

ON THE HORIZON: MELBOURNE'S WEST

Post-event insights, ideas and emerging directions

West Side Best Side



ON THE HORIZON: MELBOURNE'S WEST

Melbourne's West is growing, changing and contributing at a scale that can no longer be described as emerging. It is already shaping Victoria's economy, population, industry, culture and future.



On June 11 2026 *On the Horizon: Melbourne's West* brought together leaders from business, government, education, community, tourism, infrastructure, housing, sustainability and regional advocacy.

The event was designed as an independent space for cross-sector connection, regional thinking and practical next steps. It created a space for people to hear different perspectives, challenge familiar thinking, build new connections and consider what might be possible if the West worked with greater purpose and coordination.

The conversations were based on exploring a larger question:

How do we ensure the growth occurring across Melbourne's West creates prosperity, liveability and shared opportunity?



CORE IDEA: THE WEST HAS ARRIVED

The narrative has shifted from emerging potential to visible regional capability.



What this means

The West is not a region waiting to become important. It already carries critical pieces of **Melbourne’s future**: population growth, industrial land, freight, health, education, diverse communities, housing demand, tourism potential, young leadership and major investment.

“The opportunity now is not simply to accommodate growth, but to shape what that growth creates.”



WHO WAS INVOLVED

Contributors, attendees and host: the sources of insight included in this public-facing summary.

Presenters and voices

Contributors included: WoMEDA, Committee for Wyndham, Committee for Melbourne, ESG&I, Western Melbourne Tourism, Community Housing Limited, RMIT, Agonis Sustainability, local government, business leaders, youth leaders and community voices.

Attendees

More than 100 attendees participated across the various elements of the event.

These represented sectors including local government, infrastructure, community services, financial services, SMEs, transport.

3Minds

The On The Horizon initiative was designed and hosted by 3Minds Consulting Group.

Christine Medrano, Founder and Managing Director, convened and facilitated the event and curated these follow-up insights.



IDEAS FROM THE STAGE

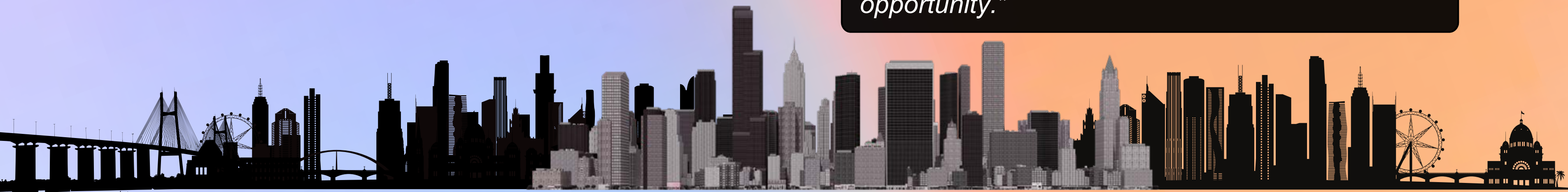
The presentations were a central part of the event's value and gave the conversation depth.

Together, the presentations created a broader picture of **Melbourne's West**: a region with significant capability, rapidly changing communities, major investment, deep cultural identity and a narrow window to shape growth of the region well.

The day moved through local jobs, infrastructure, housing, social impact, tourism, investment, sustainability, place planning, youth voice and leadership. The common thread was not simply growth. It was how to turn growth into prosperity, liveability and shared opportunity.



"The West has arrived. The question is whether growth becomes prosperity, liveability and shared opportunity."



WoMEDA: JOBS, PRECINCTS AND TRANSPORT

Growth needs local jobs, transport access and coordinated regional planning.

Priorities presented:

- Create more local jobs
- Develop a West of Melbourne Precincts Plan
- Improve public transport and connect workers to jobs
- Electrify the Melton rail line for metro services
- Establish a definite timeline for Wyndham Vale Metro
- Increase bus services and connect them to rail and key destinations
- Advance a south-west rail loop from Wyndham Vale to Werribee



“The region’s growth needs an economic and infrastructure agenda that connects people to opportunity.”
Giulia Baggio, Executive Director, West of Melbourne Economic Development Authority (WoMEDA)



PURPOSE BECOMES PRACTICAL WHEN IT CHANGES DECISIONS

The leadership model provides a practical bridge from ideas to investment and accountability.

A stronger Melbourne's West will not be built by growth alone.

It will be built by leaders willing to make growth purposeful.

Business

Buy locally, buy socially, invest in workforce pathways and supplier capability.

Government

Use planning, procurement and data to shape

Institutions

Act as anchors: convene, purchase, invest, measure and share learning.

Community

Keep the future grounded in lived experience, culture, care and belonging.

Q&A: what would we back, build or buy differently if the West's future was treated as a shared investment portfolio?

"What would we back, build or buy differently if the West's future was treated as a shared investment portfolio?"

*Scott Veenker,
CEO Committee for
Melbourne*

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ESG&I: FROM PURPOSE TO POSSIBILITY

Connect people, capital, data and collaboration into the same direction.

NOW, NOT SOMEDAY

Three forces are converging now

People & housing

Rapid population growth, new communities, housing pressure, a younger and more diverse workforce.

Movement & industry

West Gate Tunnel opened to traffic on 14 Dec 2025. Port, freight, logistics and industrial precincts remain city-critical.

Knowledge & place

Sunshine, Footscray, Werribee, Melton and Wyndham Vale are becoming stronger hubs for jobs, learning and civic life.

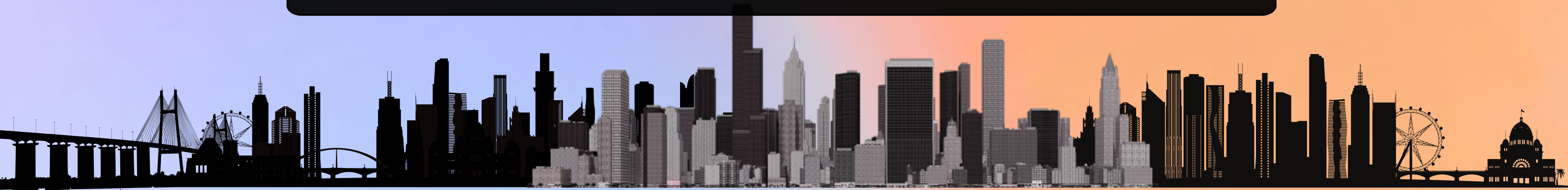
The opportunity is to connect these forces into a regional operating system: people, capital, data and collaboration working in the same direction.

Sources: Victorian Government future jobs and Inner West initiatives; Victoria's Big Build; WoMEDA; VPA Growth Corridor Plans.
From Purpose to Possibility | Melbourne's West | 11 June 2025

ESG&I



"A region with scale can attract capital. A region with purpose can direct it."
Geoff Gourlay, Founder, ESG&I, All Natural Capital, Impact Investment Fund



WESTERN MELBOURNE TOURISM: IDENTITY AS ECONOMIC VALUE

Destination branding was presented as a platform for pride, visitation and long-term value.

*“Regional brands fail when they feel imposed.”
Richard Ponsford, Executive Officer, Western Melbourne Tourism*



A strong destination begins in people's minds. The deeper task is not only to list attractions, but to define the emotional truth of place.

This presentation framed the West's award winning branding as an economic tool that can speak to multiple audiences, build community ownership and become a platform for the future.

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The Region Already Shaping What Comes Next

The afternoon panel brought together perspectives from banking, regional economic development, local government, professional services and business advocacy to consider what Melbourne's West needs as it enters its next stage of growth.

Martin Hoffman, NAB; Giulia Baggio, WoMEDA; Cr Susan Yengi, Maribyrnong City Council and Chair of LeadWest; Devan Bishop, MGI D&C; and Leanne Down, Committee for Wyndham considered what Melbourne's West needs as growth accelerates.

The discussion explored local jobs, transport, investment, business confidence, regional advocacy and the importance of stronger collaboration across government, business and community. A clear theme was that the West already has significant capability and momentum, with the next opportunity lying in better connection, shared priorities and more coordinated action across the region.



"There is significant capability across Melbourne's West, but greater coordination and collective action could unlock considerably more from it."



BUILDING COMMUNITIES, NOT ONLY HOUSES

Housing and social infrastructure determine whether growth creates inclusion or distance.

What integrated housing solutions look like.

- Integrated housing: social, affordable, private and specialist disability housing in one community.
- Tenure-blind design: you can't tell who owns, rents or receives support.
- Permanent affordability: ownership remains in community hands.
- Integrated services: access to health, employment and wellbeing across the community.
- The result: dignity, stability and belonging from day one.

CHL



The housing presentation made clear that the West has a rare opportunity to shape communities before gaps become entrenched.

Integrated housing means social, affordable, private and specialist disability housing in one community.



"Communities do not happen by accident. They happen because people choose to build something worth belonging to."

Lee Monik, Chief Governance Officer (General Counsel) Community Housing Limited



RMIT: DESIGN THE NEXT HORIZON AS A LIVING SYSTEM

The most transferable idea was the concept of a living framework, not a fixed plan.

“The rapidly changing needs of society sit in constant tension with the slow-moving world of property.”

Seamus McCartney, Executive Director Property Services Groups, RMIT

Hardware, software and orgware

Hardware: Buildings, infrastructure, public realm and physical assets.

Software: Programs, learning, services, culture, activity and experiences that bring places to life.

Orgware: Governance, partnerships, operating models and decision-making capacity that make the system work.

RMIT's Living Places Plan

What it is

A living plan

An open-ended plan to provide ever-evolving places, with the flexibility and space for new ideas to emerge in the future.

Flexible

A consistent vision with an adaptive approach – how each unique place is actioned and delivered will inevitably change as circumstances evolve.

Principled

A toolkit of institutional values and goals which guide rather than dictate, and which respond to shifts in culture and community needs.

What it's not

A master plan

A single version of the future, outlining a series of key moves to be implemented in a step-by-step approach, culminating in the completion of the plan, within a set time frame.

Rigid

A structured ideal that leaves no scope for adaptation with changing circumstances.

Prescriptive

A set of rules that are imposed indiscriminately, with no regard to the culture and community they exist within.



THE THREAD THAT BINDS US: YOUTH VOICE

Six young people, aged between 17 and 23yrs, from across Melbourne's West joined a panel, hosted by Maribyrnong City Councillor and Chair of LeadWest, Cr. Susan Yengi. The message was clear, "We are here, willing and able to shape Melbourne's West".

Critical messages from the next generation of the West:

"Young people should shape the work, not simply speak at it."

"We want to be part of shaping what's next for the West."

"We are the future, we need to be in the room."

What the feedback said:

"The young speakers were honest and grounded"

"Their contribution helped people understand the lived experience of the outer West"

"I am putting more young people on my board after hearing the youth panel"

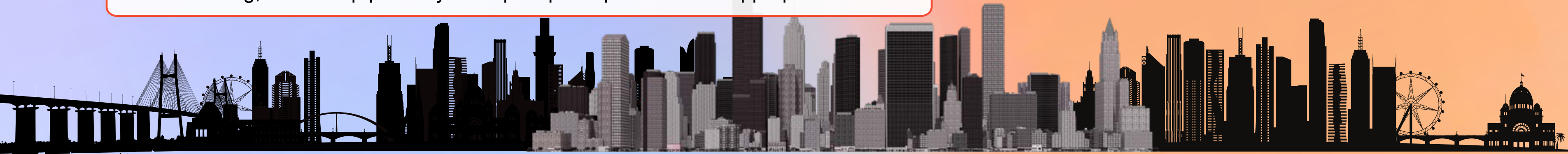
"Young people need more than occasional speaking opportunities"

Future participation should include:

- Youth representation on boards, committees and advisory groups
- Young and emerging leader places at every roundtable
- Youth-led sessions and project proposals
- Partnerships with schools, TAFEs, universities and youth organisations
- Mentoring, leadership pathways and paid participation where appropriate

"The West needs to move forward from dependence to independence."

Youth Voice



Evening Reception, Keynote & Panel

Hosted at the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria, the evening reception brought the day's conversations into a broader economic and regional context.

The Hon. Melissa Horne MP delivered the keynote address, highlighting the importance of Melbourne's West to Victoria's economy, infrastructure, growth and future development.



"The West is already central to Victoria's future. The opportunity now is to shape how that growth translates into long-term economic, social and community benefit."

The evening panel brought together the Hon. Melissa Horne MP, Geoff Gourley, Brent Dankesreither and Richard Ponsford to explore the West over the next decade, including growth, identity, investment, sustainability and the opportunity to ensure major development creates lasting value for the region.



AGONIS: USE THE INVESTMENT BOOM TO CREATE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY LEGACY

Data centres and renewable energy can become enduring regional strengths if designed well.

Key ideas from the panellist contribution:

- Melbourne's West is well placed for data centre and renewable energy investment
- Planning and procurement should lift recycled and non-virgin construction materials
- Local markets can grow around recycled plastics, steel and aggregates
- Biochar and lower-carbon materials could support construction
- Data centre heat could support greenhouses or food processing
- Projects should include biodiversity, greening, amenity and social licence from the beginning



"Development should create a lasting economic, environmental and social legacy, not only a short period of construction activity."

Brent Dankesreither,
Managing Director -
Agonis Sustainability

The Legacy Question

The critical question is not only how much investment arrives, but what remains in the West afterwards: local jobs, local suppliers, lower-carbon industries, liveability, community benefit and stronger environmental resilience.



FEEDBACK FROM THE EVENT

Across the day and from feedback received, the response was positive. There was strong interest in future events, further dialogue and greater opportunities for collaboration.



Those who participated valued the connections. They wanted the conversation to continue. They wanted more collaboration, stronger regional leadership and a practical way to move ideas forward.

Of particular value was the:

- Quality and diversity of the speakers
- Opportunity to connect across sectors
- Mix of regional, economic, community and social perspectives
- Honesty of the conversations
- Participation of young people
- Focus on Melbourne's West as a connected region
- Ideas presented about investment, place, identity and long-term impact

How would you describe On The Horizon:

- Insightful
- Inspiring
- Interesting
- Energising
- Valuable
- Well connected
- Thought-provoking
- An important beginning



FEEDBACK FROM THE EVENT CONTINUED

A positive response, with clear expectation that future work should move from conversation to action.



“A valuable opportunity to connect with leaders across Melbourne’s West and gain fresh insight into the region’s emerging opportunities. I left feeling energised and more connected to the broader vision for the West.”

“Listening to the young speakers was great and affirming. They tell the truth about what it is like living in the outer west.”



“I am confident that Melbourne’s West is getting on the map every day, bit by bit.”

“The event was valued because it brought the right people into the same room. The next stage should help them do something together.”



LOOKING AHEAD: FUTURE EVENTS

The feedback was positive, but it also gave us a clear direction for what people want next: more depth, more time to contribute and a clearer pathway from conversation to action.

For future On the Horizon events, we will place greater emphasis on:

- Fewer speakers and more time for questions and discussion
- Longer, more purposeful table conversations
- Intentional cross-sector networking
- Sharper themes and clearer outcomes
- Practical, action-focused sessions
- Stronger content on climate, environment and social impact
- More generous breaks, better flow and a more streamlined format

And yes, better coffee.



WHAT WE HEARD, AND WHERE IT POINTS

Across the feedback, submissions and conversations, several themes continued to surface. Together, they point to a stronger way of working across Melbourne's West.

**Keep the conversation going, then
create a pathway to action**

**Give young people a genuine role in
shaping what comes next**

**Strengthen the story we tell about
Melbourne's West**

**Build a stronger and more
coordinated regional voice**

**Make small business more visible,
connected and influential**

**Ensure major growth and investment
create lasting local value**

**Connect people, place, investment and
decision-making more deliberately**





WHAT COMES NEXT

On the Horizon confirmed that there is an appetite to continue the conversation, but also a clear expectation that the next stage goes deeper.

The opportunity now is to bring together people who want to contribute to practical regional thinking, test where there is genuine alignment and explore what could be progressed collectively.

This next stage will focus less on presenting ideas and more on working with them.

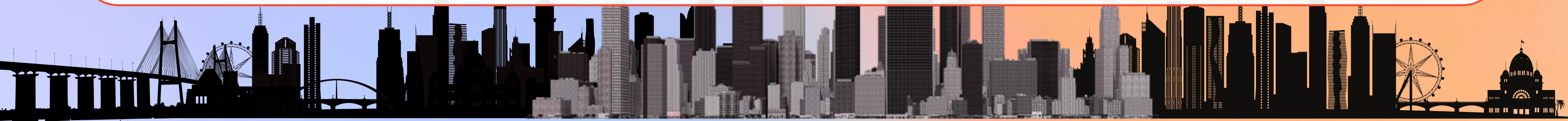
SEPTEMBER 2026: THE NEXT CONVERSATION

In September we will host the next On the Horizon conversation at a location to be confirmed.

Building on the ideas raised in June, this will be a smaller, more focused working session exploring where greater collaboration could create real value.

The conversation will look more closely at regional priorities, small business participation, youth voice, investment, place and how existing organisations and networks might work together more effectively.

If you have already indicated that you would like to participate, we will contact you individually. If you have not yet expressed your interest, let us know and we will reach out to you.



SOMETHING BIGGER IS EMERGING

A question worth exploring

One message deserves further attention.

Small businesses told us they want more than another opportunity to attend, contribute or be consulted. They want greater influence, stronger commercial connection and a clearer stake in the structures intended to support them.

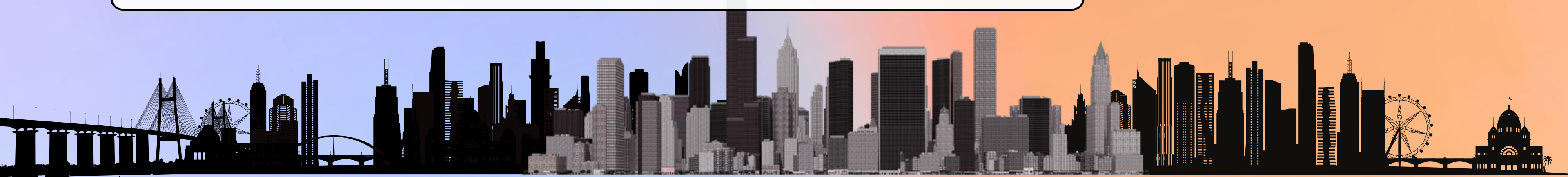
At the same time, On the Horizon demonstrated the value of bringing existing networks, institutions, industry and emerging voices into the same conversation.

This has prompted a bigger piece of thinking at 3Minds:

What if businesses could participate in a platform they genuinely own, rather than simply belong to?

The model we are exploring brings together member ownership, meaningful voice, strategic support, collective influence and commercial opportunity, while connecting with, rather than replacing, the networks and organisations already doing important work.

The thinking is taking shape. And the West is where the conversation begins.



FROM ON THE HORIZON TO WHAT COMES NEXT

The next stage is about testing what has substance.

The June event created the connections.

The September conversation will give us the opportunity to go deeper, with a smaller group of people interested in exploring where genuine collaboration could lead.

Beyond that, we want to understand which ideas have enough energy, alignment and value to grow into something more: collaborative initiatives, stronger advocacy, new commercial relationships, or potentially a new member-owned platform capable of giving businesses greater collective influence.

We are deliberately allowing the next stage to develop through the people who want to help shape it.

For those who have already expressed interest, we will be in touch individually. If you would like to be part of the next conversation, please let us know.



THE NEXT HORIZON

THE WEST HAS ARRIVED.

On the Horizon confirmed something important.

Melbourne's West already has the people, ideas, institutions, businesses and ambition required to shape a significant future.

The opportunity now is to connect that capability more deliberately, create greater local value from growth and give more people a meaningful stake in what is built next.

**Melbourne is the market.
The West is the first room.**

And we are only getting started.

West Side, Best Side.

Christine Medrano
Founder & Managing Director
3Minds Consulting Group

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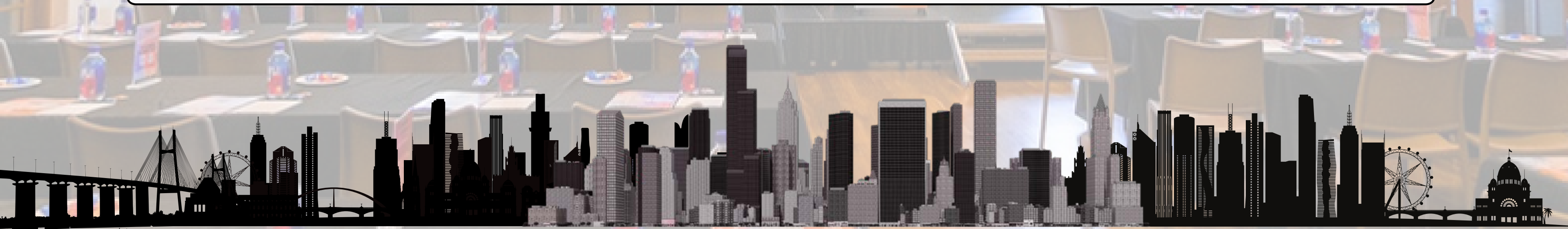
SOURCE AND ATTRIBUTION NOTES

These post-event insights has been developed from the event materials, feedback, submissions and presentations.

This deck draws from:

- On the Horizon: Melbourne's West post-event survey responses
- Written submission and direct follow-up feedback
- Direct emails, conversations and comments received by 3Minds following the event
- The full On the Horizon event slide deck, including WoMEDA, Committee for Melbourne, ESG&I, Western Melbourne
- Tourism, Community Housing Limited and RMIT
- Panellist notes and ideas provided by Agonis Sustainability
- The On the Horizon event program and visual identity materials

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West Side Best Side

On the Horizon confirmed that Melbourne's West does not lack ideas, capability, energy or ambition. The opportunity is to connect those strengths and create structures that allow people to act together.

"Most of all, people want the conversation to lead somewhere."

info@3minds.com.au | +61 457 814 434 | 3minds.com.au

