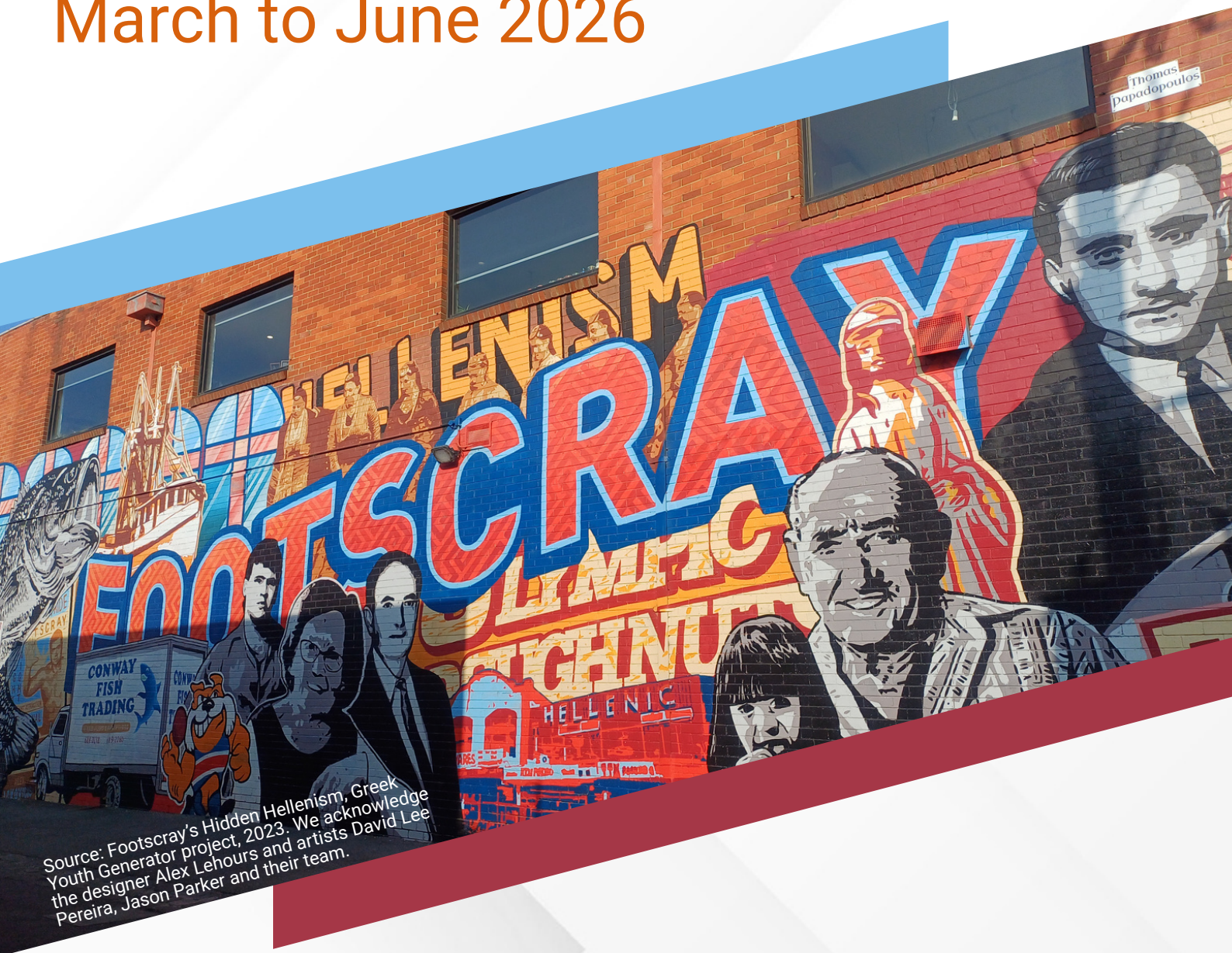


Community Listening Report

March to June 2026



Community Listening Report

Summary

Voices of the Inner West of Melbourne believe democracy works best when communities participate actively in shaping decisions that affect them. We focus on authentic representation and local priorities, not party politics or vested interests.

From March to June 2026 we conducted six types of community listening and engagement activities.

This report summarises our findings based around three key areas:

- What people love about living here
- What feels under pressure (community priorities)
- What good political representation looks like

Community priorities are being used to develop policies based on our values:

- Listening first
- Evidence-based
- Inclusive representation that reflects our community
- Integrity and transparency
- Long-term thinking for our young people and future generations



The area around Footscray has been home to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin nation for more than 40,000 years. We pay our respects to elders, past, present and emerging. Maribyrnong is a version of the Aboriginal term 'Mirring-gnay-bir-nong', which means I can hear a ring tail possum'.



What this report is for

This report documents what we have heard to date from the community listening activities undertaken by Voices of the Inner West of Melbourne. It shares what community members have told us about the issues that matter in the Inner West of Melbourne, in particular within the Footscray electorate (see map below). It will inform the policy platform and campaign priorities for our Voices endorsed candidate at the upcoming 2026 Victorian election.



What people love about living here

People love the Inner West as a place that has built, sustained and served Melbourne as an industrial heartland.



People love the sense of community, cultural diversity, close access to the city, and the quality of the people living here who care highly about their communities and the places they live.

However, the area is often overlooked, taken for granted and misunderstood. It is described by one of our community participants as suffering from 'systemic, normalised discrimination' as evidenced by polluted air, soil and waterways compared with the east.



Our community's priorities

The Inner West of Melbourne faces multiple and inter-connected pressures, including current and legacy pollution, a lack of long-term investment, continued development pressures and on-going socio-economic issues associated with inequality, climate change impacts and cost of living. Concern for young people, vulnerable communities and future generations is a major concern. Consistent themes identified are:

- **Environment**

- Air pollution and associated public health issues.
- Land and water pollution, including legacy soil contamination issues and poor water quality of waterways.
- Climate change, particularly increased flooding risk for communities along the Maribyrnong River and the need for more tree canopy to help with urban cooling.



- **Planning & development**

- Lack of long-term infrastructure planning. This includes housing density, roads/transport corridors, industrial/residential contested areas (particularly development of data centres) and vacant/derelict sites.
- Pressure on limited remaining public open green spaces and contested views on protection and expansion of green spaces, ie. siting of public utilities such as sports facilities, and redevelopment of public sites such as the old hospital.



Our community's priorities (continued)

- **People and Community**

- Housing - lack of affordable housing, homelessness, rental insecurity and parts of the community being pushed out due to affordability and gentrification.
- Education - over-flowing schools, students having to travel out of the electorate for high school options, access to childcare and early education services.
- Social support services - need for improved healthcare access, mental health support and coordinated community support services.
- Public safety and inclusive public spaces - need for strengthened community safety as well as support for people doing it tough, to ensure everyone can safely access, use and enjoy public spaces, particularly in the Footscray Central Business District.
- Concern for young people and future generations.

What good political representation looks like

Qualities needed for good political representation are simple. People want a person with high integrity and honesty, someone who listens and consults, puts the community first and is willing to advocate strongly on local issues. Transparency in decision-making and practical problem solving are also very important. Helen Haines and David Pocock were often mentioned as examples of great political representatives.

