and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

- **Connectivity and accessibility –** The data is also limited in being able to map the connectivity and accessibility of communities, services and supports. For example, the ability of communities in outer growth areas to access greenspaces or other cool spaces during heat waves or the use of certain spaces over others. Further work could be done to provide a more detailed profile of the region to inform planning for climate adaptation and mitigation.

Key opportunities:

- **Place-based indicators of physical and social infrastructure –** Enhance place-based indicators relevant to mapping health inequities and climate risks within the region, bringing in community-based knowledge around the access and availability of physical and social infrastructure.

- **Diversified datasets and evidence –** Diversify datasets and evidence to be relevant to the current and projected impacts of climate change for local communities. For example, the accessibility of bulk-billing doctors or in-language services.

- **Community-led decision-making on climate adaptation –** Create opportunities for people with overlapping experiences of generational, locational and other forms of disadvantage to inform climate change adaptation planning to shape healthy, sustainable futures.

2: Profiling climate justice issues

Notes

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Summary brief 3:

Strategic planning and priorities in the west of Melbourne

Understanding existing strategic planning and priorities across the region can help improve co-ordination and integration of climate action planning to better align the roles and needs of CHCSOs.

This brief synthesises some of the key considerations for CHCSOs within existing strategic planning and priorities identified in the west of Melbourne. It identifies policy and objective alignment, opportunities for collaboration, and illustrate how needs and opportunities in relation to health and climate change are already being actioned.

This synthesis draws from a desktop review of 25 strategic plans and policies for organisations ranging from Australian and Victorian Government departments to government funded advisory groups, local government, not-for-profits, coalitions of organisations, health providers, sporting clubs, community groups and tertiary education institutions.

Because this is based on publicly accessible information, this brief does not claim to capture the full breadth of activities being undertaken in the region, but gives an indication of the extent and direction of activity in Greater Melbourne's west.

The review first looked at plans with a state or regional lens to better understand coordination and collaboration requirements and possibilities, before turning to localised strategies, networks and programs. A selection of the plans reviewed is outlined in **Table 3.1**, with the full details in **Appendix 2**.

Table 3.1 Selection of plans included in the desktop review

Priority	Type of plans	Examples
1	Regional and state level strategic plans	• Western Metropolitan Partnership • West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance • Greater Melbourne Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy • Victorian Health and Human Services Adaptation Action Plan
2	Local plans and strategies related to organisations, specific issues or with more detailed reporting	• Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans • Greening the West Strategy • Strategic plans for local community health organisations, such as GenWest, IPC Health, cohealth and Djerriwarrh Health Services • North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network
3	Related programs, networks, and work that contribute to strategic understandings	• Western Bulldogs Community Foundation's health-focused programs • Networks facilitated by each of the region's councils, such as the Brimbank Social Justice Coalition • Growing Brimbank

3: Strategic planning and priorities

Health and climate

Partnerships or alliances lead the strategic plans and policies reviewed (48 percent). These feature diverse membership, including federal, state and local governments, academic institutions, and CHCSOs. Over half of the strategic plans reviewed have a primary focus on health and wellbeing, with other focus areas including climate and environment, community, economic development or other (homelessness, family violence, gender inequality).

Primary focus on health and wellbeing

Plans and policies with a primary focus on health and wellbeing generally also had a range of actions in other areas. Reflecting priorities under the state public health and wellbeing plan, for example, municipal public health and wellbeing planning had a similar number of initiatives focused on health and wellbeing (31 percent), climate and environment (29 percent) and community (27 percent). Aligned with findings from the Municipal Association of Victoria, most of these plans, however, do not approach the priority of climate change and its impact on health in the same way.[1] One LGA, for example, refers to increasing the number of participants in local conservation activities as addressing the intersection of climate change and health.

The plans and strategies from health providers focused more on improving the existing health system through better integration and coordination of existing services and facilities, and improving youth and mental health outcomes.

Primary focus on climate change or environment

Strategic plans with a primary climate or environment emphasis were much more narrowly focused, with only a handful of initiatives in other areas including transport and connectivity, skills training, health system capacity and access, mental health, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community programs.

Documents from partnerships and alliances were focused most on climate-related actions and strategies including more climate resilient services, housing and infrastructure, landscape greening/heat island reduction and improving climate change education and awareness. Local government plans and strategies had a more diverse spread of actions and strategies, covering climate change (notably emissions reductions, energy efficiency and greening/heat island reduction), health and wellbeing (particularly mental health and family violence) and community (with a particular concentration on community engagement/inclusion and housing affordability).

3: Strategic planning and priorities

Recurring themes in climate and health planning

The climate and environment related initiatives assessed are wide ranging but have a strong emphasis on the built and natural environment. Landscape greening and reducing the urban heat island effect, along with improving the resilience of physical infrastructure to climate change are dominant actions for these strategies **(Table 3.2)**. Strategies focused on health and wellbeing, emphasise mental health and increasing health system capacity and access are a key focus **(Table 3.3)**. Highlights of a few key initiatives in the west are described in **Boxes 3.1 to 3.3** below.

Table 3.2 Climate and environment focus - initiatives by type

Type of Initiative	Number
Landscape greening/heat island reduction	11
Climate resilient housing and buildings	7
Climate adaptation	6
Emissions reduction/zero emissions	6
Energy efficiency	6
Climate impact on health	5
Waste management and recycling	5
Climate education/awareness/engagement	5
Climate resilient infrastructure (transport and utilities)	4
Air quality	4
Water conservation and quality	4
Climate resilient services	3
Renewable energy	3

Table 3.3 Health and wellbeing focus - initiatives by type

Type of Initiative	Number
Mental health	12
Health system capacity and access	11
Youth health	8
Family violence	7
Health system integration/coordination	5
Health workforce training	2

3: Strategic planning and priorities

Box 3.1 Greening the West: The power of collaboration

Greening the West was established as a partnership in 2013 to tackle the lack of quality open spaces and urban greenery in the west of Melbourne, and the impacts on community health and wellbeing. In 2020, the initiative released the **Greening The West Strategy (2020-25)** which sets out eight goals and targets to guide partners towards a collective vision of "sustainable, liveable, healthy communities through urban greening."[2]

Barriers to achieving this include the need to demonstrate return on investment, an absence of private open space, limited knowledge of appropriate vegetation for the diversity of environments in the west, and the siloing of different urban greening projects.

Led by a steering committee consisting of representatives from Local and State Government agencies, network committees, industry associations, and community groups, the strategy outlines four strategic directions to achieve these collective goals and overcome their challenges:

- Planning for community health and wellbeing benefits of public open space

- Advocating for policy and institutional change around long=term funding

- Communicating, connecting and educating around the value of urban greening

- Promoting collaboration and securing commitment across LGA borders and organisations.

Box 3.2 Growing Brimbank: A deeper understanding of place

Growing Brimbank is a long-term collaboration between Victoria University's Mitchell Institute and Brimbank City Council to examine place-based risks to health, wellbeing and education. The program has released a series of reports examining in-depth key social indicators for the City of Brimbank, with the aim of preventing and reducing chronic conditions that affect the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of Brimbank residents.[3]

Research carried out by the Growing Brimbank program has contributed to a deeper understanding of characteristics of the west of Melbourne that will be affected by climate

change and will contribute to the region's ability to adapt to it. This includes:

- Analysing **changes in health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people** from 2006-2016

- Evaluating the **outcomes of health and education programs and service delivery** at the system, local and individual levels

- Mapping the **distribution, availability and contribution of physical and social infrastructure** for health and education outcomes in the community.

3: Strategic planning and priorities

Box 3.3 cohealth: Tackling the causes of health inequities

cohealth explicitly recognises the impacts of climate change on health, and that the greatest impacts are felt by people already facing disadvantage. In its current strategic plan, cohealth emphasises the importance of identifying the key drivers of health inequity, and the need to advocate for reform based on the best available evidence, "including the lived experience of our communities."[4]

In May 2022, cohealth released a **Climate change and health position statement** with a commitment to reducing their organisational carbon footprint, building community capacity and resilience, educating staff and service delivery partners on the impacts to cohealth's clients and operations, and advocating to all levels of government on the need for policies and programs that equitable address climate change impacts and hazards.[5] Key asks of the Victorian Government include:

• Building the capacity of the health and community services sector through the Health and Human Services Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026 to ensure service continuity, client and workforce safety, and continuity of care

• Providing financial investment and appropriate resourcing to groups experiencing disadvantage to ensure they remain healthy in a changing climate.

3: Strategic planning and priorities

Findings and emerging opportunities

From this rapid review, it is clear that there are a wide range of activities and planning being undertaken to directly or indirectly improve the region's ability to cope better with the diverse impacts of climate change. However, at a local level, there are few policies and plans explicitly focused on the impact of climate change on health services in the west, as well as the capacity and capabilities of this sector to support those most at risk.

Key findings and considerations:

- **Comprehensiveness of municipal public health and wellbeing planning –** Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans (MPHWPs) are the most comprehensive in tackling intersecting issues around climate change, health and wellbeing and community resilience. This reflects the need for councils to respond to the priorities of state public health and wellbeing planning regarding climate change and health.

- **Municipal focus on sustainability and mitigation –** Across the MPHWPs, key focus issues include the need to reduce emissions, increase landscape greening to reduce heat island effects and increase amenity, improve waste management and recycling, and achieve more climate resilient housing and buildings. The three plans that explicitly mentioned climate change adaptation did so in the context of noting a separate climate change emergency or adaptation plan.

- **Health priorities in municipal planning –** Other focus areas in municipal planning include the need to improve mental health, reduce family violence, increase community engagement and inclusion (particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse communities), and improve housing security.

- **Omission of climate change from health system strategies –** Health providers are focused on improving the existing health system through better integration and coordination of existing services and facilities, and improving youth and mental health.

- **Alignment between strategies –** Strategies and plans for the region have been developed by national, state, regional, and community organisations. Scale is therefore a critical consideration when thinking about the balance between addressing people's immediate health and wellbeing needs and tackling the roots of climate injustice.

Key opportunities:

- **Understand the direct and indirect impacts of climate change –** Increase awareness and explicit recognition of the indirect impacts of climate change, particularly the links between climate risks and physical and mental health, domestic and family violence, and disadvantaged communities. For example, the health implications of rising energy costs.

- **Build on existing networks and collaborations –** Apply a climate justice lens to build on existing cross-regional and cross-sectoral activities such as emissions reduction, urban development,

landscape greening, public transport, housing, disaster risk reduction, adaptation and resilience, and community engagement and inclusion to strengthen coordination and regional outcomes.

- **Prioritise mutually reinforcing goals –** Make explicit how priority objectives for health and wellbeing link with climate justice. For example, increasing the stock of affordable housing and buildings well adapted to climate change has the advantage of reducing emissions, improving health and wellbeing, and reducing energy costs.

3: Strategic planning and priorities

Notes

[1] MAV, *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans 2021–2025: Report* (Melbourne, 2022), 6.

[2] Greening the West Steering Committee, *A Regional Approach to Delivering Community Health and Wellbeing: Strategic Plan 2020-2025* (Melbourne, 2020), iv, https://greeningthewest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GTW-StrategicPlan2020-2050-v23.pdf.

[3] "Growing Brimbank," Mitchell Institute, Victoria University, accessed 30 August 2022, https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/community-intiatives/growing-brimbank.

[4] Cohealth, *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* (Melbourne, 2019), 14, https://www.cohealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/cohealth-Strategic-Plan-2019-2023.pdf.

[5] Cohealth, *Position Statement: Climate Change and Health* (Melbourne, 2022), 6-7, https://www.cohealth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/cohealth-climate-change-and-health-position-statement-May-2022.pdf.

Summary brief 4:

Organisations, networks and collaborations at the intersection of health and climate justice

Understanding opportunities for collaborative action first requires identifying how community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) and related organisations are already connected to one another.

This brief synthesises insights from consultation with organisations relevant to health equity and climate change adaptation, such as CHCSOs, local and state government departments, water authorities, philanthropic funders, and community centres. Through an online survey, interviews, and participation in the development of a social network analysis (SNA) map, existing relationships between organisations were explored, and challenges and barriers to collaboration identified. This consultation process revealed potential opportunities to: a) leverage existing collaborations and information flows to build more diverse networks; b) draw on specific expertise, and c) understand different ways in which the health and community services sector might collaborate for climate justice.

Insights from survey and interview responses

Twenty-eight interviews, including with 14 of the 24 survey respondents, provided insights into the nature of collaborative relationships and knowledge areas in the west. It should be noted that the survey and interview responses reflect only a selection of the networks and connections. From this analysis, three key themes around collaborative relationships on climate justice emerged: competing organisational priorities, an authorising environment for collaboration and capacity for climate justice.

Competing organisational priorities

Most CHCSOs are already familiar with working across intersecting issues and sectors, including issues exacerbated by the impacts of climate change such as housing stress, food security, and poverty. Yet for most, climate change impacts and climate justice are not seen as an organisational core focus. Where it was a focus area, the issues were often framed through an emergency management lens. For the limited few CHCSOs engaged in climate justice, action is largely driven by organisational or sector champions:

> *"...with all these collaborations, if it's not your core business, then it's about whether the individual has a particular interest in this or not, without a dedicated person focused on it."*

Existing participation in multiple collaborative networks and partnerships limits the capacity of many CHCSOs for further collaborative work. The impact of COVID-19 also continues to draw attention and momentum further away from issues of climate justice. For the majority, however, the actions and responses enabled through COVID-19 were key to thinking about climate justice:

> *"How do we make climate change and the impacts of climate change that are coming a priority? When we've got other priorities, like people homeless and mental health and health and alcohol and drugs. That's the challenge for us."*

4: Organisations, networks and collaborations

An authorising environment for collaboration

CHCSOs and aligned organisations have diverse strengths that can be utilised for collaboration. Community organisations have grass roots connections and knowledge, while local councils and other larger organisations have the ability and capacity to convene diverse stakeholders and partners. Without an 'authorising environment', however, collaborative work is often stalled:

> "[T]he governance arrangements need to be bedded down. Who's paying for what needs to be bedded down. Who's managing what? So we can know what we're all doing… there could be a lot of efficiency gains by clarifying those different collaborative arrangements."

Factors identified as supporting collaboration included clear collaborative priorities, a shared vision and goals, and relevant terms of reference. Having a shared vision, such as energy efficient housing or heat health, allows for a diversity of contributions while enabling joint action and asks **(see Box 4.1)**:

> "…I think having that shared goal has made it a lot easier. Housing is sort of the bread and butter of a lot of social welfare organisations. And environmental organisations see housing as a great potential for reducing emissions and helping the environment."

Creating an authorising environment for collaborative decision-making requires diverse perspectives and processes to ensure underrepresented voices are included in decision-making. This includes equal partnership with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations:

> "in any relationship, we need to ensure that all groups are there; all groups are represented… diversity is what I'd be looking for, when I set up a relationship or whether I'm part of one. [It's] not just what it's about, but actually who's at the table."

Lack of dedicated resourcing for action on climate justice

Capacity to take part in collaborative work depends on adequate resourcing (staff time and funding). Organisations often overlap in their focus, the locations in which they work, and the cohorts they engage. Services and approaches should be complementary and not duplicate existing work. For many, this suggests the need for a dedicated facilitator or convenor to translate sector interest into action:

> "…capacity is a key challenge. [Collaboration] takes time and effort. And it takes resources to manage…there is a great deal of goodwill amongst [participating organisations] to collaborate. But everybody's busy. Everyone has a full board of work."

While climate change and issues of climate justice may be recognised in some organisational functions (i.e. strategic plans), there are gaps between this recognition and resourced programs. A reliance on project-based funding means that many CHCSOs are already limited in the ability to secure adequate and ongoing resourcing for their core objectives. The need for dedicated resources for climate related work was suggested, rather than adding onto already stretched workloads and budgets. This resourcing need could be supported through the inclusion of climate justice considerations and planning in organisational strategy and guiding documents, as well as budget and funding bids.

4: Organisations, networks and collaborations

Box 4.1 The Hot Spots Initiative: Place-based collaboration on heat and health

Through their **Hot Spots Initiative**, the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation supports CHCSOs, local government and emergency services to raise awareness around the health impacts of heatwaves. Since 2018, the initiative has enabled cross-sectoral collaboration in areas of Melbourne with high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage and higher temperatures during heatwaves.

Through Hot Spots Brimbank, IPC Health, along with partners such as Brimbank City Council, have worked to:

- Increase community awareness around the health impacts of extreme heat

- Co=design **relevant and culturally appropriate information materials and resources** specific to the needs of the Brimbank community

- Strengthen **cross-sectoral collaboration, knowledge sharing, and community resilience** around the effects of extreme heat.

Outcomes of this work have not only informed the place-based model used through this Collaborative Action Plan but the funding of new projects to increase sector capacity and the climate resilience of residents most at-risk. This includes:

- Leveraging the relationships, responsiveness, and expertise of neighbourhood houses to building climate resilience (Project lead: Network West)

- Providing residents in an urban 'hotspot' with opportunities to participate in residential greening initiatives (Project lead: Kororoit Creek Neighbourhood House).

4: Organisations, networks and collaborations

Mapping relationships and links between CHCSOs

Surveys and interview responses were used to inform a social network analysis (SNA) of CHCSOs and related organisations working in the west. SNA is a method used to identify the actors within a network as well as their various roles, connections, and relationships with other actors in the network. Here, it was used as a tool to better understand key stakeholders supporting healthy and resilient communities in the context of climate change, as well as the nature of and structure of their existing relationships. Insights from these tools and shared priorities for action are detailed in this brief across four key areas of investigation:

• Formal collaboration for core services

• Formal collaboration for climate change, heat health, and related work

• Formal information sharing for core services

• Formal information sharing for climate change, heat health, and related work.

From the responses, we developed four maps to visually represent the network of organisations in relation to each relationship characteristic. As an example, **Figure 4.1** illustrates the formal collaboration between 28 organisations around climate change adaptation and/or heat health. Organisations with the greatest number of connections (such as Local Government 3) sit closer to the centre of the circle, and those with the least on the outside. Those organisations closer to the centre are also more likely to have roles funded for climate justice related work or staff within the organisation championing this work. As well, they are geographically located in areas with well-defined priorities around climate justice, such as the health impacts of heatwaves on low-income communities. A summary of findings across the four areas of inquiry are summarised in **Table 4.1.**

4: Organisations, networks and collaborations

Table 4.1 Summary of network mapping findings across the four lines of inquiry.

Formal collaboration for core services	Formal collaboration for climate change, heat health, and related work
• Local government and neighbourhood houses are well-connected to community health and/or community service organisations, as well as those managing determinants of health (e.g. water authorities). • Because of the connectedness of local governments, organisations and coalitions who are well connected to local government have the potential for larger and more diverse reach across the network. • Questions of how to consider catchments and how to work together are evident here. This is largely due to the sharing of clients and cohorts across LGAs, and participation in networks beyond the five LGAs of interest. For example, considering the role of peak bodies in having unique expertise but not being located within the west of Melbourne.	• Community health organisations are more engaged in work that considers the intersections of health equity and climate change than community service organisations. • More community health organisations than community service organisations are involved in formal collaborations on climate change - this is potentially the result of the policy and legislative context in Victoria, which sets out a clear focus on health and climate change. • Community health and community service organisations are very well connected. However, participation in formal collaboration on climate change is largely directed by project-based funding/partnership opportunities or the personal interest of staff members.
Formal collaboration for core services	**Formal collaboration for climate change, heat health, and related work**
• Funders (state and local government departments, Primary Health Networks, philanthropy etc) were named as key stakeholders that several organisations shared information with. • Information sharing with funders is generally for the purpose of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting for accountability.	• As with information sharing for core services, funders play a central role in information sharing on climate change related work. • Several organisations (community health and local government) are already playing a bridging role between organisations. Specifically, those with roles funded for work that considers the intersections of climate change impacts and health equity.

4: Organisations, networks and collaborations

Legend:

- Community health
- Local Government
- Community service organisation
- State Government
- Water Authority
- Neighbourhood house / learning centre
- Universities
- Peak body / network
- Unique in this network – not above categories: social housing, community organisations (unspecified), developers (unspecified), funding bodies (unspecified)
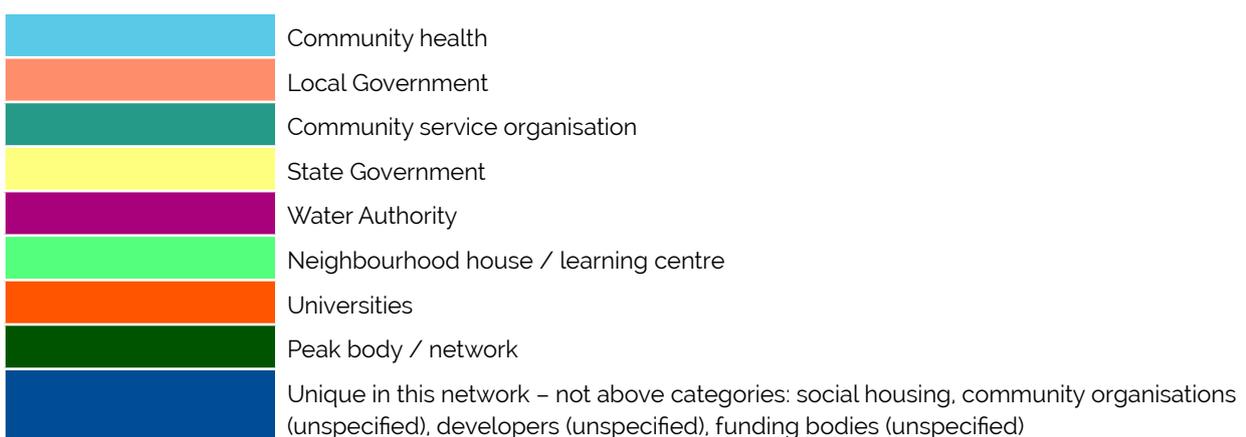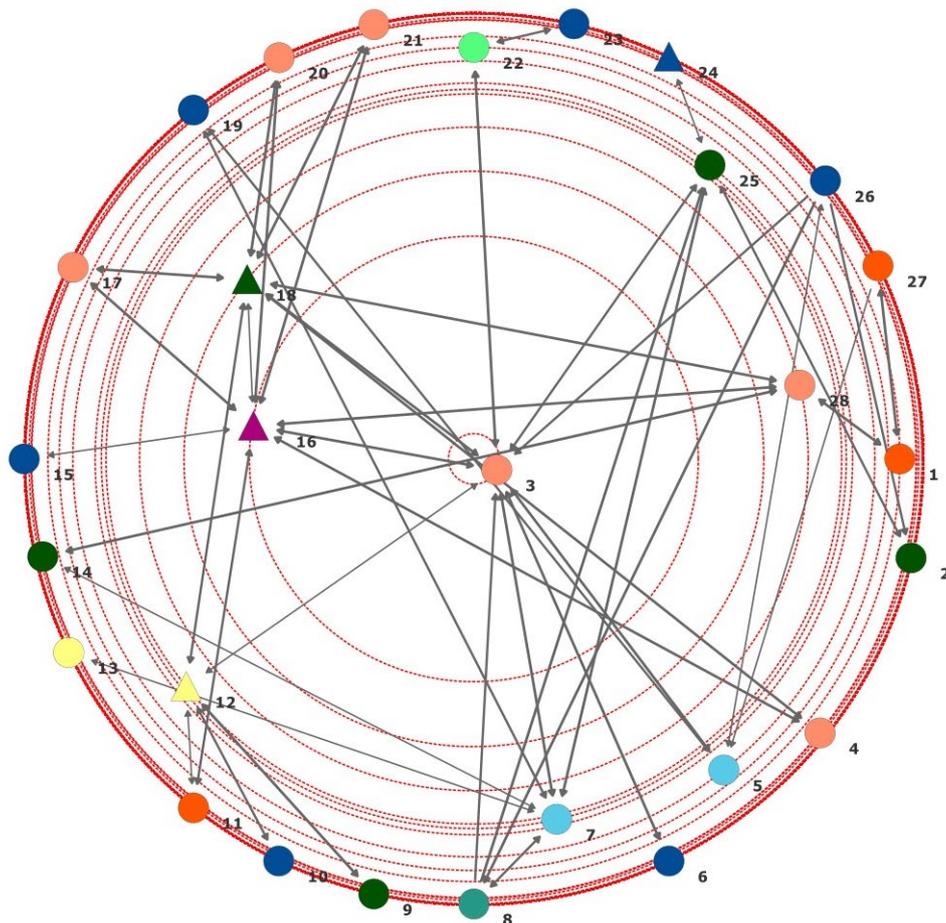
Figure 4.1 Mapping formal collaboration on heat health and/or climate change adaptation.

In this example, triangle nodes represent stakeholders with core functions in environment, energy, land, water, and planning (excluding local government, as their core functions also relate to health and wellbeing), with all other CHCSOs depicted as circles. Organisations with greater resourcing, connections, and priorities related to collaborating on climate justice sit closer to the centre of the circle. Source: Authors' representation based on survey and interview responses.

4: Organisations, networks and collaborations

Findings and emerging opportunities

What the surveys, interviews, and SNA analysis reveal is that CHCSOs have many unique connections and potential for diverse collaborations when shaping actions for climate justice. Leveraging the significant relationships held within certain organisations towards engagement and mobilisation around climate justice has several key considerations:

Key findings and considerations:

- **Organisations recognise the need for action –** There is recognition of climate change issues by organisations and an appetite to work collaboratively in different spaces, not just with organisations with the same core focus areas. However, there are gaps between this recognition and the resourcing and capacity to implement programs.

- **Bridging organisations –** Those organisations (including local governments, community health organisations, and neighbourhood houses) with funded roles for climate justice related work (dedicated roles or project-based roles) are the most connected in the climate justice space, and play a bridging role in sharing information on climate change related work.

- **Role of local government –** Local governments play a key role as connecting organisations. Organisations and coalitions who are well connected to local governments have the potential for larger and more diverse reach across the region.

- **Distribution of activities –** a focus on the intersections of climate change and health equity are more realised in the community health than the community services sector, where very little activity was identified. This could be influenced by existing and previous projects, such as the Hot Spots Initiative, led by community health organisations in the west.

- **Enabling environment –** More health organisations reported being involved in formal collaborations on climate change than community service organisations – this is potentially the result of the policy and legislative context in Victoria, which sets out a clear focus on health and climate change.

- **Catchment area –** Many CHCSOs (and the clients and cohorts they work with) work across LGA borders and in areas outside the currently defined region of the 'west of Melbourne'. In addition, many CHCSOs that hold expertise in the climate justice space are not based in 'the west of Melbourne'.

Key opportunities:

- **Support dedicated resources for climate related work –** Collaborative work on climate justice in the west can be supported through the inclusion of climate justice considerations and planning in organisational strategy and guiding documents, and the allocation of dedicated resourcing from state and local governments in particular.

- **Strengthen information sharing to facilitate learning –** Ensure that projects and initiatives are coordinated and complimentary across the sector, and learnings shared and distributed. so

that others can learn and benefit from them (i.e. avoid reinventing the wheel).

- **Work in ways that reflect shifting geographies of the west –** There are benefits and constraints of working in particular geographic areas in collaborative work. Opportunities to join up information sharing, capacity building around adaptation planning and advocacy campaigns may be useful at a wider scale, while more targeted community-led approaches are better implemented at a local scale.

Summary brief 5:

Co-designing priorities and actions for climate justice

Identifying shared priorities and mobilising collective action requires an innovative, systems approach to ensure that the actions are as diverse as the region itself.

Tackling climate injustice calls for an approach that draws on local knowledge and experience, strengthens local capacity and capability, while also transforming the wider systems within which this activity operates.[1] This multi-pronged approach is necessary to ensure that collective actions represent the diversity, needs, strengths, and vulnerabilities of community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) and the communities with whom they work.

This brief outlines a range of priorities and calls to action collectively determined by CHCSOs and related organisations working in the west of Melbourne. These were gathered using a group model building process that guided participants to collectively form a shared understanding of the drivers of a complex problem. A causal loop diagram, or systems map, was developed by the group as a tool to visualise these drivers and the feedback loops that connect them to identify opportunities for action.

Reflecting the action orientation of this plan, two group model building workshops and an action forum were held between March and May 2022. The two workshops aimed to explore a key issue identified through the preceding research: *How can our organisations (the health and community services sector) collectively strengthen capacity to mobilise and support climate justice in the west of Melbourne?* A summary of the process, as well as prioritised actions identified through the action forum is outlined in **Figure 5.1**. Note that these priorities reflect those of the workshop participants, and should be considered a starting point to engage a wider range of organisations.

Visualising collective priorities

Facilitated by Deakin University's Global Obesity Centre, two online workshops invited contributors to develop a causal loop diagram to identify the evolving drivers of climate (in)justice. Participants were invited to reflect on the specific climate impacts, communities, and health determinants relevant to climate justice in the west **(Figure 5.2)**. The seven nodes in the diagram below (shown as coloured boxes) represent these factors. Arrows between the factors illustrate the ways that they interact with one another. For example, when organisational leadership increases, so too does organisational ownership of climate justice (solid arrow). As well, when organisational leadership increases, the impacts of climate change on staff decrease (dotted arrow).

The third event and culminating event, an action forum, brought more than 30 organisations together in person to brainstorm, prioritise, and share action ideas based on the causal map developed in the previous workshops. Against the seven priority factors influencing collective capacity, participants mapped their understanding of where work is currently happening, where it is important to act, and where there is power to act **(Table 5.1)**.

Together, the group then prioritised 45 action ideas, with a further 21 ideas collected at the end of the session. These 66 ideas were then grouped into 8 types of action areas defined by the Deakin facilitators, with participants invited to sign up to areas that aligned with their expertise, interest, and capacity **(Table 5.2).** The full range of actions identified by participants can be found in **Appendix 3.**

5: Co-designing priorities and actions

Workshop 1:
Factors influencing ability to take collective action

Building evidence
Awareness of evidence-based actions and how to share resources and knowledge

Organisational ownership
Internal leadership, staff resourcing and strategic planning

Accountability to community
Consistent leadership and grassroots action

Advocating and acting for climate justice
Shared understanding and structural advocacy to address social determinants

Developing shared a understanding
Indirect impacts and messaging to inform shared understandings of climate justice

Working with community
Engagement, community awareness, and government leadership on climate justice

Workshop 2:
Priority gaps and community needs for CHCSOs operating in the west

Priority cohorts
· People living in low socio-economic areas
· Young people
· People with low English language proficiency and / or literacy

Key determinants
· Housing (safe, secure, affordable, appropriate)
· Cost of living as it intersects with the transition (energy etc.)
· Access to services and supports

Localised impacts
· Mental health (low base, cumulative and compound impacts)
· Physical health (especially respiratory disease)
· Food systems and food security

Workshop 3 (Action Forum):
Articulating a shared vision and collective priorities for action on climate justice

Physical infrastructure improvement

Organisational capacity

Organisational change

Community support and education

Information flow

Community organising

Advocacy

Communications

**Figure 5.1** Process to develop shared priorities for collaborative action.
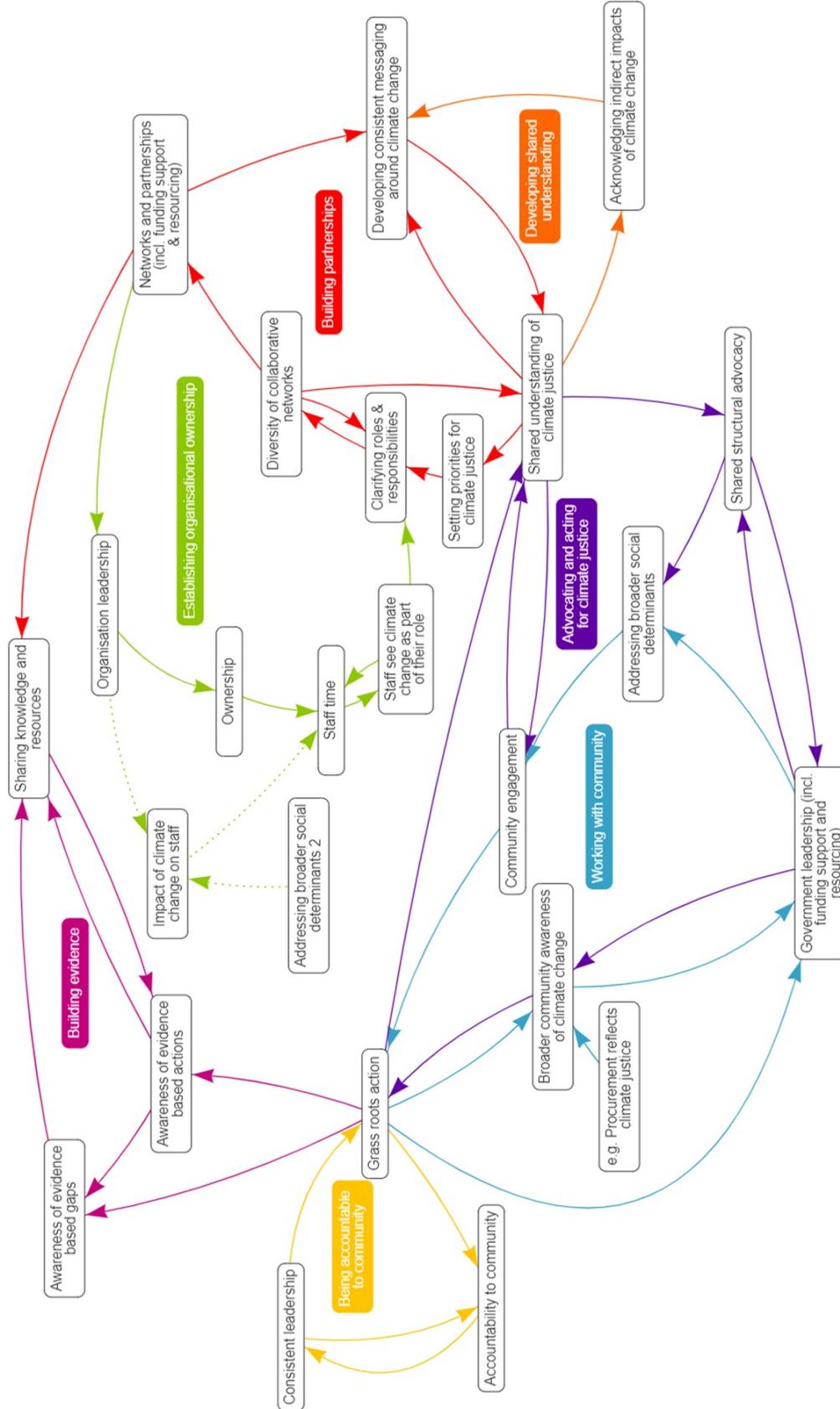
Figure 5.2. Causal loop diagram of factors influencing ability to take collective action. Source: Collective illustration facilitated through Deakin University's **STICKE2 systems mapping application.**

Table 5.1 Summary of participants' perceptions of where work on climate justice is happening, where it is important to act and there is power to act. Participants at the action forum annotated the causal loop diagram according to their understandings of current climate justice activities in the region. These responses were then collated to show where the group perceived the greatest activity (dark green) through to the least activity (dark orange). Blank spaces indicate areas where no response was recorded.
Source: Brown, Poorter and Walker (2022, p. 16).

Factor	Description	Current work	Importance to act	Power to act
Advocating and acting for climate justice	Addressing broader social determinants	[dark green]	[light green]	
	Government leadership (incl. funding support and resourcing)		[light orange]	[light orange]
	Shared structural advocacy	[orange]	[orange]	[orange]
Being accountable to community	Accountability to community	[orange]	[light orange]	
Building evidence	Awareness of evidence-based actions			
	Awareness of evidence-based gaps	[light green]		[light green]
	Sharing knowledge and resources	[light orange]		[orange]
Building partnerships	Diversity of collaborative networks	[dark green]	[light orange]	[light orange]
	Networks and partnerships (incl. funding support & resourcing)	[orange]	[orange]	
Developing shared understanding	Acknowledging indirect impacts of climate change	[orange]		[light green]
	Consistent messaging around climate change	[dark green]	[green]	[green]
	Shared understanding of climate justice			[orange]
Establishing organisational ownership	Impact of climate change on staff			[orange]
	Organisation leadership	[light orange]		
	Ownership	[dark green]	[orange]	
	Staff see climate change as part of their role	[orange]		[light orange]
	Staff time	[orange]		[orange]
Working with community	Broader community awareness of climate change	[dark green]		[light orange]
	Community engagement	[light orange]	[light orange]	[light green]
	Procurement reflects climate justice			[orange]
	Grassroots action	[light orange]	[light green]	

5: Co-designing priorities and actions

Table 5.2 Summary of action areas and sign-ups from the 33 participating organisations at the action forum based on their expertise, interest, and capacity. Source: Brown, Poorter and Walker (2022, p. 16).

Action area	Sign-ups	Interested organisations – by type
Community organising	9	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Peak bodies Community service organisations Community health organisations Funding bodies
Communications	8	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Peak bodies Local government State government agencies Community health organisations
Community support and education	8	Local Government Funding bodies State government agencies Water Authority
Organisational capacity	5	Community service organisations Funding bodies Water Authority State Government agencies
Physical infrastructure improvement	5	Local Government Peak bodies Water Authority Community health organisations
Advocacy	4	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation State Government agencies Community health organisations Funding bodies
Information flow	3	Community service organisations State Government agencies
Organisational change	2	Local Government State Government agencies

5: Co-designing priorities and actions

Leverage points for action

What emerges from this process is that there are clear priorities where organisations feel they can best drive collaborative action – both in terms of short-terms goals and building momentum for bigger actions. This has a few implications for collaborative work on climate justice.

First, there is a question of quality. That is, in being clear exactly how that action contributes to systemic change. Advocacy, for example, was a source of frustration for many CHCSOs, with years-long reporting on community and organisational need not reflected in budgeting asks. This was reflected in the 'action' orientation of many to drive change from the grassroots level up.

Second, there is a need to make explicit how actions might complement or reinforce each other. Few organisations had detailed policies and procedures around climate justice – or emphasised this as a priority – yet the need for capacity strengthening, organisational leadership and resourcing was one of the shared priorities for action.

Finally, it is important to consider which actions might allow for the 'quick wins' necessary to make larger actions possible. Action areas with more sign-ups, such as community organising, or with already engaged and highly connected organisations, such as neighbourhood houses and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, are a strong starting point. This is due to the depth of their relationships in the community, the clarity of their asks in relation to changing community needs, and the ability of their organisations to respond to these priorities.

Key questions to be explored further in the next phases of collaboration include:

- In taking a systemic approach, where might it be more effective to act?

- Which elements of the climate justice problem are we addressing? Which have the greatest opportunity for leverage?

- What does the evidence tell us about the effectiveness of this action area?

- To what extent is the group committed and resourced to acting in this area?[2]

5: Co-designing priorities and actions

Findings and emerging opportunities

This brief captures one way in which a coalition of organisations was able to identify and prioritise actions using a group model building process. This process enabled organisations to visualise a range of factors that they perceived or understood to be influencing their ability to act on climate justice.

As highlighted in the mapping exercise and through the process of identifying shared priorities, a number of key findings and opportunities for action emerged:

- **The need to address the drivers of risk and vulnerability –** Without addressing the social determinants of health that affect local communities, climate justice is not possible. Mobilising climate justice requires addressing equity across determinants of health and wellbeing for individuals and communities, as well as building the capacity of organisations to support communities including during times of crisis.

- **The need to learn from and involve diverse knowledge and experiences –** Developing a shared understanding of intersections between 'climate change' and 'health and wellbeing' was identified as needing further work. This means ensuring a diverse and inclusive process so that a wide range of communities and organisations have the ability to contribute to these understandings. This includes thinking about how to develop different governance models and strategies to engage under-represented groups.

- **The need for evidence-based and accountable actions –** Action on climate change must be evidence-led and transparent. This requires CHCSOs and the community alike to have the resources and ability to access funding, training and information to enable them to measure and track the impacts of their activities.

- **Lead by example –** Failure to embed strategies and actions on climate change and responses within operational and budgeting processes will mean that climate justice issues are not integrated into core business. In order to lead by example, organisations need to be resourced to enable their staff to consider climate change within their roles and responsibilities.

- **Strengthening connections between organisations and services –** CHCSOs do not work in isolation and as community need grows, so too does the importance of clear and reliable referral pathways for support. In turn, this requires evidence to map and communicate this institutional knowledge and social infrastructure.

- **Value the role of the community sector in building resilient communities –** Now more than ever, CHCSOs play a critical role in responding to the intersecting challenges of extreme weather, health and wellbeing, and cost-of-living pressures. Funding and governance arrangements should reflect the value of this, particularly for frontline staff who often act as intermediaries between the community and government.

5: Co-designing priorities and actions

Notes

[1] VCOSS, *A Climate of Fairness: Making Victoria's Climate Change Transition Fair & Equitable* (Melbourne, 2019), 43-47, https://vcoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/A-Climate-of-Fairness-2019-with-footnotes-web.pdf.

[2] Andrew Brown, Jaimie Poorter and Troy Walker, *Mobilising Climate Just and Resilient Communities in Melbourne's West Report: Workshops & Action Forum* (Melbourne: Deakin University, 2022), 14.

Section 3:
Collaborative Action Framework

A framework for collaborative action on climate justice

Mobilising collaborative action for climate justice requires sustained and coordinated effort involving all sectors. This starts with understanding and identifying the causes of social, economic, and health inequities and how they are being exacerbated by climate change. Addressing the drivers of risks and vulnerabilities and working to prevent and minimise climate impacts is at the heart of this Collaborative Action Plan.

Insights from across the 12 months of engagement underscores a pressing need to mobilise around climate justice in the west of Melbourne. Community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) are realising that, whether planned for or not, climate change is already impacting their services and their communities and is increasingly a core part of their work.

We know that CHCSOs play a critical role in building resilience and keeping communities experiencing disadvantage safe and well. As the pandemic has so clearly shown, it is these place-based organisations who have the strategic influence, relationships and trust to reach communities in need. What the analysis of the west and engagement with a range of organisations highlights is that there is a range of expertise and knowledge that can be leveraged to ensure that we are collectively working towards health and wellbeing outcomes for all and particularly for those most at risk to climate change. This work also highlighted that there are distinct considerations for climate justice in the west of Melbourne **(Figure 6.1).**

In this section, we introduce a framework with five focus areas to guide collaborative action on climate justice in Melbourne's west. These focus areas reflect the needs and opportunities identified by respondents throughout the project process. They draw on insights from consultation activities and network mapping processes. as well as the key actions identified through the group model building exercise and action forum. Most importantly, they reflect opportunities and capacities for collaboration and learning.

The framework is not prescriptive nor linear in approach but rather a way to:

1. **Promote learning –** Establish a foundation through which to develop a shared and iterative understanding of climate justice, and build shared resources to enable ongoing learning. For example, a network of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations might develop a climate action and resilience plan that sets shared actions and objectives across their diverse operations and share their approach with others.

2. **Build capacity –** Leverage the diverse work already undertaken in the west to develop place-based tools and methodologies that promote capacity strengthening and knowledge sharing. For example, practitioners might convene a place-based forum on heat risks and vulnerabilities to strengthen networks, highlight existing responses, and understand gaps.

3. **Support alignment –** Strengthen joined up work across organisations to align stakeholders and resources towards shared community and organisational needs. For example, some community service organisations might focus on one area of action, such as advocacy or strategy coordination, and jointly apply for funding to resource a network connector role.

Framework for collaborative action

Figure 6.1 Key considerations for climate justice in the west of Melbourne

Procedural – Addressing intersecting, systemic drivers of inequities.

Key decision-making processes around the impacts of and responses to local experiences of climate change:

- Development and regulatory regimes in growth areas: Provisions around environmentally sustainable design, infrastructure and services, residential density and diversity, private open space, and mixed-use town centres
- Draft Health Promotion guidelines: Framing of climate change responses (sustainability and mitigation) co-benefits to other focus areas of health and wellbeing
- Participatory processes: Extent of organisational and public participation around intersecting experiences of social and climate justice, and resultant policy actions
- Sector capability planning: Links between existing initiatives, COVID-19 learnings, and municipal and State adaptation planning
- Allocation of funding: Distribution of funding for the implementation of climate change adaptation plans at different scales.

Intergenerational – Supporting structures and processes to ensure equity over time and scale.

Tackling interacting drivers of climate injustice across the region, particularly in middle and outer growth areas:

- High rates of precursors to chronic disease and avoidable deaths, especially asthma and diabetes, in low socioeconomic areas.
- Rapidly aging population and growing working age population correlating with heightened service demand.
- Inadequate housing quality: low sustainability and energy efficiency standards, minimal landscaping, high site coverage, and a low density and diversity of housing stock
- Segregated land uses and inadequate precinct planning around housing, health services, employment, public transport, and retail
- Low canopy coverage and high vegetation clearing rates (new housing developments)
- Intensification of heat risks in low socioeconomic areas, concentrated in suburbs bordering Brimbank and outer growth areas.

Distributive – Ensuring the benefits of climate change action are shared and address issues of inequity.

Key considerations for adaptation and resilience interventions in the region:

- Patterns of vulnerability and social inequity related to the changing sociodemographic profile of the west
- Maladaptive potential, such as sustainability and mitigation-oriented work at the expense of long-term, transformative adaptation
- Limited engagement with the indirect impacts of climate change, such as experiences of family violence and mental health
- Evaluation of social infrastructure provision, connectivity and use in relation to health equities and climate risk
- Intersectionality and the capacity of agency among different groups, both for practical responses and strategic inclusion in adaptation planning.

Recognition – Centring diverse voices

Centring individuals and community groups most disproportionately affected by climate change and poor health outcomes in planning, support, and action:

- First Nations' communities
- People from migrant and refugee backgrounds, especially those with lower English proficiency or newly arrived
- People experiencing housing insecurity, including those who are unhoused and housing stress
- Low-income communities
- People living in growth corridors, including aspirational and low-income homeowners
- People with chronic health conditions or precursors to chronic disease.

Framework for collaborative action

Focus areas for collaborative action on climate justice

This framework for mobilising climate just and resilient communities emphasises the importance of collaboration as a means for realising climate justice outcomes. Five focus areas, grounded in diversity and inclusion and health and wellbeing, are proposed as a guide for how collaborative action on climate justice can be approached over the short to medium term (i.e. 1-4 yrs) **(Figure 6.2)**. Regardless of the scale or type of intervention, the consideration of these areas within programs, practices and planning is intended to help contribute to more just and equitable health and wellbeing outcomes for all.

Note, these focus areas are not discrete nor phased but rather, mutually reinforcing. They are intended to holistically guide CHCSOs and relevant agencies, practitioners, community leaders, and funders to think about how their existing work might be strengthened and joined up and identify where opportunities might exist to do so. This framework and the focus areas identified respond to the key issues and actions that emerged through this consultation process, and are intended to be dynamic and open to change over time.

While many organisations may have limited capacities, the intention is to create a framework for collaboration and shared work. In short, it is intended as an antidote to the commonly held view - 'we don't know where to start!'.

The following sections offer a little more insight into the key attributes and relevance of each focus area, along with example actions shared at the action forum and other engagement activities. A selection of learning resources relevant to CHCSOs in the west is also provided, many of which include rich case studies, tools, and templates to guide planning and practices for collaborative action on climate justice.

Framework for collaborative action

Figure 6.2 Collaborative action framework for climate justice

Diagram: A circular framework with "Collaborative action and learning for climate justice" at the centre.

Inner ring segments: Diversity and Inclusion, Communication, Capacity, Health and Wellbeing, Coordination, Consolidation, Context.

Outer segments and their questions:
- **Context** — How can we better understand climate justice issues in our communities through diverse perspectives?
- **Communication** — How can we better communicate and create a shared vision for climate justice with our diverse community?
- **Capacity** — How can we strengthen the capacity of our workforce and opportunities for shared learning and improvement?
- **Coordination** — How can we better coordinate and share resources and knowledge on climate justice?
- **Consolidation** — How can we better align and integrate climate justice into our decisions, practices and planning?

Focus area 1 - Context

Ensure that understandings of climate justice are situated within the social and physical context of the west and reflect the diverse perspectives, priorities and activities of the region.

> **"...there are some similarities across western suburbs and particularly councils around health...that whole adage around, show me a postcode, I'll show you the ATAR, can also be equally as relevant to show me your postcode, and we'll show you your health outcomes."**

Why is context important?

The west is a changing region and community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) need to have the capacity and capabilities to respond to changing demographics and needs as they intersect with climate change risks.

CHCSOs will need to respond to climate change impacts that exacerbate health and well-being inequities, as well as work to address the root drivers of those inequities and strengthen community adaptive and resilience capacities. This requires that they, and other relevant stakeholders, understand how climate impacts are being and could be experienced by diverse communities, and that they are resourced to better support their communities. Doing so will require multi-organisational collaborations and centring of the voices and experiences of the west's diverse communities.

CHCSOs are vital knowledge holders regarding the complex and intersecting drivers of disadvantage and community need. The importance of their roles was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and insights from this experience will be vital to informing climate change resilience actions.

Taking a strengths-based approach to working with communities and in organisational collaborative action will be key. Such an approach would build on and strengthen existing networks, knowledge, and expertise across organisations and communities to shape place-based and systems change.

Focus area 1 - Context

Strategic opportunities	Example actions
1.1 Evidence-based and community-led decision-making Evidenced-based decision-making to address intersecting vulnerabilities, risks and impacts affecting local communities at a municipal, regional and state level.	• Explore effective means of building and maintaining an evidence-based understanding of risks and impacts drawing on a range of data and knowledge. • Align decision-making with Traditional Owners' Country plans, ensuring responses address issues identified as impacting Country. • Create space and opportunities for deep listening, advocacy and community organising. For example, support social and public housing tenants to advocate on housing needs and heat impacts.
1.2 Strengthen relationships and networks Recognise, build on and learn from the diverse relationships and networks developed in the West and through COVID-19 in climate change adaptation and resilience planning and actions.	• Undertake a process to identify opportunities to strengthen cross sectoral networks to inform climate adaptation and climate justice planning. • Build on the work of VCOSS to strengthen relationship between the community sector, community leaders, and emergency management.
1.3 Improve service integration and linkages Referral pathways that connect communities and place-based organisations to relevant services and supports.	• Extend the work of local councils and Brotherhood of St Laurence in developing partnerships between Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to undertake housing energy efficiency and thermal comfort assessments. • Explore opportunities for social prescribing to integrate health and social care, build resilience, and address structural inequities that make people vulnerable to climate change. For example, local food growing initiatives.

Learning resources

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Paleert Tjaara Dja Let's make Country good together 2020 – 2030 Wadawurrung Country Plan

Ten-year plan to progress Caring for Country aspirations, strengthen cultural knowledge and education, and guide negotiations and conversations for healthy Country planning.

Victorian Council of Social Service and Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria Valuing strengths, building resilience: Improving emergency management outcomes for multicultural communities in Victoria

Based on insights and experiences from the Multicultural Emergency Management Partnership, this Policy Paper outlines recommendations for the emergency management sector to better connect with and become more inclusive of multicultural communities in Victoria.

Focus area 2 - Communication

Draw from the wealth of experience and knowledge within the west to communicate a shared voice and vision for climate justice, to strengthen advocacy and dialogue between organisations and communities alike.

> **"...there's a lot of mixed messages out in community in terms of what the issue is, how it manifests at a local level. And then that in turn reflects on roles or responsibilities and what's actually available for people."**

Why is communication important?

There are urgent calls for localised, practical, and targeted messaging on climate change risks, resilience, and adaptation. As the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated, messaging that lacks cohesion and relevance to social, cultural, and economic experiences of people's everyday, can become a matter of life and death.

Community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) play an instrumental role in bringing communities together through which to distribute information and resources, but also in amplifying the voices of those needing to be heard in the design and implementation of climate change action (both mitigation and adaptation). This is climate justice. Communication and multidirectional knowledge sharing amongst organisations ensures messages are not conflicting and collaborative efforts are sustainable.

Effective communication on climate justice by CHCSOs is enabled through resources and training opportunities that make climate justice relevant to all staff. Not only does this assist in identifying and responding to localised experiences of vulnerability, but in developing ideas and learning from others about possible strategies and actions that tackle the root drivers of injustices.

Focus area 2 - Communication

Strategic opportunities	Example actions
2.1 Diverse and meaningful messaging Consistent, coordinated, and culturally appropriate communication resources that reflect everyday experiences of climate change.	• Co-design clear and innovative messaging for diverse audiences based on the intersections of climate change and health determinants. For example, applying learnings from COVID-19 messaging to climate justice. • Share and communicate meaningful information through trusted networks, community leaders and organisations (e.g. heat preparedness).
2.2 Empower communities and amplify the voices of lived experience Centring the voices of lived experience focuses attention on community strengths and the root causes of risks and vulnerabilities.	• Create opportunities to learn from the lived experiences of people affected by climate change, such as First Nations people, LGBTIQ+ communities, people experiencing homelessness, newly arrived communities, and those on low-income.
2.3 Effective organisational and sector communications Education and training resources that make relevant the intersections of climate and social justice for community health and community service organisations to inform their strategic planning.	• Develop an online resource library of relevant communication materials, climate justice tools, case studies and planning materials. • Hold community forums and engagement activities on localised issues of climate justice. • Identify opportunities to tailor progress reporting on municipal and State adaptation objectives to CHCSOs, including funding opportunities.

Learning resources

Aboriginal Services Network of the West Deadly Western Connections

An online meeting place to connect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the west of Melbourne, and share information on services, programs, jobs and events.

Koling wada-ngal Aboriginal Corporation and Wyndham City Council Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre

Located in Wyndham Value, this integrated community centre combines high ESD performance with an inclusive and culturally safe space for people to gather, connect, learn and share.

Victorian Council of Social Service Feeling the Heat

Research and recommendations around extreme heat to support community service organisations improve service delivery and reduce the harm experienced by vulnerable communities.

Focus area 3 - Capacity

Strengthen workforce arrangements that build capacity and contributions towards climate justice, including the need for learning and continuous improvement.

> **"...we are kind of marginalised in a sense, in that there's a limited funding and we're trying to be creative in what we do. We then prioritise what we're doing... food and social support are the biggest needs. But people are sitting in their flats during this extremely hot fortnight not being able to afford [air-conditioning] or be cool. There's nothing we can do to support that."**

Why is capacity important?

Climate change impacts are often considered distinct, and out of scope of the core business of community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs). However, the complex and interrelated impacts of climate change are already exacerbating existing patterns of disadvantage and inequity and as such, require whole-of-organisation, whole-of-sector and whole-of-government responses. CHCSOs themselves are threatened by climate change impacts and need to better prepare for ongoing impacts and resilience.

There is a need to build the capacity of the sector to do their important work, including on climate justice. The barriers to capacity strengthening include short term resourcing, the project-based nature of work, and siloing of issues and policy areas. Despite these barriers there is much that can be achieved through joined up work. These include developing organisational plans, leadership and

workforce training, and governance arrangements that foster and support a sustained focus on climate justice.

Capacity strengthening happens through collaborative work that is based on a shared understanding of climate justice. This enables open information sharing and cross-pollination of ideas which is necessary to empower organisations and communities.

Focus area 3 - Capacity

Strategic opportunities	Example actions
3.1 Strengthened workforce capacity Improved governance arrangements that strengthen workforce capacities.	• Organisational training and professional development (e.g. frontline staff training in heat stress prevention). • Build on the work of Jesuit Social Services' Centre for Just Places to deliver practical, sector-specific workshops to deepen understanding of climate justice across all facets of operations, both within organisations and region-wide. • Advocate for resourcing for climate justice advocates and coordinators within CHCSOs.
3.2 Improve organisational climate change planning Develop clear frameworks and decisive strategies, policies and plans.	• Undertake organisational climate risk and vulnerability assessments. • Links to climate change are made explicit within new roles and programs, helping to build shared understanding and drive organisational momentum on climate justice. • Co-designed programs also help improve service delivery by responding to the intersecting needs of communities.
3.3 Commitment from leadership Empower and create buy-in and commitment from all levels of leadership (community, organisational and government) to support climate justice and adaptation planning.	• Develop CHCSO leadership training materials and professional development opportunities. • Leadership statements situate climate justice as core to business continuity, and are backed by strategies around climate-responsive funding and budgeting. • Enable and support a network of community leaders with a strong focus on under-represented cohorts such as people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, those on low-income, or with disabilities.

Learning resources

Jesuit Social Services, Victorian Council of Social Service, and the RMIT Climate Change Exchange
Climate and Ecological Justice Resource Pack

A toolkit to provide CHCSOs with a detailed overview of climate and ecological resources to support capacity strengthening for transformative adaptation.

Australian Council of Social Service **Resilient Community Organisations Toolkit**

A toolkit designed by and for the community services sector to support organisations in assessing and improving their resilience to disasters and emergencies.

Darebin Neighbourhood House Network **Climate Action and Resilience Plan**

A framework that uses the place-based strengths and relationships of neighbourhood houses to work towards sustainable and resilient neighbourhood houses and communities.

Focus area 4 - Coordination

Enhance the coordination of resources and knowledge sharing on climate justice, in a way that builds trust and leverages the diverse expertise within the region.

"...With all these collaborations, it comes back to who's going to do the coordination across organisations and strategic coordination? How's it going to happen? How's it going to be resourced? Where's the funding coming from? And then once we've got all that sorted out, I think everyone can just get on with it."

Why is coordination important?

To address systemic drivers of climate injustice, community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) require access to relevant and evidence-based information regarding local impacts, needs, and opportunities regarding climate change. Given the scarcity of resources and capacities across many organisations the need to improve coordination and sharing around resources and strategies is essential.

The growing need to respond to climate change-related threats means existing planning tools, strategies and indicators will need to be modified or new ones developed to drive action. This will provide support for staff – regardless of the team they work in – to have a clear understanding of how climate justice impacts their professional roles, the communities and networks they work within, and ways and means of building climate justice.

Importantly, there is also the need to coordinate actions and advocacy around shared issues or challenges facing communities in the west. This includes the creation, use and sharing of resources to guide and inform strategies and actions, as well as capacity building efforts across the region, such as workforce training and education.
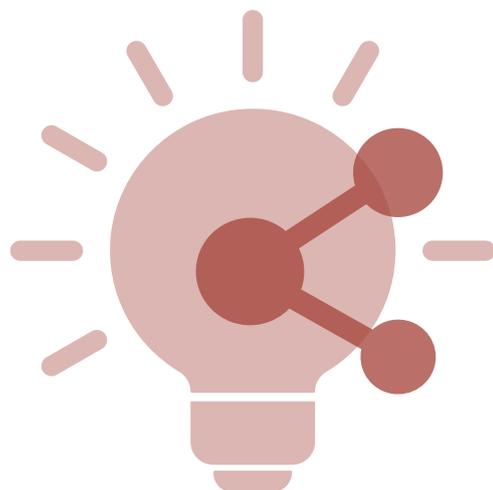
Focus area 4
- Coordination

Strategic opportunities	Example actions
4.1 Shared evidence and information Ready access to relevant and evidence-based information with sustained resourcing to strengthen reciprocal learning, provide tailored support, and enhance cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaboration.	• Regularly release data and public reports of climate justice trends and actions to help communities understand changing risks, and strengthen accountability. • Centralise and enable public access to data overlays that inform climate change planning for social justice in the west, including information about low socioeconomic communities, chronic disease, heat hotspots, tree canopy, cool zones, and health services.
4.2 Strengthen local and regional planning Coordinate strategies and actions around shared issues and goals.	• Create regional coalitions, jointly funded, to build partnerships with communities, enhance alignment, and monitor and communicate the region's activities. • Advocate for dedicated funding aimed at community sector adaptation and resilience planning. For example, to fund assessments of regional climate risk on service connectivity and continuity.
4.3 Effective monitoring, evaluation and learning Sector literacy is strengthened by reporting on place-based learnings from COVID-19, their application to climate justice, as well as opportunities to inform the implementation and evaluation of CHCSO and local and state government adaptation plans.	• Identify indicators, tools, and methods to understand and communicate localised needs and concerns, within organisations, to decision-makers, and to community groups. • Develop sector/regional monitoring, evaluation and learning tools and processes.

Learning resources

RMIT University The Climate Change Exchange

A not-for-profit, multisector network designed to support partnerships and knowledge sharing around transitioning to sustainable and just climate futures.

Victorian Government Virtual Hub for Climate Change Innovation

A virtual collection of policy and research resources, practitioners, and projects relating to climate change, adaptation, and innovation.

Focus area 5 - Consolidation

Align efforts cross-sectorally and cross-regionally to support the consolidation and integration of climate justice in organisational practices and planning, and enhance accountability for decisions, actions and outcomes.

"
"What we've found is that you can challenge existing paradigms of thought, by coming together and identifying new things. And saying, 'what we've done in the past is not working. Our business as usual is not making a difference.' So what are we doing that we need to do differently?"
"

Why is consolidation important?

Climate justice requires a whole-of-sector and whole of government effort, involving many diverse systems and stakeholders. Too often, however, planning is siloed within separate teams or disciplines including public health, environment, sustainability, transport, the arts, urban planning, housing, and emergency management.

Aligning and consolidating climate justice in practices and planning enables a resource-constrained sector to mobilise resources and strengthen advocacy and capacities. Ensuring integration in these processes is essential for two reasons. First, because community health and community service organisations (CHCSOs) play a key role in identifying and advocating on gaps in current policy and regulatory frameworks (i.e. urban planning and housing).

The second reason is that alignment allows CHCSOs and other stakeholders (like local governments) to leverage their diverse knowledge and networks to maximise co-benefits resulting from interventions. Specifically, to avoid conflicts in advice, the risks of maladaptation, and of shifting inequities. Paying attention to both these processes can ensure that contributions to climate justice are more inclusive, and enhance the productivity and transparency of ongoing climate justice efforts.
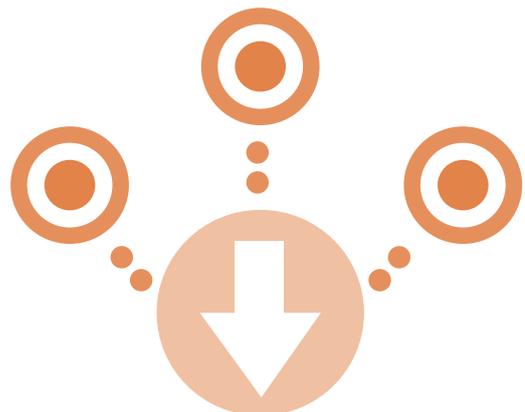
Focus area 5 - Consolidation

Strategic opportunities	Example actions
5.1 Embed climate justice goals across legislation, policies and plans Embed a shared understanding of climate justice issues across all facets of management and operations, including legislation, internal strategies, policies, plans and frameworks.	• Build on the DELWP-funded Resilience Community of Practice to develop a region-specific group with diverse practitioners to improve and embed understandings of climate change impacts, risks, equities issues, and action. • Strengthen coalition support for legislative and policy changes required to embed climate justice across sectors. • Identify new partnership and learning opportunities, such as targeting corporate, peak body, or philanthropic groups around priority asks.
5.2 Resourced climate justice action and advocacy Create innovative advocacy platforms that establish and strengthen relationships, provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and joint projects, and enable inclusive decision-making	• Networks, such as neighbourhood house and community centres, align work programs around a shared set of objectives. • A co-designed framework and toolkit minimises duplication while keeping staff and participants informed and empowered to work towards collective goals.
5.3 Policy and legislative change for climate resilient infrastructure, services, planning and housing Develop multi-impact initiatives that address the legislative and policy drivers of risk and vulnerability across housing, development, and infrastructure.	• Regulate new housing and infrastructure developments to ensure they are built to a high energy efficiency standard.* • Retrofit public and social housing with insulation, energy efficient appliances, and solar panels. • Provide access to green spaces, cool active and public transport infrastructure, for example, tree canopied bike lanes and weather protected public transport stops. • Create a network of 'cooler spaces' across the west in partnership with neighbourhood houses and other place-based organisations.

*Note, on 26 August, 2022, the Building Ministers' Meeting agreed to **increase energy standards for new homes** in the National Construction Code. This includes provisions around a minimum NatHERS energy efficiency rating of 7 stars, the introduction of an annual energy use budget (requiring consideration of the energy efficiency of appliances and roof top solar), and EV charging facilities in apartment buildings.

Learning resources

Future Earth Australia A National Strategy for Just Adaptation

A blueprint to support diverse practitioners, community leaders, organisations and advocacy groups in embedding a climate justice framework in their climate change work.

Climate and Health Alliance Regenerative and Just: Framework for a National Strategy on Climate, Health and Wellbeing for Australia

A framework to inform cross-sectoral policy action on climate, health and wellbeing in a way that integrates health, social, environmental and cultural considerations.

Framework for collaborative action

Next steps

This Collaborative Action Plan demonstrates the critical need to mobilise and support collaborative action on climate justice in the west of Melbourne. Not only to contextualise the risks and vulnerabilities of climate change for those organisations working on the frontline, but to explore deliberative pathways to work towards transformative adaptation for communities at greatest risk.

Building on the significant contributions of a range of different place-based organisations over the past 12 months, we have sought to outline a framework that, for practitioners, community leaders, funders, and government agencies, will provide a starting point to leverage existing efforts for advocacy and strategic planning around climate justice. This Plan highlights, that both within organisations and across the sector, there is a need for shared understandings, well-defined roles and responsibilities, and sustainable resourcing to identify and collectively navigate the intersecting challenges of health and climate change inequities.

The 5 focus areas for action – Context, Communication, Capacity, Coordination, and Consolidation – are not prescriptive, and instead offer CHCSOs and related agencies a holistic guide to thinking about and characterising types of collaborative and shared work within the west of Melbourne **(Figure 6.4).** Core to this is taking a strengths-based approach and recognising the diverse work already being undertaken in the region, as well as the benefits that emerge in engaging with the knowledges and experiences of communities and place-based organisations.

Engaging with the Collaborative Action Framework – and the collective priorities of the sector – initially offers organisations and their staff the opportunity to reflect on inequities within the health and human services system, and the way existing policies, plans, and practices may perpetuate vulnerabilities for certain groups. If collectively owned and applied across the region, this framework is intended to support the many diverse actors striving for transformative change in the west, and is a foundation for the critical conversations required for achieving systemic change.

With many CHCSOs still at the frontline of COVID-19 responses and impacts, and with a scaling back of Victoria's pandemic and climate change funding, this is also a call for relevant authorities to recognise and resource the critical work of the sector and to focus on prevention and mitigation of climate risk to achieve transformative change for the region.

Framework for collaborative action

Figure 6.4 Framework for collaborative action and learning on climate justice
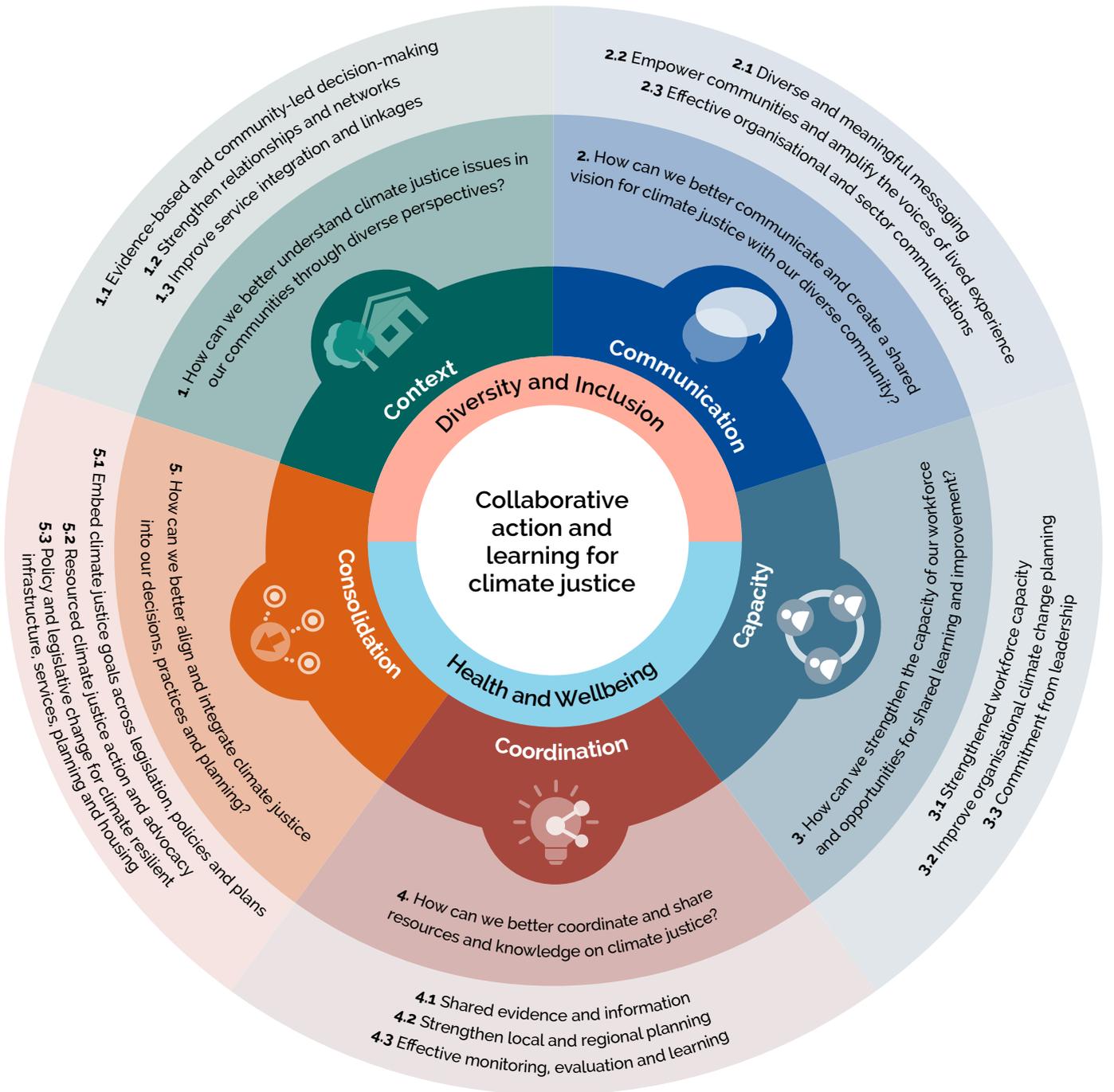
Appendix

Appendix 1 – Developing a sociodemographic profile of Melbourne's west

Table A1. Datasets used in developing a sociodemographic profile of the west of Melbourne. This plan uses unit record data from Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA) conducted by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). The findings and views reported in this paper are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Australian Government, DSS, or any of DSS' contractors or partners.

Measure	Definition	Data source	Domain
Rates of housing stress (30:40 rule), 2016	Quintiles	University of Canberra - National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, (2018): NATSEM - Social and Economic Indicators - Synthetic Estimates SA2 2016; accessed from AURIN on 1 Aug 2022.	Housing
Housing tenure status, 2010 and 2018	Tenure status residents in Melbourne's West	HILDA, Unconfidentialised data, 2010 and 2018	Housing
Age distribution	%	HILDA, Unconfidentialised data, 2010 and 2018	Demographic
Working age population	Deciles	Government of the Commonwealth of Australia - Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2017): SA2-G03 Place of Usual Residence on Census Night by Age-Census 2016; accessed from AURIN on July 16, 2022.	Demographic
% of persons born overseas, 2016	Deciles	Government of the Commonwealth of Australia - Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2018): SA2 Estimated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians 2016; accessed from AURIN on 16 July, 2022.	Demographic
% who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 2016	Deciles	Government of the Commonwealth of Australia - Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2018): SA2 Estimated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Australians 2016; accessed from AURIN on 7 July, 2022.	Demographic
% in Management or Professional roles	%	HILDA, Unconfidentialised data, 2009 and 2019	Demographic
Annual salary	Quintiles	HILDA, Unconfidentialised data, 2009 and 2019	Socioeconomic
Median Equivalised Household Income, 2016	Deciles	University of Canberra - National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, (2018): NATSEM - Social and Economic Indicators - Synthetic Estimates SA2 2016; accessed from AURIN on 7 July 2022	Socioeconomic
Highest educational attainment	%	HILDA, Unconfidentialised data, 2010 and 2018	Socioeconomic

Table A2. List of strategic plans and priorities reviewed

Name	Organisation type	Description	Link
Priority 1 - Regional and State level strategic plans			
West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance	Partnership/ Alliance	Promote economic development and employment in western Melbourne	https://www.vu.edu.au/ about-vu/university-profile/ university-of-the-west/west-of-melbourne-economic-development-alliance-womeda
North and West Melbourne City Deal	Partnership/ Alliance	Strategic plan (2020-2040)	https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/ default/files/north-west-melbourne-city-deal-plan-2020-2040-summary.pdf
Greater Melbourne Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	Partnership/ Alliance	Strategic plan (one of six Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategies across Victoria).	https://engage.vic.gov.au/ regional-climate-change-adaptation-strategy-greater-melbourne
Western Metropolitan Partnership	Partnership/ Alliance	Advise State Government on community views	https://www. suburbandevelopment.vic.gov. au/partnerships/metropolitan-partnerships/western-partnership
Greening the West	Partnership/ Alliance	Strategic plan (Greening the West Strategic Plan 2020-2025)	https://greeningthewest.org.au/ wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ GTW-StrategicPlan2020-2050-v23.pdf
Better Health Plan for the West	Partnership/ Alliance	Strategic plan (Partnership Framework 2017 – 2021)	https://www. betterhealthplanwest.org.au/
Victorian Department of Health and Human Services	State Government	Health and Human Services Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan 2022-2026	https://www.health.vic.gov.au/ environmental-health/climate-change-strategy
Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning	State Government	Strategic plan (West Metro Land Use Framework Plan)	https://engage.vic.gov.au/ project/mfpf/page/western-metro-lufp
Victorian Department of Justice and Safety	State Government	Fund community organisations to reduce crime and increase safety.	https://www.crimeprevention.vic. gov.au/in-your-community/find-projects-weve-funded
Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action	Local Government	Strategic plan (Climate Change Adaptation Strategy 2013-2020 and Action Plan)	https://waga.com.au/climate-change-action/climate-change-adaption-strategy-and-action-plan/

Appendix 2 – Synthesising strategic plans and priorities by focus areas

Table A2. List of strategic plans and priorities reviewed

Name	Organisation type	Description	Link
Priority 2 - Local plans and strategies related to organisations, specific issues or with more detailed reporting			
North and West Homelessness Networks	Partnership/ Alliance	Coordinate actions to reduce homelessness and assist the homeless.	http://nwhn.net.au/
North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network	Partnership/ Alliance	Improve health access, quality and equity, particularly for vulnerable groups.	https://nwmphn.org.au/
Djerriwarrh Health/ Western Health	Community Health	Health services provider.	https://www.djhs.org.au/services-a-z/a-c
IPC Health	Community Health	Improve health access, quality and equity.	https://www.ipchealth.com.au/how-we-work/
GenWest	Community Agency	GenWest 2020-2025 Strategic Plan	https://dzulqse4m1jxi.cloudfront.net/media/documents/GENWEST-STRATEGIC_PLAN_LONG_2020-25.pdf
Maribyrnong City Council	Local Government	Health and Wellbeing Plan	https://www.maribyrnong.vic.gov.au/About-us/Our-plans-and-performance/Municipal-Public-Health-and-Wellbeing-Plan
Hobsons Bay City Council	Local Government	Health and Wellbeing Plan	https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/Strategy-Planning/Council-Plan
Wyndham City Council	Local Government	Health and Wellbeing Plan	https://theloop.wyndham.vic.gov.au/municipal-health-wellbeing-plan-2021-25
Melton City Council	Local Government	Health and Wellbeing Plan	https://conversations.melton.vic.gov.au/cwbp
Brimbank City Council	Local Government	Health and Wellbeing Plan	https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/plans-policies-and-strategies/plans/council-plan

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Appendix 2 – Synthesising strategic plans and priorities by focus areas

Table A2. List of strategic plans and priorities reviewed

Name	Organisation type	Description	Link
Priority 3 - Related programs, networks, and work that contribute to strategic understandings			
Western Bulldogs Community Foundation	Sporting Club	Fund programs focused on health and wellbeing, youth leadership, diversity and inclusion, and community advocacy.	https://www.westernbulldogs.com.au/foundation
Growing Brimbank	Partnership/ Alliance	Research organisation focussing on place-based risks to health, wellbeing and education.	https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/health
Brimbank Social Justice Coalition	Partnership/ Alliance	Works to enhance participation, access, equity and human rights	https://www.brimbank.vic.gov.au/community/brimbank-social-justice-coalition

Appendix 3 – Focus areas and collective priorities for action

Table A3. Focus areas and collective priorities for action emerging from the action forum held on May 25, 2022.

Communications	• Develop a localised, inclusive, and consistent voice on climate justice across local governments and community service organisations
	• Create messaging that focuses on everyday experiences of climate change and how they intersect with determinants of health and wellbeing (cost of living, housing, family violence, physical and mental health)
	• Tailor education resources to the intersections of climate change and social justice for community health and community service organisations and their strategic planning
	• Develop a resource library of in-language climate adaptation and mitigation ideas to diversify understandings of community needs, and joint resources and programs in response
	• Resource bicultural climate justice advocates to strengthen community leadership and capacity, and to incorporate diverse knowledge of climate change responses within localised planning and action
	• Promote programs and events at the Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre to provide an inclusive and dedicated space for the Aboriginal community to share cultural knowledge on how to care for Country with both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
	• Host a grassroots community forum for Aboriginal community members to understand how climate change is impacting them, supports available, and working with their knowledge and experiences about affecting localised change
	• Build networks with neighbourhood house for the effective and targeted distribution of climate change resources and State Government actions, including relevant grant opportunities
	• Create a region-led documentary engages politicians, key agencies and organisations, and local community members on place-based issues of injustice
Advocacy	• Promote community participation in municipal emergency management planning processes
	• Create partnerships with funding bodies to finance priority climate change social impact programs, including water management, power saving, child protection, and food security
	• Co-develop a strategy with the Real Estate Institute of Victoria to encourage landlords to retrofit low-income homes with energy efficiency technologies
Community organising	• Ensure climate justice plans align with Traditional Owners' Country Plans and address issues identified as impacting Country
	• Establish self-advocacy groups to offer social and public housing tenants a mechanism to directly advocate the impacts of poor housing and heat to the Department of Housing
	• Co-design multilingual and multichannel resources to communicate localised messages on climate change

Table A3. Focus areas and collective priorities for action emerging from the action forum held on May 25, 2022.

Organisational change	• Create new position descriptions that describe the relationship of staff roles to climate justice • Promote responsibilities under the Climate Change Act to consider climate change in government decision-making around health and wellbeing • Create leadership statements that situate climate justice as visible, political, and urgent, and are reinforced through Climate Impact Assessments undertaken across operations • Make explicit the links to climate change in community health and community services' programs, for example, localised impacts of climate change on mental health • Develop a shared understanding of climate justice across all facets of operations, including internal strategies, policies, plans and frameworks
Information flow	• Create and maintain a central repository to allow for the sharing of relevant tools, methods, case studies, and questions • Develop organisational indicators and internal surveys that enhance internal understandings of how climate justice interacts with staff's personal and professional lives • Fund a Coalition Connector (minimum of 3 years) to build partnerships with communities, minimise duplication, and monitor and communicate the region's activities • Increase relational and research capabilities, drawing on participatory action research and reciprocal learning concepts including that offered by research student placements and direct engagement with communities in the west of Melbourne • Increase awareness of how climate justice and COVID-19 intersect
Organisational capacity	• Trial the Department of Health's Liveability Framework and tools • Establish a 'train the trainer' approach to enable a region-wide strengthening of capacity and strategic priorities for climate action • Facilitate a place-based forum on heat risks and vulnerabilities to strengthen networks, highlight existing responses, and provide space to understand what's missing (urban design, greening, housing upgrades) • Encourage organisational leadership to support climate action for at-risk groups, with the message that it will benefit us all
Physical infrastructure improvement	• Centralise overlays that support climate planning for social justice including low socioeconomic communities, chronic disease, heat hotspots, tree canopy and cool zones • Provide access to cool active and public transport infrastructure, for example, weather protection at public transport stops • Retrofit public and social housing with insulation, energy efficient appliances, and solar panels • Regulate new housing and infrastructure developments to ensure they are built to a high energy efficiency standard

Appendix 3 – Focus areas and collective priorities for action

Table A3. Focus areas and collective priorities for action emerging from the action forum held on May 25, 2022.

Community support and education	• Connect public housing tenants and housing officers to localised, tailored information and supports to upgrade to low energy appliances • Fund trusted organisations to provide wrap-around support in assessing household energy, thermal comfort, and other needs, and referral to relevant assistance • Promote seasonal wellbeing as part of regular check-ins, including questions around access to heat and cooling, thermal comfort at home, and information on local community spaces to maintain their safety and wellbeing • Train frontline staff on how to better plan for and respond to needs of clients and their circumstances relating to climate justice
Additional actions	• Use social-political-ecological scenarios in the west of Melbourne to inform planning decisions • Increase minimum wage and Commonwealth support payments to support communities in becoming resilient in their homes (better living conditions and ability to adapt home to extreme weather) • Release data related to climate change (including solar uptake, average energy efficiency, rates of electrification, deaths/illness from heat) in the interest of community accountability • Create a regional census to document everyday experiences of climate change • Provide a readily accessible database of local and sustainable goods, services, and businesses • Facilitate a government roundtable with community health and community services organisations to share the significant body of existing evidence on gaps and needs • Provide climate change or emergency management leave or working arrangements for staff • Fund an alliance of organisations for grassroots community change that addresses broader social determinants and community resilience to climate change • Consider the potential of community green power schemes to offer a more affordable option than the commercial standard • Prioritise building new, energy efficient public housing for key community groups, such as survivors of family violence • Establish a cross-regional coalition to facilitate shared advocacy asks, for example, minimum energy-efficiency standards in rental homes • Continue greening the west by planting more trees and grass • Leverage relationships through trusted organisations to provide communities with energy advice and improving energy efficiency (checking bills, switching retailers, kits for assessing home energy efficiency) • Create a campaign for localised climate justice engagement to increase our communities' shared understanding • Improve public transport access, particularly in the middle and outer suburbs (frequency, cost, connectivity) • Provide clients with advice and recommendations about accessing supports or join local community groups • Engage landlords about their role in ensuring tenants have access to sustainable, low-cost energy efficiency measures in the home

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