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MEDIA RELEASE – UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 9AM, MARCH 23, 2026

New report highlights lessons from frontline organisations responding to extreme weather events and public health emergencies in Melbourne’s west

A new report, published today by Jesuit Social Services’ Centre for Just Places, highlights how community service and health organisations in Melbourne’s west have responded to recent crises including floods, heatwaves and the COVID-19 pandemic, with key recommendations on the need for investment in grassroots collaboration and preparedness activities.

Lessons in Resilience draws on nine months of research, including interviews with frontline staff and organisational leaders working across the region, capturing how community service and health organisations (CSHOs) responded to emergencies and adapted their services to support communities experiencing disadvantage.

“Community service and health organisations are often the first responders when communities face disruption – whether from extreme weather, public health emergencies or other shocks, yet the practical knowledge developed by frontline workers and organisational leaders in these moments is rarely captured or shared. This report brings those lessons together so they can inform stronger systems and more resilient communities,” says Kate Lowsby, General Manager of Jesuit Social Services’ Centre for Just Places.

The report identifies how organisations across Melbourne’s west responded quickly to emerging needs, through community-led and place-based responses, collaboration, innovations in working with culturally diverse communities, and the use of local knowledge to guide action.

Ms Lowsby says recognising and learning from these collective experiences is essential as climate impacts and other disruptions become more frequent.

“As climate change increases the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, communities already experiencing disadvantage will often feel these impacts first and most deeply. Strengthening resilience means ensuring that organisations with deep community connections have the flexibility, resources and coordination they need to effectively respond and adapt,” she says.

The report makes a range of recommendations for government, funders, organisations and sector leaders to strengthen resilience across the region and better support action on the ground. This includes greater coordination from government and critical investment in important work to build and sustain resilience at the local level.

“The lessons captured in this report show that building resilience is not just about responding to crises – it’s about investing early in the relationships, knowledge and community leadership that allow communities to adapt, shape solutions, and thrive over the long term.”



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Jesuit Social Services thanks the project funders: Greater Melbourne Foundation, Western Public Health Unit and Wyndham City Council.

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