

# FACTBase

Bulletin 64, July 2019

## Perceptions of Greater Perth as Expressed Through Electronic Word of Mouth

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### 1.0 Introduction

The international reputation of Greater Perth is influenced by a wide cross section of variables, including lived experiences, the reported experiences and perceptions of others, and long-held stereotypes.

Word of mouth has long been recognised as a valuable form of business and place marketing. In the twenty-first century, the role and reach of word of mouth has expanded as people share their experiences and perceptions about goods, businesses and places on the Internet (Kundu and Rajan, 2017). This sharing is undertaken through a large variety of digital platforms that support user-generated content – from online booking and review companies to social media, chat rooms, blogs and discussion forums, which is known as e-word of mouth (Kundu and Rajan, 2017).

These media are known to be among the most important influencers of brand reputation and consumer decisions (Taylor, 2018). It has been established that information published online, particularly user-generated content such

### Summary of Key Findings

- The most common media through which external residents obtain information about Greater Perth are: word of mouth (40%); Internet sources (blogs, online news, online booking and review websites) (38%); television programs (35%); and social media (28%).
- 58% of external residents who have seen, read or heard information about Greater Perth in the past 12 months reported that it had positively influenced their perception of the region.
- Social media content associated with Greater Perth over the past 12 months and discussion forum commentary about the region over the past decade was primarily positive or neutral.
- Comments about and reviews of Greater Perth are mainly positive. The reviewers are most positive about Perth as a place to study and visit.
- The most commonly stated benefits of visiting, studying and living in Greater Perth are its beautiful landscapes, parks, beaches, connections to nature and wildlife, sunny climate and access to destinations in regional Western Australia.
- Most online forum contributors who identify themselves as residents or former residents provide positive and balanced commentary about Greater Perth, although they are also more likely to make negative comments and act as trolls in online discussion threads about the region.
- While some online commentary continues to present Perth CBD as dull and boring, there is a shift towards positive perceptions—specifically depicting the Perth CBD as revitalised. These perceptions are most frequently expressed by residents and former residents of Greater Perth.
- Greater Perth is currently presented as more affordable than major Australian cities (Sydney and Melbourne), but it has few employment opportunities.
- Online commentary about Greater Perth's location is changing from negative discourse about isolation/distance from eastern states capitals to positive remarks about its proximity/connectivity with Asia.
- Negative comments about Greater Perth's culture and society include descriptions of the region as cliquey, racist and intolerant.

as consumer reviews, influence the decisions that people make, including decisions about retail purchases, entertainment choices, international travel and study (Kim, Park & Lee, 2013; Taylor, 2018; Ye et al., 2011).

A review of the impact of online user-generated reviews on business performance using data from a major online Chinese travel agency found that traveller reviews had a significant impact on online sales, with a 10% increase in traveller review ratings that boosted online bookings by more than 5% (Ye et al., 2011). Their study also determined that searching for travel-related information is one of the most popular online activities in China, with between 35% and 74% of travel purchasers visiting a message board, forum, or online community before making a travel purchase decision (Ye et al., 2011). Furthermore, TripAdvisor, a consumer review website, has claimed to reach 60% of all travellers in 12 major travel markets across the globe, who researched and subsequently booked travel online in Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 2017 (TripAdvisor, 2018).

User-generated comments and reviews have been found to influence consumers because they perceive this feedback to be genuine and more reliable than information issued directly by firms or promotional organisations (Mir and Rehman, 2013). This feedback can also be widely shared and viewed multiple times over a long period of time (Moran et al., 2010). This influence continues despite well-documented weaknesses of these platforms, including false information, fake reviews and the influence of Internet trolls, and the tendency for dissatisfied or disgruntled users to share their experiences online

more than satisfied consumers (Cheng et al., 2017; Malbon, 2013; Rachna, 2017).

This Bulletin examines Greater Perth's online reputation based on an examination of online user-generated reviews and comments about the region and its attractions within social media and online discussion forums, and on travel and education review websites. This is undertaken through an Artificial Intelligence (AI) application, which is combined with a manual review and assessment process. This research forms part of the *Hashtag Perth* project that is run by the Committee for Perth.

## 2.0 Influence of Internet and Social Media on Perceptions of Greater Perth

The Perth Reputation Survey that was prepared for the Committee for Perth as part of the *Hashtag Perth* project was released in June 2019. The survey's responses indicate that residents of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Singapore and Auckland primarily obtain information about Greater Perth through word of mouth (40%); Internet sources (blogs, online news, online booking and review websites) (38%); television programs (35%); and social media (28%) (Ipsos, 2019). This highlights the influence of e-word of mouth and user-generated content on Greater Perth's national and international reputation.

Yet, just 26% of external respondents reported seeing, hearing or reading information about Greater Perth within the past 12 months (Ipsos, 2019). Of these respondents, 58% said that seeing, reading or hearing information about Greater Perth had a positive impact on their perceptions of the region, 34% said that their perceptions

remained unchanged, while 7% reported a negative shift in their perceptions (Ipsos, 2019). This highlights the potential power of Internet sources and social media in generating positive perceptions of Greater Perth. It also indicates that information about Greater Perth has achieved limited penetration in external markets, and that not all information available online about the Greater Perth region is positive.

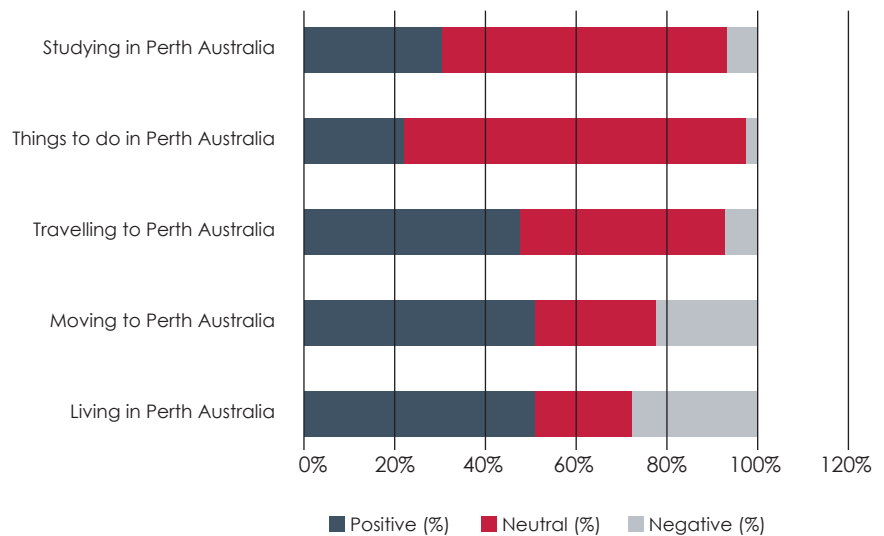
### 3.0 An Artificial Intelligence (AI) Review of Social Media Content

An AI application was applied to examine social media content about Greater Perth posted over the 12-month period from 1 June 2018 to 1 June 2019. The following five primary keyword searches were undertaken: 'life in Perth Australia'; 'moving to Perth Australia'; 'travelling to Perth Australia'; 'things to do in Perth Australia'; and 'studying in Perth Australia'. The results incorporate all user and corporate generated social media content. Figure 1 gives a summary of the search results.<sup>1</sup>

The review found that a substantial majority (89%) of the 975 social media posts that were associated with living in, visiting, and studying in Greater Perth are classified as positive or neutral, while 11% of total search results are classified as negative. The highest proportion of negative posts were identified through the searches: 'life in Perth, Australia' (28%) and 'moving to Perth, Australia' (22%). However, the same searches generated the highest proportion of positive content (51%).

The keyword searches 'travelling to Perth, Australia', 'things to do in Perth, Australia' and 'studying in Perth, Australia' generated the highest proportion of positive-neutral content: 79%, 98%, and 93%, respectively. The high proportion of content classified as neutral in these searches was associated with information-based posts (i.e. information about attractions, institutions or airlines). Positive and neutral (information-based) posts

**Figure 1: Social Media Content Associated with Living, Visiting and Studying in Greater Perth (Classified by AI Application)**



associated with Greater Perth were most commonly shared and achieved the greatest reach across all categories.

### 4.0 Greater Perth's Reputation in Online Discussion Forums

To understand the perceptions of Greater Perth expressed on the Internet in greater detail, 700 online opinions of Greater Perth posted in discussion forums over the past 12 years were manually examined. This included 490 online comments about Greater Perth as a place to live, 150 online comments about Greater Perth as a place to visit, and 60 reviews of Greater Perth as a place to study. A list of the forums and discussion threads examined is provided in Appendix A.

This examination specifically scrutinised *user-generated content* within online discussion forums and only included content that provides direct perceptions of living, visiting and/or studying in the Greater Perth region. It aimed to gain an indication of the internal and external stakeholders' perceptions of Greater Perth. It also aimed to

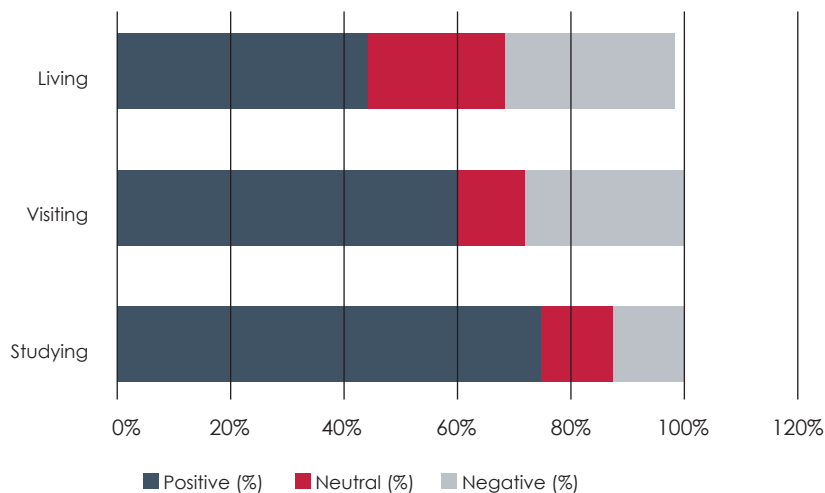
identify the patterns associated with positive and negative discussion threads. Individual comments were manually classified as positive, neutral and negative by subject matter.

The review found that online feedback about studying in the Greater Perth region was the most positive, followed by remarks about visiting the region. Comments about living in Greater Perth were more mixed but are still primarily positive or neutral (balanced). It is noted that, based on available information<sup>2</sup>, reviews of Greater Perth as a place to study were primarily provided by international students; comments about Greater Perth as place to visit were provided by visitors, residents and former residents; and remarks about living in Greater Perth were mainly provided by residents and former residents, with some input from non-residents (most often residents of other Australian capitals).

<sup>1</sup> It is noted that the results include all social media posts incorporating the keywords over the search period, which includes some comments that do not directly relate to Greater Perth as a region (i.e. posts associated with specific experiences, events, companies and institutions).

<sup>2</sup> It is noted that the contributor's city of residence is not always provided.

**Figure 2: Feedback about Studying, Visiting and Living in Greater Perth**



It is noted that online discussions about Greater Perth are at times subject to comments by Internet trolls, who disrupt constructive discussion with excessively downbeat and at times antisocial contributions, which generates a negative context to the discussion. This in turn is known to increase the probability of negative and excessively negative posts by other users (Cheng et al., 2017). This trend was observed in numerous forums and discussion threads about Greater Perth. It has also been identified as influencing the proportion of negative online comments, particularly about living in and visiting the region.

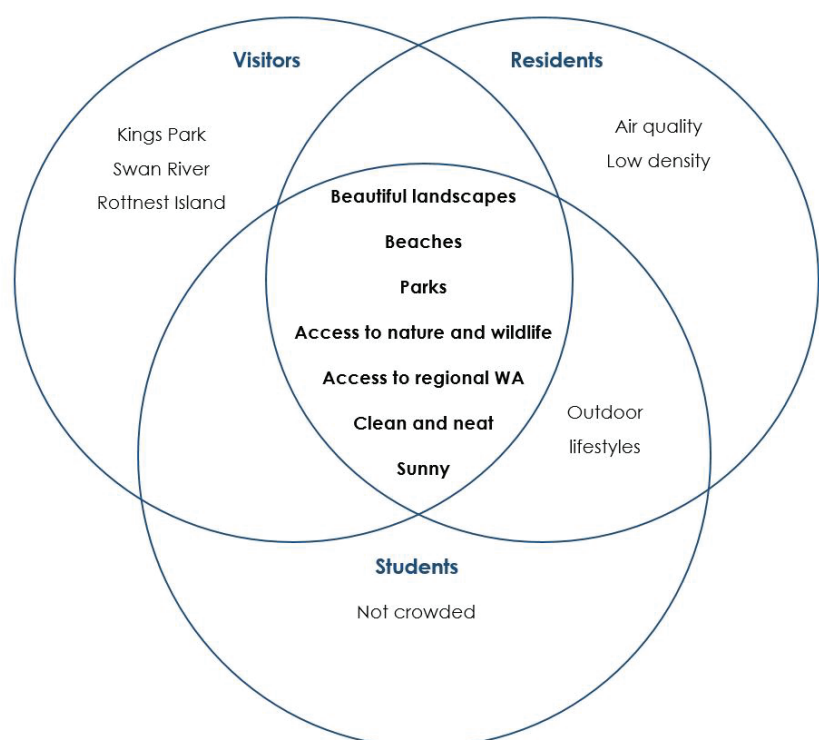
The residents also had a tendency to criticise Greater Perth, often in jest, which was observed to make the mood and context of a discussion more negative. These comments were also observed as having the potential to be misconstrued by other forum users or observers, particularly users from overseas.

## 5.0 Beautiful, Clean and Connected to Nature

Online feedback from residents, visitors and international students highlight Greater Perth's environment as its biggest strength. Most notably, the most commonly stated benefits of living in and visiting Greater Perth are its beautiful landscapes,

parks, beaches, connections to nature and wildlife, sunny climate and access to destinations in regional Western Australia. As illustrated in Figure 3, the benefits are identified by residents, students and visitors alike.

**Figure 3: Benefits of the Environment in Greater Perth Identified by Residents, Visitors and Students**





Some examples of online comments espousing these benefits follow:

*I highly suggest you see Perth if you have the time. Its a lovely sunny city which is more like a big country town with absolutely gorgeous beaches. There are some awesome regions in WA which are stunning to see.* Ellemay, Sydney, Australia, <https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/>

*Having lived in Perth for the last 12 years and having travelled to almost every continent on earth I can honestly say it is one of the most beautiful places on earth.* Anonymous Answered Sep 22, 2014, <https://www.quora.com/What-is-it-like-living-in-Perth-Australia>

*Perth does have nice beaches, as well as nature and wildlife. And one thing that beats the eastern states for sure – the sunsets. Seriously stunning sunsets on a frequent basis, especially in summer.* limeandpepper, 2016, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2522435>

*Perth is awesome and seriously one of the most underrated western cities in my biased opinion. Benefits:*

- *beautiful weather (almost) all year around*
- *in no other big city is the air as clear or the water unpolluted*
- *lots of parks, outdoor activities*

sketchy\_painting, [https://www.reddit.com/r/perth/comments/9fnt42/thoughts\\_on\\_living\\_in\\_perth/](https://www.reddit.com/r/perth/comments/9fnt42/thoughts_on_living_in_perth/)

Visitor feedback online primarily focuses on attractions in Greater Perth. Therefore, this research has examined online reviews of attractions in the region. In particular, environmental, nature based, and outdoor attractions are found to achieve the most positive feedback and strongest recommendations from visitors. Meanwhile, Kings Park and

Botanic Gardens (rated 5/5) and the Swan River (4.5/5) are identified as the top two 'things to do' in Perth on TripAdvisor, and visitor reviews of these attractions exemplify the qualities that residents and visitors identify as unique to Greater Perth; that is, beautiful, vast, well maintained and connected to nature. Some examples of visitor reviews of these attractions follow:

*How lucky is Perth to have this beautiful, vast oasis in the middle of the city. This was our first visit to Perth and we'd come back again just to stroll through these gardens again.* lamKP, Melbourne, Australia. [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d256589-Reviews-Kings\\_Park\\_and\\_Botanic\\_Garden-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d256589-Reviews-Kings_Park_and_Botanic_Garden-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

*Beautiful views across Perth city and river. Fantastic walks, flora, and the amazing baobab [boab] tree, lots of different walks and information about everything from native plants to history of Australia, everything beautifully looked after. Plenty of parking. We climbed the DNA Tower which looked out across the mile. Would love to be there when there is a concert in the park, looks fabulous.* Terveur, Belgium [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d256589-Reviews-Kings\\_Park\\_and\\_Botanic\\_Garden-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d256589-Reviews-Kings_Park_and_Botanic_Garden-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

*The walk along the Swan River is a wonderful way to unwind after a long travel day. The area is beautifully maintained and has such a relaxed vibe. The view is picturesque and very tranquil. We walked to Elizabeth Quay and Kings Park. Along the way we saw black swans and herons. The pathway is good for runners, walkers and cyclists.* Delores A, Edmonton Canada, 2019, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d1170920-Reviews-or10-Swan\\_River-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d1170920-Reviews-or10-Swan_River-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

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*Swan river is more than a river. It gives Perth its soul.* Prayanak, Bangkok Thailand [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d1170920-Reviews-or10-Swan\\_River-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d1170920-Reviews-or10-Swan_River-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

## 6.0 Revitalised Central Business District

The positive online comments about Greater Perth's environmental, nature and wildlife strengths are at times counteracted by negative statements about the Central Business District (CBD) and Greater Perth's cultural, shopping and entertainment/nightlife options.

Dubbed 'Dullsville' by Lonely Planet in 2000, Perth has been typecast as 'dull' and 'boring' for the past two decades, which is reflected in its reputation online (Davis, 2019). Negative stereotypes of Greater Perth as boring, behind other cities in Australia and slow to embrace change are most often expressed by current and past residents, and also residents of other Australian capital cities. Although these perceptions were most frequent before 2012, they have persisted in discussion forums through to 2019.

Associated with online comments that Greater Perth is 'boring' are views the region lacks 'things to do', including unique or iconic cultural activities and visitor attractions. These views are most often expressed by residents and former residents. Some examples follow:

*In my view Perth is a great city to live in, but not a very interesting place to visit. I'd go further: there*

*is really nothing in Perth city that is worth a trip from overseas or inter-state for its own sake. Perth is also very expensive. I usually recommend overseas visitors to spend no more than one night in Perth and then travel down south or up north. The real attractions in Western Australia are in the regions.* 2016, <https://www.quora.com/What-are-some-interesting-things-to-do-in-Perth-Western-Australia>

*There really isn't a night life in Perth ... Besides beaches you are probably going to be spending most of your time at home after you have done touring around and such.* Mesmus, 2016, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2522435>

*Culturally we are way behind, everything can't just revolve around food and drink. We need more museums, art galleries, music venues, theatre's not to mention a better variety of shops! We need to attract bigger and better artists and promote Perth as a city worth coming to. For a population of nearly 2m, it's far too quaint and quiet. Passing through the CBD over a weekend is like walking through a twilight zone, absolutely lifeless unless it's after dark when it becomes a dangerous and hostile place.* 2019, <https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/in/Perth>

However, over the past decade urban renewal, new cultural and sporting infrastructure combined with a relaxation of retail and liquor licensing regulation and new cultural events have transformed the area. Although the impact of this revitalisation is yet to fully translate into a shift in the stereotypes of Greater Perth presented online, an evolution in the conventional narrative about the region is emerging and current residents most commonly challenge the 'Dullsville' stereotype by promoting the revitalisation of the Perth CBD

and region, as illustrated in the following comments:

*The Perth inner city vibe has changed a lot in recent years, driven by some major new 'public-space' infrastructure projects like Elizabeth Quay, the change in liquor laws allowing new small bars to pop up and there's a major new rail project 'Perth Link' plan to sink the railway lines between the CBD and Northbridge with new restaurants/bars/offices/home planned in this in-between area too.* Manisha Lee, 19 April 2018, Quora, <https://www.quora.com/Is-it-boring-living-in-Perth>

*No, it is not boring living in Perth at all, quite the contrary. The Fringe Festival has recently finished in Perth which played host to 700 shows at over 150 venues and performance spaces spread across Perth and further afield in local communities and neighbourhoods. The Fringe Festival was followed by the Perth International Art Festival which winds up today.* Robert Nathan, Perth, 6 March 2017, <https://www.quora.com/Is-it-boring-living-in-Perth>

*When we came over 10 years ago, the nightlife was rubbish, the food scene was terrible, and shops weren't even open on a Sunday. The transformation we have witnessed has been like no other I've ever seen anywhere. There is now a very vibrant bar scene, with lots of bars around the city centre, but the best being dotted around in clusters in the suburban high streets. Kind of like London. The food scene has also stepped up by a thousand times.* Joe Berah, 2018, <https://www.quora.com/What-is-it-like-living-in-Perth-Australia>

Notably the 'Dullsville' stereotype is most commonly perpetuated online by current and past residents of Greater Perth, while visitor reviews, such as the review

that follows, are more positive, including reviews of attractions and locations within the CBD.

*Perth is a beautiful city with waterfront parks, a free bus service and some great eating venues. The CBD area is walkable and provides for some pedestrian only malls. Worth a visit.* Greg S, Sydney, Australia. [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d300356-Reviews-or20-St\\_George\\_s\\_Terrace-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d300356-Reviews-or20-St_George_s_Terrace-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

The most reviewed and highest rated cultural, sporting and educational attractions in the Perth CBD (excepting Kings Park, the Swan River and other parks and natural features) are the Perth Mint, the Bell Tower, Elizabeth Quay, St Mary's Cathedral, Scitech, the Art Gallery of WA, RAC Arena and the WACA. This feedback highlights that the Perth CBD is home to unique, high-quality attractions that deliver many learning and cultural experiences for visitors. Reviews of food and entertainment options in Greater Perth and of Northbridge are also primarily positive.

Bell Tower: *Getting an opportunity to see and hear the Anzac bell chime at noon was amazing, as was seeing and hearing the other bells ring during the performance. I was not prepared for how fascinating this would be. Building that houses the bells is neat to see, and the view from the top floor observation deck is lovely. This is an attraction that should not be missed!* Mary A, Plano, Texas. [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d267222-Reviews-The\\_Bell\\_Tower-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d267222-Reviews-The_Bell_Tower-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

Perth Mint: *Learnt many things during the guided tour, like Perth Mint being the oldest operating mint in Australia and having the world's largest gold coin. Highlights include the gold pour and lifting a gold bar. There is also a chance to customise your own coin with a range of a selection of material and designs.* CYOh, Singapore, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d256590-Reviews-The\\_Perth\\_Mint-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d256590-Reviews-The_Perth_Mint-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

Art Gallery of WA: *Went to the art gallery twice, but you could easily spend days here as their collection is huge and offers a lot of variety. Not just paintings, but also sculptures and an exhibit of objects in glass.... 'Portraits of the Kimberley' is a rather spectacular outburst of indigenous colors with desert, river and sea as background and source of inspiration. I joined the free tour with explanation about the materials used and presenting some of the artists' profiles. Very worthwhile.* Robert 937, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d256586-Reviews-Art\\_Gallery\\_of\\_Western\\_Australia-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d256586-Reviews-Art_Gallery_of_Western_Australia-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

Yet, as outlined in the following reviews, while still typically positive, some visitor reviews also complain about the weaknesses of the Perth CBD, which include generic retail experiences and limited activity/vibrancy after business hours and on weekends.

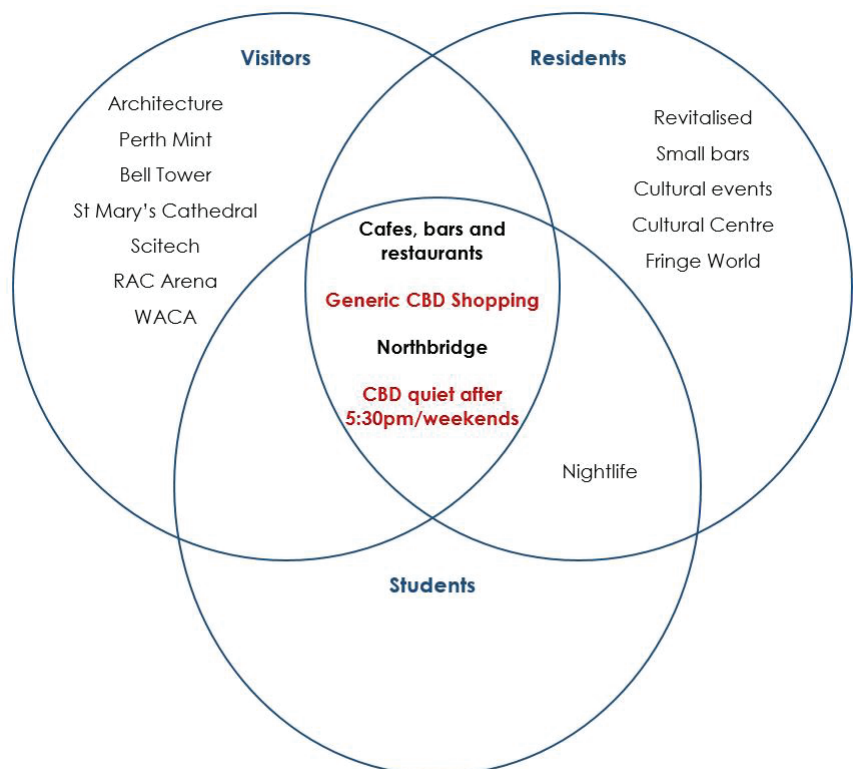
*Weekdays loads of cafes & restaurants are open. Sadly almost none on weekends as this is mostly business area.* Clio H, Sydney, Australia, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d300356-Reviews-St\\_George\\_s\\_Terrace-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d300356-Reviews-St_George_s_Terrace-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

*Pretty much like most modern day shopping areas. There are plenty of designer shops, as well as plenty of restaurants and cheap eateries.* [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d3184827-Reviews-Hay\\_Street\\_Mall-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d3184827-Reviews-Hay_Street_Mall-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

*Pedestrian mall with a number of shopping centres and arcades, and loads of shops, no really exciting shops as such but nice area to wander, browse, see the locals.* Grommet22, Canberra, Australia, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d3184827-Reviews-or20-Hay\\_Street\\_Mall-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d3184827-Reviews-or20-Hay_Street_Mall-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

Figure 4 provides an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Perth CBD as identified by residents, visitors and students.

**Figure 4: Positive and Negative Features/Attractions of Greater Perth's CBD Identified Online (Non-environmental/nature based)**



## 7.0 Friendly, Relaxed Society

Greater Perth's people are often described as 'relaxed' and 'friendly', and this view is perpetuated in online feedback about the region provided by residents, visitors and students, and particularly in visitor reviews. Multiculturalism is also identified as a benefit of Greater Perth by some international students. Some examples follow:

**Easy to move around, interesting place to visit, friendly people, plenty to see and do, free transport a bonus.** Cecefreeflyer, January 2019, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d300356-Reviews-St\\_George\\_s\\_Terrace-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d300356-Reviews-St_George_s_Terrace-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

**People are generally fun and chilled. Perth is a peaceful with lots of green but can be too quiet particularly if you come from a big town.** Pedro, 2018, <https://www.gooverseas.com/study-abroad/australia/university-western-australia/42546>

**I visited recently and enjoyed it very much. It has a relaxed atmosphere to it.** Geoffrey White, 2019, <https://www.quora.com/Is-Perth-worth-visiting-Why>

**It's such a unique city, with an incredibly diverse population (there is people from all over the world, it's incredible).** Maria, <https://www.gooverseas.com/organization/university-western-australia-reviews>

User-generated content also reinforces cultural stereotypes of Greater Perth, including long-held perceptions of the region as family friendly, outdoor oriented and delivering a good work-life balance. While most of these characteristics are framed positively, as illustrated by the comments that follow,

Greater Perth's family-friendly culture is also at times portrayed negatively in online commentary.

**In my experience, living in Perth is great when you are in the stage of your life of "settling" down. Most of the things you can do in Perth are mainly all nature based activities.** Karl Montecillo, 2018, <https://www.quora.com/Is-Perth-a-good-city-to-live>

**Perth is a great place to raise a family because you can still manage a reasonably balanced work-family dynamic.** Candice Parsons 2018, <https://www.quora.com/What-is-it-like-living-in-Perth-Australia>

Negative discussion threads about Greater Perth's culture and society are also evident online. These comments portray people in the region as unsophisticated, intolerant/racist, and cliquey. There are also specific comments online from residents, migrants and visitors about racism, sexism and intolerance towards minority groups and particularly towards Indigenous Australians.

It is noted that excessively negative comments are most often made within the context of negative discussion threads about the region, rather than within more balanced discourse.

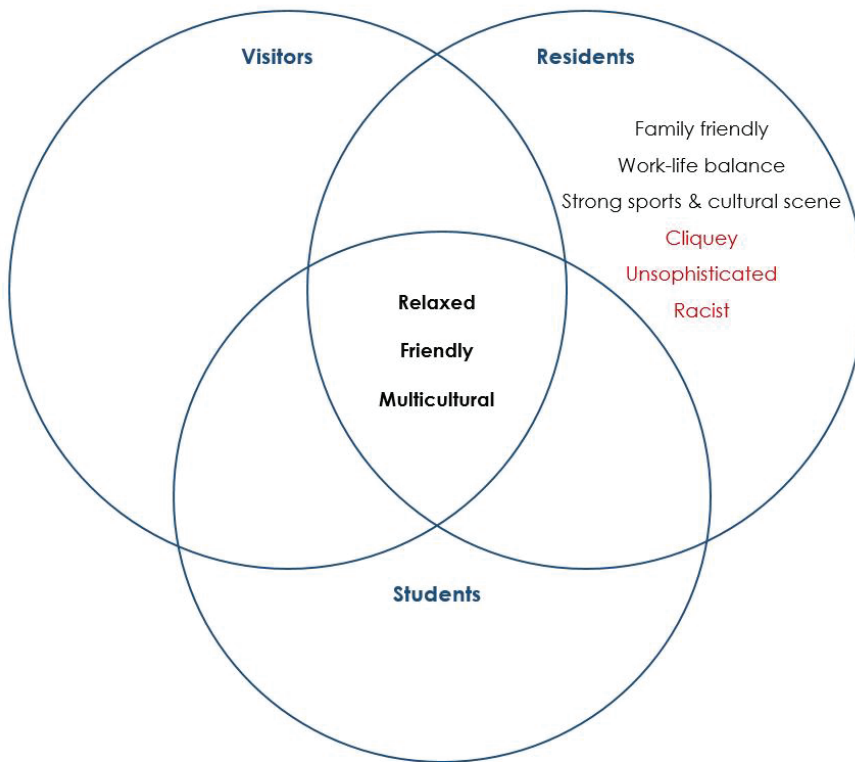
**The locals between themselves are very tight knit... if you're not from Perth, even if you're white, there's still an undercurrent of this hostile barrier you can't penetrate unless you grew up or have family here.** #Quincyboots 1 March, 2018, Numbeo, <https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/in/Perth>

**Europeans may feel like Perth is unsafe, because the tolerance towards people from other cultures in Perth feels much lower compared to other cities around Australia. The percentage of Aboriginal people in WA in general, is much higher than in Sydney or Melbourne, and while I was living in Perth I felt there was a definite sense of white supremacy going on, which is not present to the same degree in "the Eastern states" as the locals call it.** Ben Drury, 2016, <https://www.quora.com/How-safe-is-Perth>

**I'm afraid there is plenty of racism, homophobia, sexism in Perth. WA just hasn't caught up with the rest of the Western world in terms of social conscience, equality, acceptance.** Emily, 20 April 2019, Numbeo, <https://www.numbeo.com/quality-of-life/in/Perth>



**Figure 5: Representation of Greater Perth's Society and Culture Online**



## 8.0 Increasingly Affordable Yet Limited Employment Opportunities

Perceptions of affordability and economic opportunity are responsive to changing circumstances in the region. Consequently, online reviews and comments about Greater Perth have shifted from depicting an expensive region with strong earning opportunities (2007-2015) to an affordable region (particularly in regard to housing costs) while delivering limited employment prospects (2016-2019) as economic conditions in the region have changed. Some examples of shifting perceptions of affordability and economic opportunity in Greater Perth follow:

*Would hate to be looking for a rental (not a house) in the metro area now, it's as bad as Sydney in that prospective tenants are*

*bidding to up the rent so that can secure somewhere to live.* dddp, 2012, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1832296>

*Perth is definitely cheaper and much better work life / balance and quality of live. Rent and property and much, much cheaper.* jinny\_g, 2017, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2677713>

*The money I've made here has been great, I would never have done what I've done here had I been in Melbourne.* BlueDream, 2007, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/789463>

*Job opportunities are poor. I wouldn't move here without first having secured employment and having sufficient funds to support yourself for at least six months if you find yourself out of work.* Johnny The Knife, 26 February 2017, Whirlpool, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2611276>

*Not very many "head offices" over here, unless you are in resources. Limits how you can move job wise.* Legoman01, 27 February 2017, Whirlpool, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2611276>

While the online comments by some of the residents continue to identify Greater Perth as an expensive place to live and visit, current visitor reviews (which did depict Greater Perth as expensive in the period from 2009-2014) suggest that costs in the region are perceived favourably compared to those in other Australian capitals (noting that Australia is identified as an expensive destination by international standards).

Negative remarks about the prices of food and drink in Greater Perth, which were evident at the peak of mining-driven economic growth, have also significantly reduced in the post-boom period. However, reviews by international students continue to identify cost and expense as the single biggest negative of studying in the region. Student housing is most often identified as being expensive, followed by university fees and living expenses such as food and drink. It should be noted here that perceptions of costs in Greater Perth appear to be influenced by prices within a students' home countries and by their housing, social and travel preferences. Some examples of students' perceptions of living costs in Greater Perth follow:

*On campus housing is more expensive...The university housing office offers some support for people who are looking for off campus accommodation. It is important to start searching as early as possible. At the beginning of the semester most accommodations are already taken. Housing is relatively expensive.* Robert, Austria, [https://www.iagora.com/studies/uni/University\\_of\\_Western\\_Australia::show=reviews:offset=4#main](https://www.iagora.com/studies/uni/University_of_Western_Australia::show=reviews:offset=4#main)

**Great places to visit here thus spending more in travelling; shops close early here thus spending less on nightlife and food; good special offers for telecommunications thus spending less due to great deals.**

Shanshinoda, Malaysia, [https://www.iagora.com/studies/uni/Curtin\\_University\\_of\\_Technology::s how=reviews:offset=2#main](https://www.iagora.com/studies/uni/Curtin_University_of_Technology::s how=reviews:offset=2#main)

## 9.0 Accessible and Safe with Quality Infrastructure and Services

Accessibility and most notably the distance from Greater Perth to the capitals of the eastern states has been identified online as a disadvantage to living in and visiting the region, particularly by residents of other Australian capital cities. It has also been identified as a disadvantage by some international students.

Nevertheless, over the past decade, a shift is evident in online commentary away from isolation from the east coast to connectivity to Asia. Online contributors commonly cite the benefits of Greater Perth's location, due to increasing access and affordability of travel to and from cities in Asia. Greater Perth's location in the same time-zone as Asia has also been identified as a strength by international students. Some examples of remarks about accessibility to Asia follow:

**Drawback is isolation, if you have family you want to visit regularly in the East. Flights aren't as cheap as hopping up and down the east coast. On the other hand, Bali, Thailand and Singapore are a lot closer and more affordable to get to.** Drubbing, 2016, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2522435>

**I do short trips to Asia often, with Jetstar or Tiger, if you book ahead you can get flights for \$200++ one way between Perth and Singapore.** Mbeats, 2010, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1590099>

In regard to accessibility in Greater Perth, while residents of the region have identified mobility and car-based transport as a weakness of living in the region (Ipsos, 2012; 2015; 2018), online commentary more often identifies it as a strength compared to Sydney and Melbourne. Many contributors remark that the traffic in Perth is better than in Sydney or Melbourne, while Greater Perth's extensive cycle path network is also identified as a strength by both residents and visitors.

As illustrated in the following comments, public transport is also identified as both a strength and a weakness of living in Greater Perth in online commentary, depending on the needs and circumstances of the contributor. It is most often considered a strength by visitors and students who comment that it is reliable, value for money, clean and safe. The free transit zone and Central Area Transit (CAT) buses in the Greater Perth CBD are particularly singled out for praise by visitors:

**I used Transperth on metro trips to Fremantle, Armandale, Mandurah and the free CATbuses in all locations. The services are intermodal, frequent and reliable. One of the best public transport systems I have experienced.** Tony K, Hong Kong [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction\\_Review-g255103-d9998148-Reviews-Transperth-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/Attraction_Review-g255103-d9998148-Reviews-Transperth-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

**We were surprised with the transport system in Perth. Firstly there are 4 buses that do 4 different circuits and they are free. They are hop on hop off and very smooth. Then there is the local bus system that is also quite frequent and reliable.** Ronald, R Port Adelaide, Australia [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255103-d9998148-r391936705-Transperth-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255103-d9998148-r391936705-Transperth-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html)

**We used Transperth for all our journeys in and around Perth. The Familyrider and Dayrider tickets are particularly good value for money – and the trains and buses all arrive on time! What a treat for Brits used to waiting around!** Dianne B, Colchester, UK, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255103-d9998148-r675782055-Transperth-Perth\\_Greater\\_Perth\\_Western\\_Australia.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255103-d9998148-r675782055-Transperth-Perth_Greater_Perth_Western_Australia.html#REVIEWS)

**Perth is an amazing city. I have lived here for 5 years now from over east and I have to say that I can't be happier. Its clean, beautiful and you can actually drive almost anywhere and not worry too much about traffic and parking (compared to Sydney). I have never had to catch public transport – in Sydney I usually preferred to catch public transport lol.** Varys, 2016, <https://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2522435>

**Public transport is average at best and distances are huge.** Richard Foster, 2014, <https://www.quora.com/What-is-it-like-living-in-Perth-Australia>

Greater Perth is also presented on digital platforms as having high-quality infrastructure and services, including education and health services. Education is specifically important for international students, for whom access to a quality education institution is the primary criteria for choosing a study destination. In this regard, student reviews of Greater Perth's major higher education institutions are principally positive and are consistent with ratings and reviews of comparable institutions elsewhere in Australia (e.g. all of Australia's major universities achieve ratings of between 3.9/5 and 4.6/5 on major review websites including seek.com.au and iagora.com).

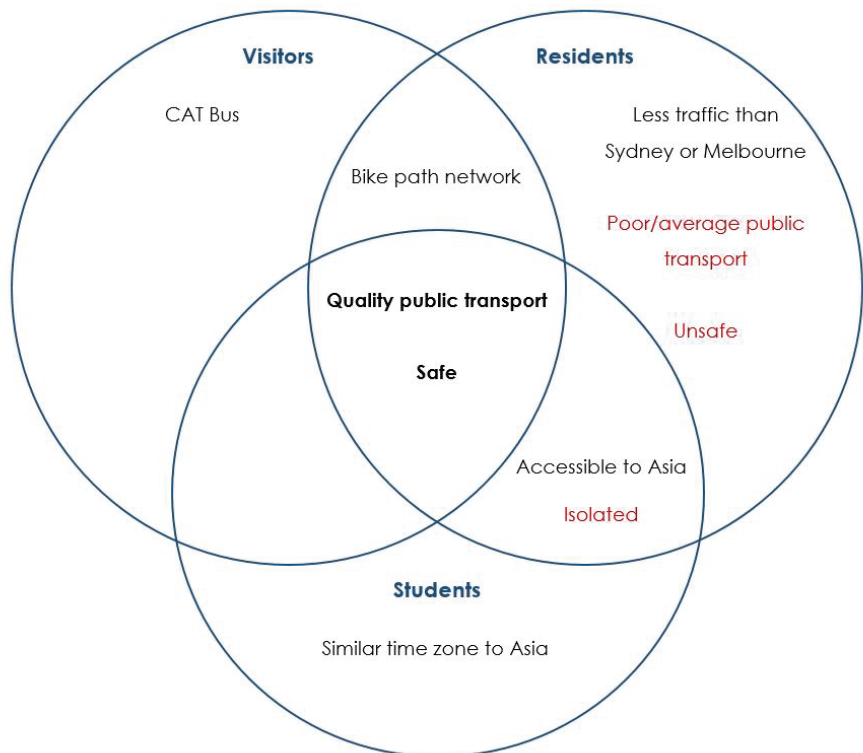
Safety is also considered to be a regional strength, particularly in an international context. However, some contributors (most often residents of Greater Perth) report that safety in the region has declined and that this is associated with problems of drug and alcohol abuse.

***Perth is very safe. My whole life I have felt safe here. I can walk the streets after dark and feel safe. Travelling on public transport has always been safe. Of course like many cities around the world it has its small pockets of unsafe places but you don't go to those places!*** Jillian Hilton, 2016, <https://www.quora.com/How-safe-is-Perth>

***Perth is far less safe than most European touristic destinations, I am not sure about the USA.*** Marco Marcon, 2016, <https://www.quora.com/How-safe-is-Perth>

Figure 6 provides a summary of perceptions of accessibility, infrastructure, services and safety in Greater Perth as outlined online by the different stakeholder groups.

**Figure 6: Perceptions of Accessibility, Infrastructure, Services and Safety Online**



## 10.0 Conclusion

This paper has shown that e-word of mouth shared through the Internet and social media plays an important role in the promotion of Greater Perth, and can influence the perceptions of the region among external stakeholders.

Greater Perth has a relatively positive online reputation, which is strengthened by positive reviews and online feedback about the region by residents, visitors and students. Currently, visitors and international students deliver more positive online commentary and reviews of Greater Perth and its attractions than residents or former residents. People from overseas are also more positive about Greater Perth than people from the east coast of Australia.

Residents and former residents of Greater Perth are most likely to engage in negative discussions about the region online, and negative comments about the region most often occur within the context of unbalanced discourse. Residents and former residents are also more likely to perpetuate negative stereotypes of Greater Perth, including the 'Dullsville' narrative. There is also a tendency for residents and former residents to engage in criticism of Greater Perth in jest.

Greater Perth's environment – including its beautiful, clean landscapes, parks, beaches, connections to nature and wildlife, sunny climate and access to destinations in regional Western Australia – are most commonly identified as regional strengths online. In this context, Kings Park and the Swan River are highlighted online as stand out attractions within visitor reviews.

Visitor reviews are also very positive about other urban and cultural attractions within the CBD. There is growing online recognition of the revitalisation of inner-city areas associated with urban renewal, cultural and sporting infrastructure and events. However, some weaknesses are evident, including a lack of vibrancy in the Greater Perth CBD after office hours and generic CBD retail experiences.

Other major strengths of Greater Perth identified online by visitors, residents and students include the relaxed friendly culture, affordability, safety, quality infrastructure and transport systems, access to Asia, and location within the same time-zone as major Asian cities.

Looking forward, a need has been identified for residents to mobilise as online promoters of Greater Perth. Attracting more visitors to Greater Perth is also important because it can generate positive word of mouth and e-word of mouth about the region.

This should be supported by action to continue the revitalisation of the Greater Perth CBD, including the generation of a more vibrant night-time and weekend economy, and the development of unique and iconic events, attractions and retail experiences. Actions to address personal safety, particularly within entertainment districts, and to develop and promote Greater Perth as a region that truly acknowledges and celebrates Indigenous culture and heritage would also assist in breaking down negative stereotypes and perceptions of the region in the future.



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## Appendix A – List of Discussion Forums, Review Websites and Discussion Threads Examined

Living in Perth	Visiting Perth	Studying in Perth
<b>Whirlpool Forums</b> Living in Perth Opportunity to Move from Melbourne to Perth Moving to Perth Moving to Perth Living in Perth Moving from Sydney to Perth Moving from Sydney to Perth – Where to Live Advice How is life in Perth as Compared to Sydney and Melbourne? How is life in Perth as compared to Mel and Syd? Thinking about moving to Perth	<b>Quora Forums</b> Is Perth worth visiting Why What are the best things to do while visiting Perth Australia What are some interesting things to do in Perth Western Australia What are some awesome things to do in Perth that are not in the standard guide books What are some good things to do in Perth Western Australia in late July Whats one of the best things to go and see when you visit Perth Australia What is a good itinerary for spending 5 days in Perth Australia What's your favourite place in Perth WA	<b>Online Reviews Curtin University</b> Curtin University Facebook International Student Reviews <b>Quora Forums</b> How good is Curtin University? Go Abroad (www.goabroad.com) Curtin University <b>Study International</b> (www.studyinternational.com) Top 4 student experiences for engineering students <b>Hot Courses Abroad</b> (www.hotcoursesabroad.com) Curtin University reviews and ranking <b>Seek Learning</b> The University of Western Australia
<b>Quora Forums</b> What is it like living in Perth, Australia? How safe is Perth? Where is a nice place to live in Perth? How much is the cost of living in Perth? Is it boring living in Perth? Which city in Australia should I live in: Perth or Sydney? What is the best place to live in Perth? What are the perks of living in Perth? What are the best aspects of living in Perth, Australia as a young adult? Are there many homeless people living in Perth? Can you live in Perth, Australia without a car? What is it like to live in Melbourne compared to living in Perth? What is a comfortable salary to live in Perth WA for a Bachelor? What are some positive sides to living in Perth, Australia?	<b>Whirlpool Forums</b> Perth and WA Trip Things to do in Perth Things to do in Perth for 1 day Things to do in Perth	<b>Online Reviews The University of Western Australia</b> <b>UWA International Students Facebook</b> International Student Reviews <b>Go Overseas</b> The University of Western Australia <b>Quora Forums</b> The University of Western Australia <b>University Reviews</b> (universityreviews.com.au) <b>Seek Learning</b> The University of Western Australia

Living in Perth	Visiting Perth	Studying in Perth
<b>TripAdvisor Forums</b> Melbourne vs Perth as a place to live Moving and living in Perth Where is the best place to live in Perth? Perth at night Culture and the arts in Perth	<b>TripAdvisor Forums</b> Is Perth worth a visit? 13 days in Perth 1 day in Perth Struggling to find something to do at night in Perth? Travelling from Canada to Perth Australia Travelling from Adelaide to Perth – Best route? Perth holiday...things to do Suggestions for budget travel (Perth) Advice Perth attractions and accommodation. Expensive city Walking about in Perth Public transport – will I need a car?	<b>Online Reviews</b> <b>Edith Cowan University</b> <b>Quora Forums</b> How good is Edith Cowan University? <b>Iagora</b> (www.iagora.com) Edith Cowan University <b>Hot Courses Abroad</b> Edith Cowan University
<b>Poms in Oz Forums</b> Move to Perth or not City centre issues Perth suburbs Four more sleeps and I'll be in Perth Best suburbs in Perth How friendly is Perth	<b>Reddit Forums</b> Visiting Perth Things to do in Perth on a holiday Best things to do in Perth on a holiday	<b>Murdoch University</b> <b>Iagora</b> (www.iagora.com) Murdoch University reviews <b>Quora Forums</b> How good is Murdoch University? <b>Hot Courses Abroad</b> Murdoch University <b>Yelp.com.au</b> Murdoch University <b>Go Abroad</b> Study Abroad in Australia at Murdoch University Seek Learning Murdoch University
<b>Numbeo Forums</b> Quality of Life in Perth Quality of Life in Perth – Cost of Living Cost of Living in Perth/Prices in Perth Crime in Perth		<b>General</b> <b>Quora Forums</b> What is it like living in Perth Australia as an international student? <b>Student Edge</b> Making friends in Perth What's on in Perth? <b>Tripadvisor Forums</b> Melbourne or Perth to study?

## About FACTBase

FACTBase is a collaborative research project between the Committee for Perth and The University of Western Australia. It aims 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.

The Committee for Perth is a member-funded organisation and we acknowledge our Gold Members:



\*Current as at 11 July 2019

A complete list of current members is available at [www.committeeforperth.com.au](http://www.committeeforperth.com.au)

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