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Lessons in Resilience

Organisational and Community Adaptation in Melbourne's West

Art from 'Sharing Connection' by Maddi Moser (Taungurung artist), 2024



Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency



Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience



Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land(s) we are meeting on today and pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.



About Centre for Just Places

Established in 2021, the Centre for Just Places was designed to bring together and strengthen Jesuit Social Services' long-standing commitment to ecological justice, place-based ways of working, and decades of research into locational disadvantage, enabling practice, research, and policy to inform each other and work in an integrated way across local and systemic levels.

We undertake research, action and advocacy that improves equitable social and ecological outcomes for people, place and planet, with a particular focus on supporting place-based and justice-centered approaches.



Melbourne's west: Demographic and Climate Risk Profile



Map Source: <https://www.outcomes-won.com.au/contact-us/>

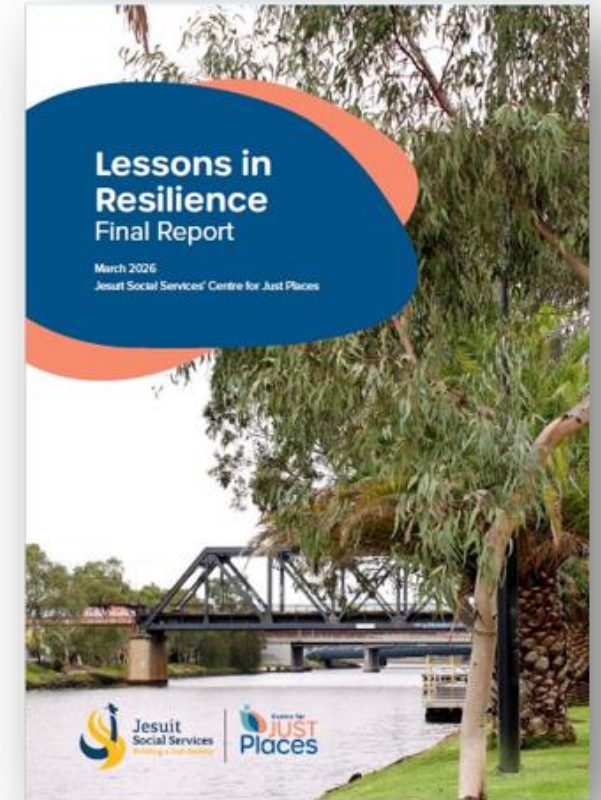


Lessons in Resilience

Understanding how community and health organisations build resilience in Melbourne's west

This project explored:

- How organisations adapted during extreme weather events and the COVID-19 pandemic.
- What enables effective, equitable, and locally grounded responses.
- How resilience, just adaptation, and health equity can be strengthened across Melbourne's west.
- What lessons can inform future climate adaptation and community resilience efforts.



Project background

This project was informed by:

- Two previous climate justice and resilience initiatives in Melbourne's west in 2021 and 2024 (*Mobilising Climate Just and Resilient Communities in Melbourne's West* and *Climate Resilient Neighbourhoods*).
- A rapid review of existing evidence, evaluations and inquiries from Melbourne's west.
- Co-design and governance with local community service and health organisations.
- Long-standing partnerships and local relationships across the region.
- A collectively identified gap in understanding what is needed to strengthen community and organisational resilience as climate risks intensify.

Key contribution:

- Documenting and systematically analysing practical responses and lessons from community organisations in Melbourne's west responding to climate related shocks and the COVID-19 pandemic between 2019-2025.



Key findings

- How CSHOs build climate and community resilience in practice, grounded in place, and lived experience.
- Shared enabling conditions that support long-term adaptive capacity across diverse contexts.
- Structural and system-level barriers that constrain effectiveness, continuity, and scale.
- The ways different forms of community and organisational capital are mobilised, combined and constrained.
- What is working well, and where further investment, alignment and system change are needed.



THEME ONE

Community-led and place-based approaches

- Effective climate adaptation and disaster response rely on community-led, place-based approaches.
- Flexible, responsive, and grounded in local context.
- Builds trust, relevance, and equitable access to services.



THEME TWO

Justice, equity, and inclusion

- Central to building community and organisational resilience.
- Intersectional lens helps organisations centre communities disproportionately affected by climate impacts.
- Bicultural and lived experience worker models strengthen cultural safety, inclusion, trust and responsiveness.
- Investing in cultural capital enhances equitable access, and adaptive capacity.



THEME THREE

Trusted relationships, collaboration, and partnerships

- Trusted relationships with communities and across organisations are essential for building long-term resilience.
- Collaboration across sectors helped share knowledge, resources, and supported joint advocacy efforts.
- Neighbourhood houses identified as highly responsive and trusted local hubs for communities.



THEME FOUR

Organisational learning and adaptability

- Learning through reflection, debriefing, and documentation.
- Supportive leadership, flexible funding, and adaptable programs enable effective learning.
- High staff turnover and rigid structures hinder organisational learning.



THEME FIVE

Innovative approaches

- Innovative solutions-focused approaches play an important role in building climate and community resilience.
- Reflecting on practice and adapting to new challenges enables effective response to complex and rapidly evolving challenges.
- Applying a climate justice and equity lens ensured responses were both relevant and inclusive.



MARIBYRNONG TOWNSHIP Property Flood Risk Card

How my property may be affected



Address 2022-4 22m 2- 0-46

FLOOR HEIGHT:

Flood water may reach my property floor when the Maribyrnong River Township gauge level is at:

3.76 m

PROPERTY BOUNDARY:

Flood water may start to affect my property boundary when the Maribyrnong River Township gauge level is at:

3.42 m

STEPS TO TAKE

Step 1: Check the measurements provided on this card to understand how a flood may impact your property boundary and floor level.

Step 2: Download the VicEmergency app at emergency.vic.gov.au and set your emergency alerts.



SCAN ME

Step 3: In a flood event, monitor VicEmergency warnings or check your emergency radio broadcasters for predicted flood levels. The prediction will be taken from the Maribyrnong River Township gauge.

You can use this card to check whether you may be impacted in a minor, moderate or major flood.

River Height at Maribyrnong

4.5m

MAJOR

2.9m

MODERATE

2.3m

MINOR

1.m

BELOW FLOOD

Note: this does not correlate to the height information provided for your property. Look at the floor heights and property boundary numbers provided.

Note: Measurements are for the main dwelling only. For multi-storey buildings, measurements are taken from the ground floor. m = Metres Australian Height Datum (AHD) on the river gauge

Foundations of resilience

Core conditions that underpin climate and community resilience in Melbourne's west



Resilience is not delivered through isolated programs, but emerges from coordinated systems, trusted relationships, and justice-centred practice in place.

Recommendations

What the report recommends for CSHOs

1. Embed organisational learning as a core resilience capability.
2. Use place-based evidence and lived experience to guide action.
3. Integrate climate, health, and social determinants in resilience planning.
4. Strengthen community-led and culturally grounded practice.
5. Build and sustain collaboration as everyday practice.



Recommendations

What the report recommends for government

1. Enable locally adaptable funding and program models.
2. Improve coordination between emergency management, public health and climate adaptation strategies at municipal and state levels.
3. Shift accountability toward long-term, community-defined outcomes.



Recommendations

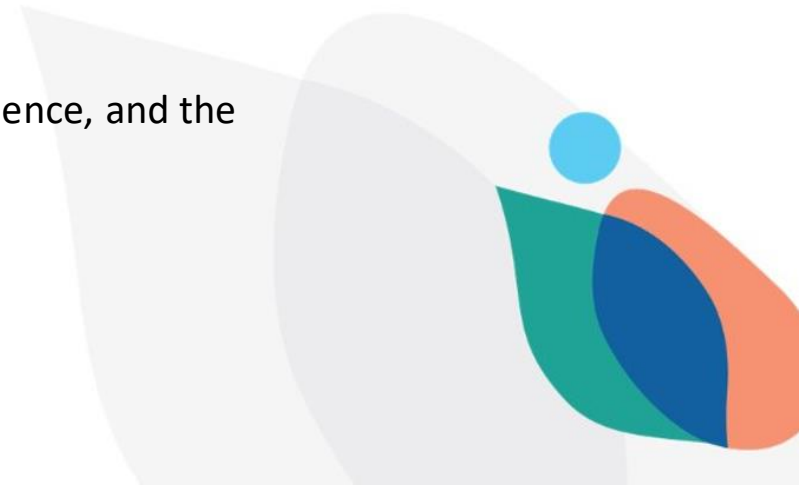
What the report recommends for funders

1. Provide flexible, multi-year funding for preparedness and resilience - not only disaster and crises.
2. Resource collaboration and relationship-building as core resilience infrastructure.
3. Invest in culturally safe practice and lived-experience leadership.



Next steps

- Sharing and translating the findings through report launches, presentations, workshops, and sector forums across Victoria and beyond.
- Informing policy and practice through engagement with government departments, local government, health services, emergency management agencies, and community sector partners.
- Supporting organisations to apply the lessons by embedding organisational learning, community-led practice, and climate resilience into planning and service delivery.
- Building new partnerships and collaborations to extend this work, including opportunities for comparative research, replication in other regions, and deeper exploration of community and organisational resilience.
- Continuing to advocate for just adaptation approaches that centre equity, lived experience, and the strengths of local communities.



Thank you

[ACCESS THE FULL
REPORT HERE](#)



Get in touch

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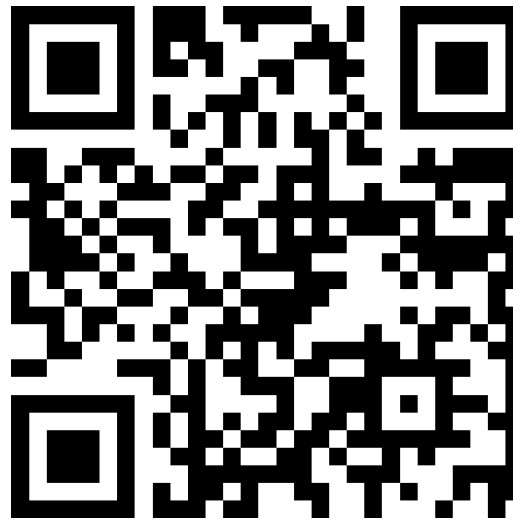
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