



FACTBase

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Perth's Evolving External Reputation as Presented in Published Indices, Literature and Media

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Introduction

City competitiveness has been identified as central to the long-term economic performance of global cities in the twenty first century. Notably, the Committee for Perth's 2018 *Bigger & Better Beyond the Boom: Perth's Pathway to Prosperity* report identified a strong, competitive identity and positive global reputation as central to Perth's economic future.

City identity is the sense of a city that distinguishes itself from others and the extent to which people recall a place as being distinct from other places (Lynch, 1960). The concept of city identity is often closely associated with city or place branding, which is "the strategic self-presentation of a place with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political and social interest promotion at home and abroad" (Szondi, 2008, p. 5).

Yet it is evident that both an underlying competitive city identity and successful brand is a strong, positive city reputation. City reputation can be defined as the aggregation of a single stakeholder's perceptions of the capacity of the city to meet demands and expectations of many city stakeholders, including residents, prospective residents, businesses and investors, tourists,

Summary of Key Findings

- Reputation is important to sustainable economic performance and to the growth and development of established and emerging sectors in Greater Perth's economy.
- City reputation can be defined as the aggregation of a single stakeholder's perceptions of the capacity of the city to meet demands and expectations of many city stakeholders, including residents, prospective residents, businesses and investors, tourists, visitors and purchasers and consumers of goods produced.
- Non-fiction literature and external media coverage of arts, culture and travel opportunities in Greater Perth this century illustrate the evolution of perceptions of Greater Perth from 'Dullsville' in 2000 to a 'revitalised/transformed city' today.
- Perceptions of Greater Perth presented by global city indices depict a region that is liveable but not as liveable as other Australian cities. Perth is also falling behind in regard to perceptions of innovation, smart technology, attractiveness to international students and the strength of the city's brand – yet has strengthened its reputation as affordable.
- Reports of major international events in Greater Perth in the twentieth century depicted the region as remote, somewhat unsophisticated and laid back yet also confident, friendly, youthful, optimistic, entrepreneurial and outward-looking.
- Greater Perth's external reputation in the latter twentieth century and early twenty first century include: involvement in and hosting of major international events; investment in capital, sporting and cultural infrastructure; urban redevelopment and revitalisation; improvements to accessibility; pervasive stereotypes; promotion and marketing; geographic location and attributes; as well as the region's society and culture.
- The hosting of major international events, as well as phases of investment and revitalisation have primarily been perceived positively by the outside world. Conversely, periods of relative underinvestment have been harshly judged, the impacts of which can linger.
- The latter twentieth and early twenty first century was identified as a period of perceived inherent conflict between the characteristics of Greater Perth most valued by residents (i.e. suburban lifestyles) and those sought by visitors (i.e. a vibrant city centre). Yet the transformation of Perth over the past decade has illustrated that these need not always be mutually exclusive.
- Looking forward, Greater Perth must take control of, and actively shape, its future narrative and reputation through ongoing, strategic action and outward communication.

visitors and purchasers and consumers of goods produced in the city (Delgado-García, Quevedo-Puente and Blanco-Mazagatos, 2018).

Given the breadth of stakeholders and the diversity of stakeholder demands and expectations associated with a city, its reputation is therefore influenced by a wide cross-section of variables.

This Bulletin is the first input into the Committee for Perth's 'Hashtag Perth' project that seeks to characterise Greater Perth's global reputation through original quantitative and qualitative research involving local, national and international stakeholders combined with a comprehensive review of historical and current perceptions of Greater Perth as presented in published literature and global media.

The aim of this Bulletin is to examine city reputation and provide a review of the *reported* reputation of Greater Perth. It seeks to identify the factors that influence the reputation of global cities; the established benefits of a positive city reputation; and the evolution of Greater Perth's reported reputation over time. It achieves this through a review of published local, national and international literature, media reports, research reports and indices.

The Importance of City Reputation

The importance of reputation is widely recognised in the field of business. Organisations with strong, positive reputations have been associated with a capacity to attract talent, establish customer loyalty and demonstrate resilience and market longevity. Corporate reputation has also been

identified as a factor enhancing corporate financial performance (Lee and Roh, 2018; Fombrun, 1996; Roberts and Dowling, 2002).

Published literature has afforded less attention to the impact of reputation on the performance of places, however there is current evidence that a positive reputation is an intangible asset and a source of place/city competitiveness, with links made between the reputation of a city and economic development including new firms, employment growth and positive migratory trends (Delgado-García, Quevedo-Puente and Blanco-Mazagatos, 2018; Wæraas, 2015).

Reputation has therefore been identified as important to sustainable economic performance and to the growth and development of established and emerging sectors in Greater Perth's economy. However, prior to examining the reputation of places, it is important to understand the factors which influence it at a local and global level.

Factors Influencing Place Reputation

Investigations by global research and marketing organisations as well as academic literature report a complex combination of national culture, identity, attributes and brand; local social, cultural, economic and environmental attributes; infrastructure; governance efficiency; city brand and image; and investor, visitor and tourist experience as influencing stakeholder perceptions and therefore the reputation of a place. These are illustrated in Figure 1.

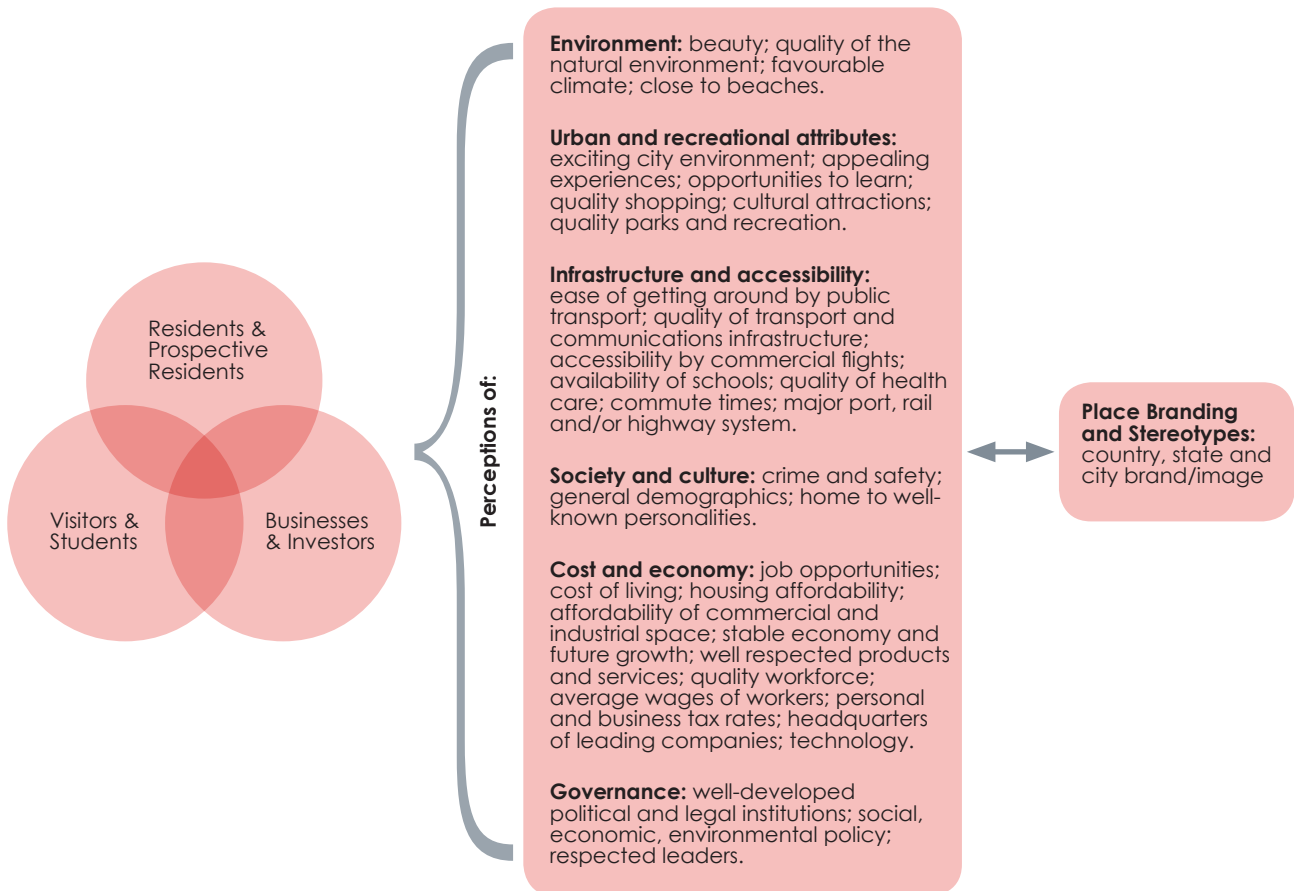
Whilst it is evident that some attributes, such as beauty, quality of the natural environment and climate should remain relatively

stable if adequately conserved; others including urban form, recreational opportunities, infrastructure quality, economic performance, cost of living, governance and branding are subject to significant changes over time. As a result, place reputations also evolve over time.

Stakeholder expectations are also subject to change and conflict, with the perceived satisfaction of stakeholders connected to the satisfaction of other stakeholders in both a cooperative and a competitive way (Delgado-García, Quevedo-Puente and Blanco-Mazagatos, 2018). For example, the expectations of residents are more easily met if the city can attract business and tourists; but the priorities of residents, visitors and businesses can vary and resources oriented to meet the expectations of one stakeholder group mean that there are fewer resources available to serve the interest of others (Delgado-García, Quevedo-Puente and Blanco-Mazagatos, 2018).

Cities have also taken various pathways to showcase their attributes, differentiate themselves and demonstrate their capacity to meet stakeholder expectations to the world. This includes communication and reality building actions in areas such as culture, innovation, design and technology; the building and preservation of emblematic monuments or attractions; and hosting important organisations or major international events (Aula and Harmakorpi, 2008; Turok, 2009).

Figure 1: Factors Influencing the Reputation of Places



Source: Fair and McGrath, 2018; Reputation Institute, 2018.

Greater Perth's Reputation in Global Indices

As previously expressed, the purpose of this Bulletin is to examine Greater Perth's external reputation as perceived and reported by external stakeholders in published literature and media. An important indicator of external reputation is provided by global city indices, which compare and rate the performances of cities around the world against a range of economic, social and environmental criteria.

The primary purpose of city indices has been to deliver intelligence regarding the suitability of cities as regions to invest and do business and their attractiveness for global staff.

These indices can therefore play a role in reporting and influencing stakeholder perceptions of cities as well as in generating and perpetuating city stereotypes.

Greater Perth's performance and reputation in international indices was examined in detail as part of the Committee for Perth's *Bigger & Better Beyond the Boom* project. It identified Greater Perth as a comparatively competitive mid-tier global city and the fourth most competitive capital in Australia. It also established that Greater Perth has strong rivals – notably other major capitals within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.

The indices identify liveability/ quality of life as one of Perth's greatest competitive advantages – but also established that this

strength is not distinctive to Greater Perth. Liveability is also a primary strength of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Auckland.

In addition, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) rates 'liveability' in Greater Perth below that of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Auckland and, while major cities in Asia have increased their EIU liveability ratings over the past decade, Greater Perth's ranking fell from 8th to 14th from 2015-18. Recently released global indices also position Greater Perth well behind Sydney and Melbourne as a place to study; as a city of innovation; and as an implementer of smart technology – all of which are emerging indicators of success in competitive twenty-first century cities.

Table 1: Index Ratings for Australian and Asia-Pacific Cities

City Index	Perth	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Adelaide	Auckland	Singapore	Osaka	Hong Kong
Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Index 2018	14	5	2	22	10	12	35	3	37
Mercer Quality of Living Survey 2018	21	10	16	37	29	3	25	59	71
Mercer Cost of Living Survey 2018	61	29	58	84	87	81	4	10	1
Economist Intelligence Unit Worldwide Cost of Living Survey 2019	64	16	22	41	51	41	1	5	1
Numbeo Cost of Living Comparison 2018	77	40	86	144	110	60	38	85	81
2ThinkNow Innovation Cities 2018	105	10	16	54	163	96	6	45	27
QS Best Student Cities 2018	39	9	3	21	41	23	15	19	12
Easy Park Smart Cities Index 2017	41	12	10	N/A	61	48	2	52	68
Resonance World's Best City Brands 2017	62	5	11	29	N/A	N/A	2	61	34

Source: Committee for Perth, 2018; EIU, 2019

Yet, Greater Perth has substantially improved its 'cost of living' rating in recent years and the most recent EIU Survey (2019) ranks Perth 64th – making it the most affordable major capital in Australia and the most affordable city of those compared in Table 1.

Perth's Reputation as Reported in International Literature and Media

Perceptions of and opinions about Greater Perth have been preserved in literature and print media since settlement and afford snapshots of the region's pre and post-colonial evolution towards a city of more than two million inhabitants. They also offer an insight into Greater Perth's evolving external reputation and the factors that have influenced it.

This section outlines perceptions of Perth reported in the media generated by major international events. It also delivers an overview of literature and media reports about Perth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century non-fiction literature, academic literature and media reports, most notably in the spheres of travel and tourism and arts and culture. The findings presented are based on a review of more than forty articles referenced within the text below or listed in the attached bibliography.

Perceptions of Perth from Major International Events

In the mid to late twentieth century, Greater Perth showcased itself to the globe through its involvement in, and hosting of, major international

events including the 1962 British Empire and Commonwealth Games; the 1987 America's Cup; and the first orbital space flight by a United States astronaut, John Glenn. These events had a pivotal influence on Greater Perth's twentieth century external reputation and were successful in presenting attributes of the region to the world in a primarily positive light.

City of Light

In 1962, Greater Perth and Western Australia played a role in the historic first US orbital flight by John Glenn aboard Friendship-7. While tracking stations at Muchea in Western Australia and Woomera in South Australia tracked Glenn's progress across the Australian continent, Greater Perth reached out to Glenn by switching on all of the lights in the city (WA Museum, 2012). Glenn observed the lights on the edge of the vast darkness of the Indian Ocean and remarked: "*The lights show*

up very well, thank everybody for turning them on". As a result, Perth became known to the world as the 'City of Light' and Perth Lord Mayor at the time, Harry Howard, was invited to be part of the New York ticker tape celebrating Glenn's flight (Gary, 2012).

Perceptions of Perth from the VIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games

Later in 1962, Greater Perth stepped onto the international stage again, hosting the VIIth British Empire and Commonwealth Games. British news reels from the time describe Perth as a "beautiful capital" and "paradise" located "a few miles inland on the Swan River Estuary". The city was commended for the new Perry Lakes Stadium, reportedly costing the city one million pounds, the athletes' village in City Beach, as well as its calm beaches and hot "tropical climate". The Games were branded a success and Perth's 500,000 people were praised for "rising to the occasion" (British Pathe, 2014).

Greater Perth's success in hosting the games came as a surprise to some international commentators. James Coote of the London Daily Telegraph reported: "The VIIth Commonwealth Games have proved that it is possible for an area as basically devoid of sports interest as Perth to stage the second most important sports meeting in the World – and stage it successfully. Perth has shown that these Games will continue for years to come" (Howie and Wynne, 2014).

Perceptions of Perth and Fremantle from 1987 America's Cup

In 1983, an Australian team, bankrolled by Western Australian entrepreneur Alan Bond won the prestigious America's Cup, breaking the United States' 132-year stranglehold on the title, and ending the longest

winning streak in the history of sport. The victory has been reported as transcending sailing and "becoming the symbol of a time when Australia came of age and made our mark on the international stage" (ABC, 2013).

Yet for Perth, the victory was even more significant. Australia was to defend the Cup in 1987 and the internationally renowned sporting event was to be held in Perth and Fremantle. Described by David Allan-Petale of the Sydney Morning Herald as "a stubby provincial city and a shabby port far from the glamour of Sydney or the culture of Melbourne", 1980s Perth was considered an Australian backwater and while Alan Bond's new status of Australian hero put the spotlight on Western Australia's bold, entrepreneurial culture, hosting the America's Cup was also an opportunity to place Perth firmly on the global map.

Graham Edwards, member of the Western Australian Labor Government at the time, described this period: "There was a feeling that this was an opportunity for Perth to grasp the future – to reshape Perth as a city of excitement and a city of the future, and a hospitality and tourist hub" (Allan-Petale, 2017).

Consequently, the America's Cup provided the impetus for investment in new modern skyscrapers, hotels, sports facilities, marinas and malls and also facilitated the much-needed revitalisation of Fremantle and its heritage west end from 'scruffy port' to bustling entertainment district. Greater Perth's rapid 1980s facelift and optimism was captured in international media reports, which depict a remote and young, if relatively unsophisticated region dressed up and eagerly awaiting its moment on the world stage.

On December 31, 1986, Nicholas Kristoff of the New York Times wrote of Fremantle: "This sunwashed harbor town, home to the America's Cup sailing races, abounds with souvenirs, freshly painted storefronts and shopkeepers eagerly awaiting an invasion of American tourists. The only thing that Fremantle lacks, so far, is the American tourists...But even if the foreigners do not show up in the numbers anticipated, Fremantle has suddenly become one of the most fashionable places to shop or dine in all of Western Australia...An erstwhile earthy undercurrent in Fremantle – with topless barmaids inside some pubs, and inebriated patrons outside – has been replaced by hordes of young people who sip wine and are well, if minimally, dressed."

Yet the 1987 America's Cup was widely heralded as a success for Fremantle and Perth, and a post-event report found that the visitors did come – estimating that the regatta attracted 930,000 visitors to WA and generated \$450 million in business and investment for the State (Butler S, 2017).

But not all visiting journalists were impressed. American journalist and political satirist P. J. O'Rourke wrote of his travels to Fremantle for the America's Cup "God knows how the America's Cup wound up out here...In Western Australia they don't even know how to make that vital piece of sailboating equipment, the gin and tonic"...while in reference to the America's Cup Ball he quipped "...nobody in Western Australia owns a tuxedo either. Every guy there was wearing a rented one exactly like mine. We all spent the night itching and squirming and scratching ourselves like apes" (p. 146).

1987 and subsequent years proved challenging for Greater Perth and Western Australia. Following Australia's America's

Cup defeat, the stock market crash in mid-October ended the 'era of the entrepreneur' in Australia and Western Australia, with high-profile businessmen including Alan Bond, Laurie Connell, Keven Parry and Robert Holmes à Court suffering substantial financial losses (Morgan and Janda, 2017).

The stock market crash also precipitated a financial downturn in the State and the exposure of a corruption crisis for the Western Australian government which resulted in the 1988 resignation of then Premier Brian Burke, who a subsequent Royal Commission found had engaged in "grossly improper" conduct in regard to business dealings during his time as Premier at substantial cost to the State, and was imprisoned for falsifying travel expenses (Burrell A, 2015).

In the following decade, while other Australian cities (most notably Sydney and Melbourne) adopted aggressive strategies of capital investment, self-promotion and image creation and delivered hallmark international events including the 2000 Olympics, Greater Perth became slow to develop its potential (Kennewell and Shaw, 2008). Numerous public development projects in Greater Perth over this period including the Hillarys Boat Harbour and Graham Farmer Freeway attracted significant regional controversy and public opposition, while the Bell Tower and Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre were also criticised (within Greater Perth) for failing to reach their potential (Committee for Perth 2011; 2011a; 2016).

In addition, while infrastructure projects including the extension of Greater Perth's suburban passenger rail were widely heralded a success, the quality of the region's sporting and

cultural infrastructure fell behind that of other Australian cities and Greater Perth's Central Business District was increasingly criticised on global tourism websites for lacking vibrancy and attractions (Kennewell and Shaw, 2008).

Greater Perth in Literature and Media

Published perceptions of Greater Perth extend beyond those generated by major events and are present in art, fiction and academic literature. Stratton and Trainer (2016) examined perceptions of Perth in literature and songs and refer to them as 'myths of the city' which "both convey the experience of that particular city and help to construct that experience" (p. 34).

Twentieth and early twenty-first century myths of Greater Perth include: Greater Perth as the world's most isolated or remote capital city; Perth as a small city; Perth as Dullsville; Perth as a boom-town; Perth as expensive and unsophisticated; and Perth as revitalised, with the dominate stereotype shifting over time in response to investment in the region along with economic, social and cultural change. Greater Perth's people have also been periodically (and somewhat paradoxically) typecast as laid back; lacksadaisical; inward looking; entrepreneurial; fiercely independent; slow to accept change; and exhibiting a sense of inferiority to capitals 'over east'.

There are numerous examples of these stereotypes of Greater Perth being presented in late twentieth century literature. One of these is Rodney Hall's book 'Home: A Journey through Australia', in which the author writes: "People assure me that

Perth – the world's remotest city – is vivacious, exciting and beautiful. I have to admit that I find it dull. I returned to the west last year, hoping to encounter the place I still hear reported as being there. For me, it doesn't exist: just a little city fully absorbed with navel-gazing. Its loyal citizens, obsessed with cleanliness and sunbathing, congratulate each other on living in a place so vivacious, so exciting and so beautiful. On weekdays Perth strikes me as half-dead – and totally dead on Sunday. The location is fine, the Swan River describes a broad sweep around parklands and freeways, which usurp all the most interesting sites. People are friendly, this cannot be denied, and the pace is leisurely. Yet the city seems to have no heart, no shape, no character. In search of character you should catch the first available train (or taxi, if desperate) to the port of Fremantle" (p. 119–20).

Yet over the past decade, some of these stereotypes have been increasingly challenged and reported perceptions of Greater Perth have exhibited a significant shift.

Perceptions of Greater Perth as Isolated

Perceptions of Greater Perth as the world's most isolated capital city were commonly presented in twentieth century literature and, while this claim is a fallacy, it is reflective of Perth's remote geographical location, notably the distance between Greater Perth and other cities in Australia, and in the Asia-Pacific region. It is widely acknowledged that Greater Perth's remote location has shaped its internal identity and external reputation (Stratton and Trainer, 2016).

A review of literature and media undertaken for the purpose of this Bulletin has identified Perth's remote location as the

characteristic of Perth most commonly depicted in external media reports over the past two decades.

While it is acknowledged that isolation/remoteness can have negative connotations, particularly in the context of globalisation and efforts to attract international visitors and investment, it is also noted to be *"less relevant than it was for most of the twentieth century, when flying interstate was expensive and the Nullarbor Plain was crossed via dirt track"* (Whish-Wilson, 2013, p. 12).

Furthermore, some external media and academic literature have highlighted positive consequences of Greater Perth's remote location, including crediting isolation with generating creativity, a fiercely independent culture and delivering a source of local pride.

In 2012, Georgina Pearson of *Encore* magazine wrote *"A five-hour flight from the eastern seaboard, WA's capital city is as far off the beaten track as you can get... But that's not to say Perth is deficient within. In fact, this forced isolation has cultivated a small but blossoming media industry, yielding creative of international calibre. A glance at Perth's media landscape reveals an industry punching above its weight."* Quoting Perth artist Tina Wilson, Pearson also writes: *"There is less competition so there is more room to be creative. Perth work is as original, if not more original, because the unique challenges that come with being small can often create opportunities"* (p. 32).

Australian academic Tara Brabazon (2012) also challenged the idea of isolation as a disadvantage, writing: *"It is important to note that isolation from larger population hubs is not a disadvantage. Indeed,*

the second-tier cities literature (Markusen et. al. 1999) – which is surprisingly unmentioned in Perth's economic, cultural and social development portfolio – notes that a disconnection from global cities enables quirky specificities to thrive" (p. 175).

Yet perceptions of Greater Perth's location are changing and a shift in the reported narrative about Greater Perth's geographical location is evident over the past decade. Greater Perth has increasingly identified itself and been identified externally by its proximity to Asia rather than its distance from eastern states capitals.

A review of twenty-seven research reports and strategies prepared from 2003-2018 undertaken as part of the Committee for Perth's 2018 *Bigger & Better Beyond the Boom* project established that Perth's proximity to Asia has been reported as a key economic opportunity for Perth since 2008. An example is the Committee for Perth's 2012 *Towards a Bright Future* project which identified an opportunity for Perth to become 'Australia's Gateway to Asia and the Indian Ocean Rim' (Committee for Perth, 2018).

This perception of Greater Perth has also emerged in external media reports. Lonely Planet's current online profile of Greater Perth (2019), for example, identifies the city as being *"as close to Bali as it is to eastern (Australian) capitals"* while Chris Pash of Business Insider (2014) described Greater Perth's location as central, rather than remote, noting Greater Perth's geographic proximity to the *"world's emerging economies"*.

Factors influencing shifting perceptions about Greater Perth's geographic location include globalisation (the trend of increasing global integration); the entrance of China and India into

the global economy; the growing prominence of Asian economies; and rapid improvements in connectivity and accessibility through technology and air travel (Committee for Perth, 2018). In this regard, Greater Perth's increasing accessibility by air has also been a substantial focus of international marketing and media attention, most notably following the commencement of direct flights between Perth and London in March 2018 (Australian Tourism Exchange, 2017) and the announced launch of direct daily flights between Perth and Tokyo from 1 September 2019 (Loo, 2018).

Perceptions of Perth as a Small City

External and internal twentieth century and early twenty-first century media reports have also presented Perth as a small city. This perception has been examined by academics Stratton and Trainer (2016) who write: *"In 1980 Perth's population was a little under 900,000. This was not small. For comparison, in 1980 in the United States, Dallas had just over 900,000 inhabitants and San Diego just under. In Britain, Sheffield at this same time had a much smaller population of rather over 500,000, which was roughly the same as that of Liverpool. By 2000, Perth's population had increased by about a million to nearly 1,900,000. Nevertheless, the rhetoric that Perth is small has, as we shall see, been perpetuated..."* (p. 36).

While Greater Perth is reported to retain a reputation as a small city, this research has found that reports of Perth as small have decreased over the past decade, with a shift in perceptions particularly evident during the period of rapid population and economic growth from the mid-2000s to 2012-13. During this period, media reports about Greater Perth were more likely to describe Perth as 'booming' than 'small'.

Perceptions of Greater Perth as Dullsville

Among the most publicised perceptions of Perth is that of 'Dullsville', popularised by the Lonely Planet's travel guide in 2000. Stratton and Trainer (2016) quote Rebecca Chau and Virginia Jealous: "When many a traveller came to visit in the 1990s, the city was dismissed as 'dullsville'. The streets were dead, there was nowhere to party. Locals were just too lackadaisical, at home, in their boardshorts and desert boots, tinkering with the barbecue" (p. 52).

This perception was repeated in other media reports including an article from the UK's 'Management Today' in 2008, in which an anonymous author wrote of doing business in Perth: "There are excellent job opportunities and the regional economy is booming. The halcyon lifestyle is the main attraction, but it has to be said that if you've had enough of sun, sand, golf and tranquillity, Perth can live up to its nickname of Dullsville."

Perceptions of Greater Perth as dull have been examined and challenged in literature. In 2012, Tara Brabazon wrote: "A great music industry including a thriving band scene and dance communities are present along with bohemian districts in Fremantle and North Perth, wine and food industries within a twenty-minute drive of the city (Brabazon 2011), and five universities populating the city with bright, ambitious and thoughtful residents. If this is dullsville then – with respect – these critics need to travel more widely." (p. 172).

Brabazon has also argued that while Greater Perth's Dullsville tag stemmed significantly from the perception of a 'dead' city centre or city with no 'heart' –

residents of Perth were content with their lives in the suburbs ascertaining that "*The problem confronting Perth planners in particular is that the denizens like living in the suburbs and have no great need to travel to 'the centre'*" (Stratton and Trainer, 2016, p. 37).

Similarly, Kennewell and Shaw (2008) maintained that Greater Perth's Dullsville debate "went beyond considerations of public planning and desirable urban form to challenge the basis of Perth's established lifestyle" and suggested that "Those bemoaning Perth as Dullsville on the basis of reduced shopping opportunities or the absence of top ranked entertainers who frequently by-pass Perth on their much publicised 'world tours' may be a minority voice" (p. 252-253).

Despite this dissent, the 'Dullsville' tag has been credited with being the "slap in the face Perth needed" by igniting debate about Greater Perth's future and assisted in generating "intense interest and desire for intervention in the CBD" (Fulker, 2017; Brabazon, 2012, p. 181).

Perceptions of Greater Perth as a Booming Mining City

From 2009 to 2013, the peak of Greater Perth's mining investment fuelled economic upswing and associated migratory population expansion, perceptions of Perth were shifting from 'Dullsville' to 'Boom-town'. This has become a dominant perception of Greater Perth in twenty-first century media, with 'mining', 'resources' and 'boom' referenced in media articles and literature about Perth (reviewed during the preparation of this Bulletin) almost as often as 'isolated' or 'beaches', with mining and resources often presented as a central element of the regions' culture during this period.

Robyn Annear of 'The Monthly' commented on the connection between mining, arts and culture in Greater Perth in her 2014 article, 'Perth Goes Boom', remarking: "Barry Humphries likened it to a giant shish kebab. Fifteen artless lumps of ore skewered on a 14-metre pipe from an oil drill, stood upright in a public park. That's the Ore Obelisk, planted on Perth's busy St Georges Terrace in 1972 to celebrate Western Australia's one-millionth citizen and "the harmony of mining and environment". "Who but a 'practical idealist' would claim to celebrate "the harmony of mining and environment"?" Annear further observed: "A celebration of the harmony of mining and the arts might be an apt description of the Perth Festival, held each February. Since Sydney's funding took a dive this year, Perth now boasts the richest arts festival in Australia" (p. 32-5).

Perceptions of Perth as Expensive and Unsophisticated

Yet during this period, Perth was also presented as expensive and, in some publications, as lacking sophistication. In 2009, Jason Loucas of Conde Nast Traveller reported on 'Perth's New Cultural Scene' writing: "Locals tell you that 'WA', as the State of Western Australia is generally known, used to stand for Wait Awhile. Not any longer. The man from the tourist office tells me that the restaurants are pricier than in London. 'Perth's no longer cheap and cheerful,' he says, and makes it sound like a boast... Perth really was an Australian backwater; now the city has begun to aspire to a much grander status."

By 2011, Lonely Planet's assessment of Perth had shifted significantly, although not in an entirely positive direction. Jenna Clarke from Traveller quoted

the guidebook as painting a "hot and cold" picture of WA and Perth: "Where many of Australia's other state capitals might have a handful of top restaurants charging over \$40 for a main, in Perth those prices are fast becoming a norm for any establishment that considers itself above average," the guide stated "Unfortunately, the experience doesn't always match the outlay."

The guide was also cited as criticising the culture of Greater Perth's mining and resources workforce, stating: "One of the by-products of the mining boom has been the rise of the Cashed-Up Bogan (CUB) – young men with plenty of cash to splash on muscle cars, beer and drugs." "It would pay to keep your wits about you in pubs and on the streets after dark" (Clarke, 2011).

Perceptions of Perth as a Revitalised/Transforming City

Yet over the past decade, perceptions of Greater Perth presented in the media began to demonstrate a notable shift, with journalists increasingly documenting the positive impacts of the region's twenty-first century economic and population growth including Greater Perth's cultural, entertainment and urban revitalisation. From 2014-19, themes of urban transformation and accessibility dominated the media and travel articles about Perth.

This shift coincided with new development and major investment projects, most notably in Greater Perth's central business district, previously criticised as 'dead'. This included the emergence and growth of Greater Perth's small bar scene following amendments to liquor licensing laws; the arrival of food trucks and farmers markets; the commencement and completion of major revitalisation and redevelopment projects such as New Northbridge, Perth Cultural

Centre, Elizabeth Quay, Perth City Link, Yagan Square and Scarborough; the development of new cultural, entertainment and sporting infrastructure including the State Theatre Centre, RAC Arena and Optus Stadium; as well as the emergence of Perth's Fringe World Festival to complement the existing and highly successful Perth Festival.

The impact of these projects on reported perceptions of Greater Perth has been substantial. In 2014, Baz Dreisinger of the New York Times dubbed Perth a "Hipster Heaven" and promoted Perth's "multiple parks and waterfronts; spotless subways and free public buses; restaurant menus with organic, locally sourced food and wine; cool bars in heritage buildings; and pop-up everything, from farmers' markets to cinema and yoga" while Andrew Stafford (2017) and Abigail Healy (2017) write of a city "transformed"; and Conde Nast Traveller referred to "the new Perth" (2017).

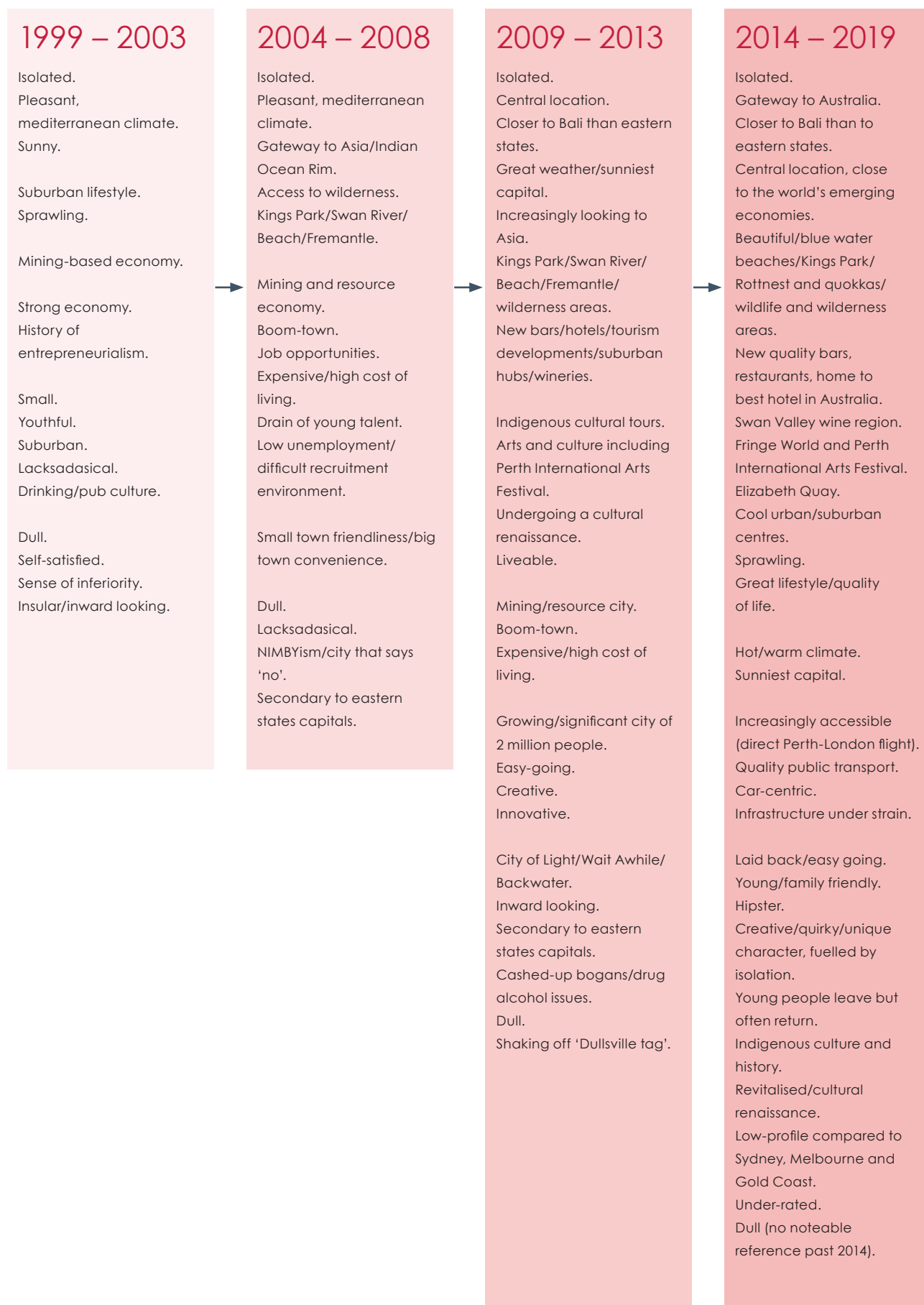
Greater Perth has also recently witnessed Conde Nast Traveller (2017) voting Como The Treasury as the best hotel in Australia and New Zealand and 12th best hotel in the world; Qantas commencing a direct Perth to London service in 2018; and both Forbes and the New York Times naming Perth among the top global destinations for 2019. This has generated additional positive publicity and has assisted in positioning Perth as increasingly accessible and as delivering a competitive and sophisticated visitor experience.

It is also apparent that this transformation has been achieved without challenging Greater Perth's established lifestyle, evidenced by the strong support among residents for the urban changes in Perth since 2012 (Ipsos, 2012; Ipsos, 2015; Ipsos, 2018). It is now evident that the

next challenge for Greater Perth will be to sustain and expand this positive narrative, particularly in the context of the recent economic slow-down.

The evolution of reported perceptions and characteristics of Greater Perth over the past two decades is summarised in Figure 2. It depicts not only an increasingly positive narrative and perceptions of Greater Perth, but also reported growth in the perceived number and diversity of attractions available to stakeholders.

Figure 2: The evolving twenty-first century reputation of Greater Perth



Persistent Perceptions of Greater Perth

While this review has identified shifting perceptions and stereotypes of Greater Perth, it has also identified persistent perceptions of the region from the mid twentieth century to today. They relate to the region's location, natural environment, climate and people and include reports of Greater Perth as: remote, beautiful and sunny with a pleasant mediterranean climate, great beaches, an enviable location on the Swan River, friendly people and a laid back lifestyle. Access to the natural environment and wildlife and to regional locations such as the Margaret River region also consistently feature in reports about Perth in recent decades.

Whilst Perth's transformation has emerged as a common narrative in external media in recent years, journalists still often identify Perth's natural environment and access to wildlife as among Greater Perth's biggest strengths, while unique characteristics such as Perth's 'piercing light' and the 'Fremantle Doctor' are also positively described.

Andrew Stafford of The Guardian observed in 2017: *"The first thing you notice about Western Australia is the light; light so piercing that the late David McComb, from the Perth band the Triffids, once noted that no foreign pair of dark sunglasses could ever shield you from it."* Stafford also described Perth as "dazzling" and reported on Perth's traditional attractions, combined with the region's recent metamorphosis: *"Once you get past its obvious natural attractions – the long, white beaches welcoming the Indian Ocean; the immense King's Park on the western edge of the CBD... – this thin strip of land on the Swan*

coastal plain gives up its secrets slowly. But while it will always be isolated, it is turning its back on isolationism and showing its face to the world."

Lucas Peterson, 2017, reported in the New York Times, that *"The most enjoyable solo trip I took, though, incorporated all of Perth's major appeals. Rottnest Island... while I wasn't able to score a vaunted 'quokka selfie,' I found the little guys to be much like Perth and its environs – laid-back, friendly, outside the mainstream and definitely underrated."*

While in 2018, Telegraph journalist, Nigel Richardson quoted a Perth resident, in his article 'How boring Perth was reinvented as a magnet for hipsters' stating: *"In Melbourne and London people work hard but they don't know when to stop," ... "Here they work hard and then they switch off, go to the beach, whatever. The work-life balance is more healthy. I really love it."*

The value that Greater Perth's inner urban neighbourhoods and centres add to the Greater Perth region has also been progressively recognised. In 2017, Lonely Planet named Maylands one of Australia's coolest three neighbourhoods (Baker D, 2017) and praised "eclectic neighbourhoods", such as Leederville (Bainger F, 2017).

Emerging Recognition of Indigenous People and Culture

External media articles also demonstrate a heightened acknowledgement, respect for and interest in Aboriginal people, cultures and history as well as a desire for Aboriginal cultural experiences. While Forbes Travel Guide (2019) lists Kings Park's Aboriginal Art Gallery among its

'10 Top Perth Attractions', other journalists have highlighted Aboriginal cultural experiences as among their most memorable experiences in Greater Perth and WA.

In his 2018 article for The Sun newspaper in the United Kingdom, Jonathon Reilly described: *"The gentle hum of the didgeridoo vibrates down the boardwalk, interrupted only by the lapping waves breaking near us. With his melodious playing, George Walley, my guide and local elder here in Western Australia, is perfectly rounding off a tour of the local spiritual land. He has taken me to see the living fossils that form egg shapes on the coastline near Mandurah, an hour south of Perth. Called thrombolites, the orbs were thought to be eggs laid by a giant snake, part of a creation story told by local aboriginal people. George tells me: 'Every time I come here I feel like I am visiting an old friend'."*

Nigel Richardson was similarly effusive in his praise of a tour of Ngilgi Cave in Dunsborough with Aboriginal guide Josh Whiteland, while also acknowledging the "dark history" of Rottnest Island as a penal colony for Aboriginal people. Of his Ngilgi Cave experience, Richardson remarked: *"The cave, a vast amphitheatre of phantasmagoric limestone formations that he regards as a "living, breathing spirit", is sacred to the local Wadandi people as it forms a "pathway to the dreaming" through which the spirits of the dead flow out to their final resting place at sea. In 1911 the soprano Dame Nellie Melba had a piano lowered into the cave so she could sing in its strange acoustics, but I can't believe this was more memorable than Whiteland's performance on his didgeridoo – a hypnotic orchestral wash that contained both weather and animal sounds."*

Conclusion

The purpose of this Bulletin was to examine and provide a review of the *reported* external reputation of Greater Perth in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. It seeks to identify the factors that influence the reputation of place; the established benefits of a positive place reputation; and the evolution of Greater Perth's external, reported reputation over time.

The research examined:

- Perceptions of Greater Perth as presented by global city indices, which depict a region that is perceived to be liveable but not as liveable as other Australian cities including Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Perth is also falling behind its Australian city-counterparts in regard to perceptions of its performance in areas of innovation, smart technology, attractiveness to international students and the strength of the city's brand.
- International coverage of major international events in Greater Perth in the twentieth century, which depict the region as remote, somewhat unsophisticated and laid back yet also confident, friendly, youthful, optimistic, entrepreneurial and outward-looking with the capacity to attract and deliver hallmark events of global significance.
- Non-fiction literature and external media coverage of arts, culture and travel opportunities in Greater Perth, which illustrate the evolution of perceptions of Greater Perth from 'Dullsville' to a 'revitalised/transformed city'. This literature also expresses pervasive, positive narratives of Greater Perth that are both

distinctive and evocative. These include Greater Perth as remote (i.e. off the beaten track), beautiful and sunny with a pleasant mediterranean climate, great beaches, an enviable location on the Swan River, friendly people, a laid-back lifestyle and delivering unique access to nature and wildlife.

This Bulletin has established that the reputation of Greater Perth and places globally is influenced by perceptions of a wide range of regional attributes by a cross-section of internal and external stakeholders. It found that both stakeholder expectations and regional attributes change over time and, as a result, place reputations shift and evolve, influenced partially the fortunes of a place but most critically by its actions.

Key factors identified as influencing Greater Perth's reputation in the latter twentieth century and early twenty first century include: involvement in and hosting of major international events; investment in capital, sporting and cultural infrastructure; urban redevelopment and revitalisation; improvements to international accessibility; economic growth; pervasive stereotypes; promotion and marketing; Greater Perth's geographic location and attributes; as well as the region's society and culture and changing perceptions of it over time.

In particular, the hosting of major international events as well as phases of investment and revitalisation in the inner city and in cultural and sporting infrastructure and urban form have primarily been perceived positively by the outside world and boosted perceptions of Greater Perth while periods of

relative underinvestment in these areas have been harshly judged, the impacts of which can linger.

The Bulletin also established that perceived satisfaction of stakeholders is connected to the satisfaction of other stakeholders in both a cooperative and a competitive way. In this regard, the latter twentieth and early twenty first century was identified as a period during which an inherent conflict was perceived between the characteristics of Perth most valued by residents (i.e. suburban lifestyles) and those sought by visitors (i.e. a vibrant city centre). Yet, the transformation of Perth's inner city over the past decade has proven that these qualities need not always be mutually exclusive.

Looking forward, it is evident that Greater Perth must not slip into complacency in the post-boom and post-Dullsville era. Rather the region can to take control of, *and actively shape*, its future narrative and reputation through ongoing, strategic action and outward communication.

This should include a program of urban revitalisation; branding and promotion to reinforce positive perceptions and stereotypes; continued capital investment in sporting, arts and cultural infrastructure; maximising accessibility; identifying opportunities to showcase Greater Perth to the world; addressing the region's perceived weaknesses including innovation, smart technology and attractiveness to visitors and international students; as well as building on the region's distinctive and emerging strengths.

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About FACTBase

FACTBase is a collaborative research project between the Committee for Perth and The University of Western Australia to benchmark the liveability of Perth and its global connectedness through an examination of Perth's economic, social, demographic and political character.

The FACTBase team of academics and researchers condense a plethora of existing information and databases on the major themes, map what is happening in Perth in pictures as well as words, and examine how Perth compares with, and connects to, other cities around the world.

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