



CLIMATE JUSTICE



Climate justice means taking action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in ways that remedy inequities, so everyone can live a dignified life - whatever the climate. It also means having those who are most affected at the centre of all climate resilience efforts.

WHY IS THE FOUNDATION FOCUSED ON CLIMATE JUSTICE?

Greenhouse gas emissions persist and accumulate. So even when we reach 'net zero', climate change won't suddenly stop and return to a 'normal' climate. We will be living in a new, more dynamic climate, where impacts continue for decades ¹.

This affects us all. But not equally.

Communities experiencing structural inequities* are disproportionately impacted. If we don't work with these communities and for policies that support climate resilience for all, then inequities will worsen.



* Often along lines of race, gender, disability, immigration status, health, age, socio-economics, and other forms of marginalisation and their intersections.

INEQUITABLE URBAN RISKS

People living in neighbourhoods dominated by hard surfaces and much less nature face increased flooding and heat risks, and reduced mental and physical well-being.

- **Extreme heat** is particularly dangerous for the elderly, the very young, people with disabilities, outdoor workers, and those in inadequate housing ²
- Heat stressed suburbs and **disadvantage often overlap** ³

80%

of our western and northern suburbs are already **>5°C hotter** and have more large heat islands than other areas ⁴

- Our **western suburbs have only 4.3% vegetation cover** and north only 12.1% ³



We face **increased likelihood of floods** such as the 2022 Maribyrnong River flood ⁵, which displaced hundreds, including migrant and refugee families, and saw housing insecurity for months afterwards ⁶

- Without sound policy responses, urban greening **can worsen** local inequities through gentrification ⁷
- Family violence can **increase after a disaster** ⁸

FOOD INJUSTICE

Climate change impacts our food system across supply chains, food quality, worker safety, and food prices ⁹; all exacerbating food injustice:

- In 2023, **8% of Victorian adults ran out of food** and could not afford to buy more ¹⁰
- Food prices have **risen 20%** since 2020, with climate-related disruptions wiping out harvests and making it harder for some regions to grow food ¹¹
- During the Millenium Drought, fresh vegetable prices **increased 33%** and fresh fruit **43%** ⁹
- Many places across Melbourne only have **one healthy food outlet** to every 7 to 9 unhealthy ones ¹²
- Only **25% of people in growth areas have access to any healthy food** outlet within 1 km, compared to 90% in inner city councils ¹²
- Less than **2%** of the growing bushfood market are First Peoples owned ¹³
- Conventional, **industrialised food** systems contribute to climate change ¹



CLIMATE JUSTICE



FRAGILE OR LIMITED COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Community infrastructure - community centres and gardens, neighbourhood houses, libraries, and parks - foster social connections that are the foundations of wellbeing, community cohesion, community resilience, and active citizenship, while also connecting people to services and nurturing local economies ¹⁴. Yet

- Communities in Greater Melbourne's west, north, and south-east have **much less community infrastructure within 1km of home** than others ¹⁵
- **78.6% of Victoria's neighbourhood houses** are in **disadvantaged postcodes**, so are constrained in their capacity to raise revenue from within their communities ¹⁶
- Only **20% of First Peoples** in Greater Melbourne have access to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) within 30 minutes by public transport ¹⁷
- **Extreme weather** already causes the most disruptions to our electricity system, upon which community infrastructure, home cooling, refrigeration, medical equipment, etc, depend ¹⁸
- In 2024, only **12%** of community service organisations had a **climate resilience plan** ¹⁹
- **82%** of Victorian **ACCO buildings need replacing** or **substantial repairs** within the next 15 years ¹⁷
- Current 'energy efficient' building standards use **outdated climate data** ²⁰

LACK OF URBAN COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE PLANNING

Climate justice must centre those disproportionately at risk because they know their communities best and when they lead, everyone's needs are addressed. Yet:



Mainstream action plans often rely on generic labels of "vulnerability" or exposure, rather than diverse cultural, economic, personal and structural needs ²¹



First Nations and multi-cultural approaches to adaptation have not been prioritised in adaptation policy initiatives ⁵



Only 4% of Australian Philanthropy goes to climate (and environment) action, and of that, only 0.02% goes to climate adaptation and resilience, **0.03% to climate justice**, and 0.08% to First Nations ²²

OUR ROLE

As a Community Foundation focussed on the big challenges of our time, we recognise the need to support long-term change in ways that also address immediate risks. So we link community-led resilience action with the policy and structural transformations needed for a just future. We work with communities and organisations that centre justice in climate change mitigation and adaptation, to demonstrate thriving and dignified futures for all, whatever the climate.



References

¹ IPCC (2022) *Impacts & Adaptation Assessment Report 6*
² FCLC (2023) *Climate change impacts on access to justice*
³ VCOSS (2024) *Poverty and the urban heat effect*
⁴ Sun et al (2019) *Heat Vulnerability Assessment in Melbourne*
⁵ Melbourne Water (2025) *Maribyrnong River flood model*
⁶ GenWest (2022) *Our Community, Our Voice*
⁷ Anquielovski (2023) *(In)Justice in Urban Greening and Green Gentrification*
⁸ The Climate Authority (2025)
⁹ Foodprint (2022) *The resilience of Melbourne's food system to climate*

¹⁰ The Victorian Population Health Survey
¹¹ The Australia Institute (2025) *Cost-of-Living and the Climate Crisis*
¹² Needham et al (2024) *Spatial inequalities and trends in food retail accessibility*
¹³ Victorian Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy 2023
¹⁴ *Reimagining the Civic Commons (2025) Our Social Infrastructure Will Save Us*
¹⁵ Australian Urban Observatory (2024) *Growth Areas Liveability Scorecard for Melbourne*
¹⁶ NHVIC (2023) *Annual Neighbourhood House Survey*

¹⁷ Infrastructure Victoria (2025) *Investing in Aboriginal health & wellbeing infrastructure*
¹⁸ Mummary (2025) *Rethinking network regulation for climate resilience in Australia's energy transition*
¹⁹ VCOSS (2024) *A strong community sector for a safe climate*
²⁰ ReNew (2024) *Future climate impacts on home energy standards*
²¹ Tschakert et al (2025) *Intersecting inequalities and urban heat adaptation*
²² AEGN (2025) *Environmental Giving Trends*