

NCA advocacy focus 2024–2025

The Northern Councils Alliance advocates for projects that will improve services for its residents and businesses. The NCA represents approximately one million people who live across seven municipalities in northern metropolitan Melbourne: Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Merri-bek, Mitchell, Nillumbik and Whittlesea.

This document lists the NCA's key priority areas and summarises its advocacy focus for 2024–2025.

Priority 1: Transport connectivity and access



Regional transport strategy

Development of a Victorian Transport Plan by the Victorian Government that takes into consideration the *Northern Region Transport Strategy* and *Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks*. These NCA documents outline investment priorities and projects that will improve public transport connectivity and encourage sustainable transport growth across this region.

Large-scale transport infrastructure

Approval and funding support for large-scale transport infrastructure investments with significant regional benefits, as identified in the *Northern Horizons* documents. Key priorities for Melbourne's north include the Upfield Rail Extension, Clifton Hill Rail Exchange, Wollert Rail Extension, Melbourne Metro 2 and OMR/E6.

Upfield rail duplication and extension

Key rail investments are needed now to resolve critical constraints on train services in Merri-bek, Hume, Whittlesea and Mitchell. Duplication and extension of the Upfield rail line will improve train frequency, removing ongoing constraints and improving capacity, frequency and reliability for passengers. This will support rapid residential, commercial and industrial development in the region, including at Cloverton and Donnybrook.

Improved bus networks across the region

An efficient network of buses that connect the Melbourne's north community to major precincts and health and education facilities, as outlined in the *Northern Region Transport Study Stage 2: Bus Networks*. This includes improved services to Melbourne Airport and La Trobe University, improved SmartBus access, increased northern growth corridor services and buses replicating the future Suburban Rail Loop route.

Funding for transition to electric vehicles

Support for implementation of recommendations resulting from the evidence-based *Community Electric Vehicle Transition Plan* – particularly financially supporting transition of Council fleet vehicles to electric (with a focus on heavy fleet), and grid connection and grid stability upgrades for Council depots, offices and community facilities.

Liveability funding for northern trails

A 10-year pipeline of funding (estimated \$110 million) to complete all stages of the Northern Trails project, including delivery. *Northern Trails 2022* provides a planning framework and action plan to establish a network of integrated and connected shared trails (primarily for walking and cycling) that link communities, destinations and a range of urban and natural environments across the region.

Priority 2: Jobs and skills growth



Develop precincts

The Victorian Government to recognise and support growth in our region's four major precincts (La Trobe, Broadmeadows, Epping, Cloverton) and two minor precincts (Beveridge, Inner North), facilitating growth through industry, education and health. If these important precincts across Melbourne's north are not developed, there will be significant negative economic and social impacts.

Inclusive employment program

Funding of \$13.6 million over four years to roll out Banyule City Council's successful Inclusive Employment Program to all Councils in Melbourne's north. Roll out of this project will result in 336+ local jobs for local people experiencing barriers to employment over a four-year period, with a focus on target community groups that are underrepresented in the labour market.

Affordable housing for key workers

An increase in the density and dwelling typologies of affordable housing in new and established areas for essential workers with low and moderate incomes. Programs designed to support key workers must apply both the key worker definition and an income threshold to determine eligibility.

Priority 3: Community health and wellbeing



Mental health and wellbeing support

Funding and services to improve and support mental health and wellbeing, and an increased focus on mental health prevention across the region. This can be achieved by funding Councils to engage in mental wellbeing activities, Council representation on key governance structures and in planning processes, funding for current promotion and prevention work, and to improve availability of local mental healthcare services.

Increased access to health services

A new public hospital in Melbourne's north to cater for the growing population and increasing health needs in our community, providing emergency care with provision for specialist services such as oncology, maternal, neonatal and paediatric services. Major public hospitals in the north (Northern Hospital and Austin/Mercy) are at capacity, with the Northern Hospital in particular under significant pressure.

Ending family violence

Better support to end family violence in communities across Melbourne's north and increase early intervention to support children and young people's wellbeing, including commitment to improving the service system in each Council area, four years of funding to establish a Northern Councils Violence-Free Team and four years of funding to deliver Gender Equity Action Plans and Gender Impact Assessments.

Support for a greener north

Victorian Government support to meet canopy cover and biodiversity targets set within the *Plan Melbourne: Northern Metro Land Use Framework Plan*. Tree canopy cover in this region is the second lowest of any region in metro Melbourne. Funding of \$25 million each year for four years will support delivery of canopy justice plans in areas of community vulnerability, tree planting programs and biodiversity actions along waterways.

For more information:

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