While in London last month I met with Ralph Luck of the Olympic Delivery Authority. A knowledgeable man in terms of redevelopment, he is integral to the delivery of the Olympic Stadium and Village for the 2012 Olympics. While he provided me with a brief on the project, he was also keen to be updated on what is happening in Perth.

I was proudly telling him about the work of the Committee for Perth along with the government projects that will reshape, reform and revitalise Perth when he asked me a question that rendered me speechless. Those of you who know me well will understand how rare a phenomenon that is.

The question he asked was, ‘So what do the Chinese want for Perth?’

The point of his question is that as a major trading partner and investor in Western Australia and Perth, the Chinese will no doubt have a view about the future form of the city, yet it is an angle that I had not previously considered.

When you consider it in detail the question seems eminently sensible and shows great foresight. So perhaps now is the time to adopt not only a local perspective about Perth’s future but an international one, and not just from a Chinese perspective but from the perspectives of many other nations that have a symbiotic relationship with our city and state.

Some of you may recall our joint event with CEDA in 2007 Is Perth Australia’s Western Gateway? at which we concluded that, geographically, Perth is the western gateway to Australia but we conceded that we still had a way to go to confidently claim this mantle and have it acknowledged at a federal level.

Four years on, at a recent dinner held for our Perth’s Alumni ambassadors group, Brian Haratsis of MacroPlan used his skills as an economist, futurist and strategic planner to think about Western Australia’s Role in Australia’s Future in a similar way. He told an audience of pre-eminent Western Australians that it was time to start influencing national policy debate or find ourselves seriously disadvantaged by eastern-states centric policies that could harm Western Australia’s prosperity and therefore that of the nation.

The following morning Bernard Salt’s article Ignore WA at your own Peril appeared in the Fairfax media. Bernard is quoted as saying ‘the nation is risking its future prosperity by ignoring the needs of Western Australia’s resources boom.’ As I said to Paul Murray on 6PR that morning, it is wonderful to have some seriously credentialed people who don’t live here acting as bellwethers for the consequences for both WA and the nation if we don’t start to take an ‘all of Australia’ approach to policies on issues such as skilled migration.

Just a week after this I attended a breakfast held by the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy with Treasurer, Christian Porter who spoke on All the Talk About a Two Speed Economy post the Tax Forum at which he concluded that there is very little understanding about what drives the WA economy outside of our state. When I asked, ‘What can we do?’, his response was ‘Some rear guard action to support growth in WA [is needed], not east-coast anti-growth centric policies.’

In typical Committee for Perth style, we are now thinking about what we can practically do to address this issue and will keep you posted on actions arising. Brian has already offered his assistance to get the message out along the east coast and a number of our Alumni are keen to be involved in catalysing discussions that bring about perception change.

The newly re-elected Lord Mayor of Perth foreshadowed at her swearing in ceremony this month that ‘Perth is entering a golden era’. At the Committee for Perth we believe that we find ourselves in a period laden with opportunity - opportunity that we do not want to see unfulfilled by ill-conceived policy.
Examining the world’s most liveable cities

This series of articles looks at the world’s top ten liveable cities, as rated by the Economist Intelligence Unit’s (EIU) Liveability Index, in the context of what we can learn for Perth. This month we consider what lessons we can learn from the 5th ranked city of Calgary.

This article has been prepared by Gemma Davis of Davis Consulting Group.

Livable Calgary - a city with vision

Calgary sits at number 5 in the EIU’s liveability survey, a position which, incredibly, makes it the third most liveable city in Canada, behind Vancouver and Toronto – which score 97.3 and 97.2 respectively in comparison to Calgary’s 96.6.

According to the EIU scores, Calgary’s top rating features are its stability (it is one of only three cities in the world that score top marks), healthcare and education. The city’s cold climate is a liveability handicap, with the city scoring 91st on ‘temperature rating/humidity’ and 35th in ‘discomfort to travellers’ - yet on categories that are within human control, the city fares well.

On face value, Calgary has a lot in common with Perth. Calgary is the epicentre of Canada’s energy industry and home to the vast majority of Canada’s oil and gas sector head offices. It is a medium sized city, with a metropolitan population of approximately 1,230,000 and in recent times has boasted the fastest growing economy in Canada.

The metropolitan area of the city is physically large, consisting of an inner city surrounded by communities of various densities and has traditionally been known as a city with a relatively high reliance on private cars.

Located at the transition zone between the foothills of the Canadian Rockies and the Canadian Prairies, Calgary’s city centre is elevated approximately 1,048 m above sea level, and its weather is strongly influenced by the mountains. As a result, it can have uncomfortably cold and long winters, however, just as Perth welcomes the Fremantle Doctor to cool us in the long hot summer months, Calgary enjoys the warm, dry Chinook Winds which routinely blow into the city during the winter months, giving Calgarians a break from the cold.

Calgary has, like Perth, also become a city that is defined by growth and by the stress that growth is placing on its environment and natural resources – particularly its land and water resources.

According to the City’s 2011 State of the Environment Report, ‘the big environmental story in Calgary is how much our City has grown... This has placed increasing stresses on land, air and water. While growth provides attractive opportunities, it also makes us more accountable to manage growth to mitigate or offset these risks.’

However, unlike Perth, Calgary has been actively responding to these challenges for the last six years.

In January 2005 imagineCALGARY was launched. The project was initially designed to be an 18-month public engagement process with the goal of producing a one hundred year vision for the city.

The project attracted input from over 18,000 people - becoming the largest community visioning and consultation process of its kind anywhere in the world - and resulted in the production of a long range vision for the city and a plan known as the imagineCALGARY Plan for Long Range Urban Sustainability.

The plan identifies the vision and goals that reflect the diversity of aspirations and interests of the community now and in the future. It also includes a series of 114 targets which are reference points for organisations and individuals to determine what action can be taken to build a more sustainable community.

The plan was not developed purely as a vehicle for government, it was developed to be implemented by a large network of partner organisations in the city, who have been actively implementing the imagineCALGARY targets and goals. This includes organisations as diverse as the City of Calgary, through to Canadian Freightways and the Calgary Airport Authority.

EIU Rankings August 2011

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<th>City</th>
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<td>Adelaide</td>
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implementation of the plan has included some major government initiatives, not the least of which was the alignment of the city’s integrated land use and transportation plan with the goals of imagineCALGARY.

The outcome was Plan It Calgary, a land use plan with a goal to set out a long-term direction for sustainable growth to accommodate another 1.3 million people over the next 60 years.

Plan It Calgary is grounded in Smart Growth values and focused on applying sustainability principles for land use and mobility, which includes the development of a compact city form that cativates walking, cycling and transit, and preserves open space, parks and other environmental amenities.

Plan It Calgary initiated its own public engagement process involving more than 6,000 people. It was successful in gaining community support for the intensification and diversification of urban activities around transit stations and premium transit routes, in urban activity centres and along corridors with housing choice, mixed land-uses, strong local employment bases, and comfortable, safe, walkable streets, public spaces and amenities. The plan was adopted by the City Council in September 2009.

Other recent initiatives to improve Calgary’s environmental performance in response to the imagineCALGARY goals and targets have included improvements to the city’s recycling infrastructure; the City Council’s signing of the World Energy Cities Partnership Calgary Climate Change Accord (committing the city to support actions that will reduce municipal greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 20 per cent by 2020); the development of a wastewater treatment facility that will produce high quality treated effluent; and a reduction in total per capita water demand that has exceeded the city’s targets.

These initiatives have paid off, with Calgary recently being rated by the Mercer Quality of Living Survey as the world’s number one eco-city. It is an achievement that came as a surprise to many, including to Calgarians themselves who recognise that, while having made significant progress, they still have a long way to go in becoming sustainable.

Mercer used the following criteria for its eco-ranking: water availability; water potability; waste removal; sewage; air pollution and traffic congestion and, while these criteria are by no means exhaustive, Calgary’s rating is not without merit.

The city’s advances in reducing its water consumption and renewal, improving recycling and developing a fully integrated land use and transportation system are world class and have generated substantial positive media for the city - and reason for Calgarians to be proud.

While the EIU does not rate a city’s sustainability or environmental performance, they do rate city infrastructure, including roads and public transport, and Calgary’s public transport system receives full marks.

Calgary Transit is responsible for public transport in Calgary and it provides light rail and bus services. Calgary’s light rail system, known as the C-Train was one of the first systems in North America and consists of three lines on 48.8 kilometres of track mostly at grade with a dedicated right-of-way. The system carries 42% of the city’s CBD working population to work and is the third busiest light rail system in North America.

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Calgary is also notable for its high quality cycle and walking paths. Calgary also has over 260 kilometres of shared bikeways on streets and the city has a 635 kilometre network of multi-use cycle and walking paths.

The city also has North America’s largest system of indoor walkways known as ‘Plus 15’, a system which links the city’s CBD buildings with enclosed suspended walkways 15 feet above the ground. The initiative started in response to the city’s cool winter weather and has developed into a system of 60 suspended bridges which connect 100 buildings and create an 18 kilometre circular route for walking the core of the city without having to go outside.

The path leads past shops, restaurants, through office towers and to theatres. It is the longest elevated climate-controlled pedestrian walkway in the world and makes walking in the city centre a great winter option.

However Calgary has more to offer than just its burgeoning sustainability and environmental credentials.

The city’s proximity to the Rocky Mountains makes Calgary a popular destination for winter sports, and the city’s hosting of the 1988 Winter Olympic Games elevated it from a city of relative obscurity to one of global significance.

Calgary also has a strong and growing culture and arts sector. The city hosts a series of summer festivals including the Calgary International Film Festival, Calgary Underground Film Festival, GlobalFest (an international fireworks demonstration and celebration of cultural diversity), Calgary Folk Music Festival; Calgary International Blues Festival; Calgary Comedy Festival (FunnyFest Calgary) and Calgary’s biggest event, the Calgary Stampede, a ten day rodeo and exhibition which attracts over 1.2 million annual visitors.

What can we learn from Calgary?

Perhaps the biggest lesson that Perth can learn from Calgary is to be proactive about planning for the city’s long term future, and not to be afraid of involving the public in debate and discussion about the city.

Taking a highly participative approach to its future planning has given Calgary’s leaders a clear long term framework for planning, development and environmental protection and a mandate that will surpass political cycles.

This approach has also enabled the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and organisations in achieving the city’s vision – rather than relying on the government in isolation.

Calgary’s example also demonstrates that, if a city is positive about becoming more sustainable and addressing its environmental challenges, it can achieve real results in a relatively short timeframe.

For a city that had not been previously recognised for its environmental achievements to gain the number one eco-city status, Calgary must be doing something right.

Ultimately, Calgary appears to be a city with a ‘can-do’ attitude that has the confidence to lead and to forge its own pathway to the future – something that would work wonders in Perth.
What we thought would kill us: The Bell Tower

The third in our series of the *What we thought would kill us* case studies, which research the controversy surrounding major developments, examines the history, development and public opinion surrounding what is arguably Perth’s most controversial building – the Bell Tower.

From the initial public outcry over cost, which started the moment the development of the tower was announced, to the ongoing debate that it’s too small, too quiet and doesn’t pay for itself, the 82.5 metre monument has never been far from the headlines.

The study examines the community’s concerns about the Bell Tower; how this concern impacted on the final design and outcome of the project; why as a community we undervalue investment in landmark places and spaces; and the difficulty governments face in investing in assets that do not have an immediate measurable benefit.

The Bell Tower as it exists today sits a long way from the original government approved concept for the development that would have seen construction of a landmark building which would make an iconic statement, connect the city and the Swan River, create a pedestrian link to Barrack Square and provide public and commercial spaces as part of the redeveloped Barrack Square.

Widespread community backlash caused the $3.5 million, Stage 2 of the Bell Tower project to be cancelled and as a result, many of the original projects objectives which were supported by the community never happened. For example, the Bell Tower did not link or bond the city to the river, a pedestrian link to Barrack Square was not created and while it improved the Barrack Square precinct, it did not energise Barrack Square or the surrounding waterfront.

While the Bell Tower attracts around 62,000 visitors each year and can claim titles as the world’s largest musical instrument and a ranking as one of British Airways ‘10 Best in the World – Millennium Projects for 2000’, CEO for Committee for Perth Marion Fulker believes that, ‘Looking back, there is no doubt that this was a missed opportunity for Perth.’

The report also identifies that while community backlash to the Bell Tower centred on a lack of community consultation or input prior to its announcement, there were also a number of other factors working against it. These include Perth’s ongoing issue of inadequate value being placed on funding for arts and cultural infrastructure.

Last year’s ABS figures put Western Australia fourth in total state arts funding and third in state cultural funding on a per capita basis. Arts and cultural organisations world-wide are publicly funded and most civilized societies strongly encourage their governments to support culture, arts and heritage yet in 2009-10, state government subsidies to the Swan Bells Foundation totalled just $350,000. This is a relatively small figure to support one of the city’s premier tourist attractions.

The report observes that Melbourne’s Southbank was redeveloped in the early 1990s and Brisbane’s South Bank and Sydney’s Darling Harbour were undertaken in the 1980s and, while these projects were not without controversy, they were delivered.

The Committee for Perth believes that if history is to have taught us anything, it’s that getting these projects across the line requires strong leadership, commitment, and an effective and inclusive strategy for early public participation and input, especially when it comes to waterfront locations.

Our FACTBase joint venture research project with the University of Western Australia continues to benchmark the liveability of Perth and its global connectedness, by examining its economic, social, demographic and political character with the publication of our twenty second bulletin that focuses on *The Spatial Distribution of Employment in Metropolitan Perth from 1991-2011*.

FACTBase Bulletin 22 compares unemployment rates across Perth across the twenty year period on the basis that employment growth and unemployment rates are critical indicators of the performance of local economies. Not only do they provide insights into the capacity of an economy to generate new jobs, but also the extent to which there is ‘spare capacity’ through people not being engaged in work. It concentrates not only on the aggregate pattern of change, but begins to tease out some of the more local trends and issues occurring across the metropolitan region.

The results indicate that while Western Australia may be experiencing a resource sector fuelled skills shortage, with predictions the state faces a shortage of 36,000 within just four years and 150,000 workers by 2017 there are some Perth suburbs where unemployment rates still remain relatively high.

However the results also indicate that some suburbs have been able to transition from high unemployment to low unemployment over the 20 year period, information that is incredibly valuable and will be used by the Committee to examine whether there are policy and planning reasons for this improvement and whether these practices can be implemented in areas where unemployment is still relatively high.


Western Australia is positioned to lead Australia in the ‘new world order’, prominent economist, futurist and MacroPlan Managing Director, Brian Haratsis told the gathering of Perth’s Alumni ambassadors at their recent annual dinner.

However, he warned, despite WA’s growing economic prominence and increasing linkages to growing world economies, the importance of the state continues to be overlooked by eastern states based federal leaders whose ‘fixation on green/anti development philosophies, carbon, MMRT and big government are at odds with a post GFC world based on trade and competitiveness.’

‘There seems,’ he said, ‘to be no understanding that Australia’s future cannot be the same as its past.’

According to Brian, ‘the resource boom hasn’t started’ and Western Australia’s position as Australia’s economic leader is set to increase with continued growth in the sector fuelled by demand from fast growing mineral consumption in Asian economies such as China and India and by local drivers such as increased production of natural gas. This is evidenced in the huge swell in capital expenditure that has occurred in the sector over the past five years.

‘The resources super cycle driven primarily by WA will propel Australia’s export performance and deliver a national trade surplus,’ he said. ‘WA accounts for nearly 44.5% of total exports in 2011 and this could reach 60% by 2021, despite accommodating just 11% of the country’s population.’

Brian also highlighted the importance of Western Australia’s geographic linkages to Asian and Indian Ocean Rim economies, its location at the centre of Australia’s future labour markets and its existing trade relationships which strategically place Western Australia as Australia’s future global and geographic leader.

‘WA can and should lead Australia’s globalisation and integration with Asia because it has the experience and the trade relationships,’ he said.

Associated with this, Brian predicts that Perth should become more than Australia’s Dallas or Houston - it should become a global city in its own right.

Ultimately, according to Brian, WA will project Australia onto the world scene as a medium level resources and energy super power and ‘this will result in new labour market structures and policies, new immigration policies and new requirements for hard and soft infrastructure.’

Also associated with this will be changes in the nation’s population distribution and the need for the country to take a new strategic focus, with the spotlight firmly fixed on Australia’s north.

Brian proposed that northern and remote Australia should be developed to support the region’s industry and as a pathway through which to engage and integrate with Asia.

Plans for Australia’s north should also, he believes, include a major new defence hub in the north-west; a framework for understanding, respecting and improving native title outcomes; and a national freight and logistics framework that not only meets the needs of remote and northern Australia but accelerates Australia’s global integration.

However before this can be achieved there are some major hurdles that need to be addressed, the biggest of which is the nation’s, and particularly Western Australia’s, critical skills shortage.

According to Brian, Australia is headed for a massive shortage of labour as Net Overseas Migration growth rates are expected to fall. ‘We can’t afford to continue to fund our lifestyle without higher levels of immigration,’ he said.

The lack of national recognition of this problem and of WA’s emerging prominence was highlighted by Brian as a major downfall of Australia’s existing East Coast centric leadership structure and therefore an issue that will require strong leadership from the west.

‘If WA cannot fill Australia’s leadership void then there is a strong case for major changes to the role of Federal Government,’ Brian said.

It is a view echoed by prominent demographer Bernard Salt who spoke to WA Today in October, warning that ‘the nation is risking its future prosperity by ignoring the needs of Western Australia’s resources boom.’

‘The East Coast - where majority of the country is based - is so narrowly focused it is failing to realise that its own economic growth would be stifled unless it turns West,’ Salt said.

The issue is well known in WA, with Premier Colin Barnett regularly lamenting the East’s lack of support, but according to Salt, the scale of the problem is lost on most Australians. ‘WA is doing all that it possibly can but at the end of the day it’s a state with barely 2.5-3 million people,’ he said.

‘What’s required is an understanding that what’s happening in the West is a national priority. This is clearly where future prosperity is going to be coming from in Australia and we need to deliver labour, skills, infrastructure services and national building.’

The dinner was attended by Perth’s Alumni and Committee for Perth board members including:

Joanne Farrell
Brian Haratsis
John Poynton
Richard Walley, OAM
Alan Robson, AM CitWA
Paul Murray
Tony Howarth AO
Rory Argyle
Linda Wayman
Lisa Scaffidi, The Right Honourable, The Lord Mayor
Michael Monaghan
Judy Monaghan
Ian Fletcher
Warwick Hemsley
Marion Fulker
Ken Michael AC
Sam Walsh AO
John Langoulant AO

Following Brian’s presentation, there was a sense of unity and common purpose among the Alumni who acknowledged that they can play a role as national advocates for Perth and WA.

It was generally agreed that by making east coast decision makers and influencers aware of how different the situation is in Perth and just how essential Western Australia is to the nation’s future, we will be able to capture more attention and understanding of our unique needs.
New Staff Member

As the activity and influence of the Committee for Perth increases, so does the demand on our small team of staff so we were pleased this month to welcome Lisa Rossi as Manager, Member Services.

This newly created position will see Lisa reporting to the CEO to drive the delivery of high quality services to members and assist in the development of an overall strategy for membership growth with the intent of enhancing current member service offerings and boosting sustainable revenue growth.

Lisa has most recently been working at the University of Western Australia as manager of the Berndt Museum Campaign and has a Bachelor of Business degree from Curtin University.

She is passionate about the environment, heritage and culture and contributes significantly in these areas though volunteer work. She is a foundation member of the Rotary Club of Crawley and has been a member of various associations such as the Fundraising Institute of Australia, the Australian Development and Professionals in Education and the Property Council of WA.

Lisa is currently contacting members to introduce herself and become familiar with the issues they consider most important for the Committee for Perth. We are confident that, through her work, we will be better positioned to establish and maintain relationships with existing members and identify, evaluate and acquire new members.

Upcoming Events

In Touch with Media
Guest Speaker: Linda Wayman, Austereo
Date: Wednesday, 2 November
Invitees: Support staff of key member representatives

Inaugural Perth Graduate Forum
Guest Speaker: Professor Richard Weller of Landscape Architecture at UWA and Director of the Australian Urban Design Research Centre.
Date: Tuesday, 8 November
Invitees: By invitation to graduates of member organisations

Special Event
Guest Speaker: James Cameron, International Climate Change Expert
Date: Tuesday, 15 November
Invitees: All members and stakeholders

Annual General Meeting & Luncheon
Guest Speaker: Professor Alan Robson, Vice-Chancellor University of Western Australia
Date: Tuesday, 22 November
Invitees: Key member representatives

End of Year Celebration
Date: Tuesday, 6 December
Invitees: By invitation for all members and key stakeholders
This month we continued meetings to further our knowledge base to enable a considered and constructive response to the 20 year Public Transport Plan for Perth.

Reshaping

• Much of our time early in the month was spent finalising our submission in response to the 20 year Public Transport Plan for Perth through which we strongly supported an integrated public transport network and advocated for light rail to be implemented sooner rather later.

• The Reshaping Working Group and Knowledge Arc Light Rail Steering Committee met to receive a presentation on the findings of my recent light rail study tour an outline of the research we have commissioned into funding models which will be undertakings by PhD candidate James McIntosh, and finally a presentation by Tim Crane of Corview Group Pty Ltd who has been instrumental in developing a value capture model that will fund the majority of the Gold Coast Light Rail project.

• Met with Michel Masson, CEO of Yarra Trams, to discuss Melbourne’s tram network and the role it plays in the transport network for the region.

• Received a briefing on the stadium development and reiterated our perspective that the venue must be multi-purpose and multi-use. Department of Sport and Recreation will present to the Reshaping Working Group early in the New Year once contracts have been let.

• Attended a workshop held by EPRA with Project for Public Spaces, a non-profit planning, design and educational organisation. Fred Kent and Kathy Madden led a discussion about great places across the world and the essential elements that will need to be incorporated into the planning and design of the public realm within the Link project.

• Gary Prattley, Chairman of the Western Australian Planning Commission, addressed a Food for Thought luncheon on the planning for major cities in the Pilbara region.

• Our What we thought would kill us case studies have continued to add to the shared knowledge base about Perth’s controversial projects and this month saw the release of the Bell Tower report which speaks volumes about how uninformed debate can compromise the outcome of a project.

• Addressed the Outer Metropolitan Growth Committee of WALGA and the best practice group of local government metropolitan CEOs to discuss the work of the Committee for Perth and issues facing the growing region.

• Attended the 2 day conference of the Property Council’s Residential Development Committee focused on population growth and delivering diversity in housing to meet demand.

Reforming

• The further deregulation of retail trading hours is a slow and tortuous process however we remain positive that each small change in regulation makes a contribution towards having a more flexible retail trading environment. It seems to be a key issue that new arrivals and visitors comment on as a point of frustration.

• The independent panel looking at the governance structure for the Perth metropolitan region is hard at work and a discussion paper that identifies the issues is due out sometime in the next month or so.

Revitalising

• Our Youth Arts Hub Steering Committee met this month to approve the concept paper for release. We are now seeking the endorsement of the Chamber for the Arts & Culture before presenting it to Minister John Day for comment. Propel Youth Arts is planning workshops in the new year which will consult with youth about the big ideas for the hub as outlined in the paper by Sam Fox of Hydra Poesis who has done a wonderful job of developing an evocative narrative of the concept of the hub.

• Attended a Uni Club breakfast where the new artistic director, Jonathan Holloway of the Perth International Arts Festival, told us about his career and vision for future festivals. I think it is safe to say that the Festival is in very good hands!

• As guest of the City of Fremantle, I got up close and personal with the Endeavour Replica. How lovely to have her back in Fremantle for the Perth 2011 ISAF Sailing World Championships.

• Met with John Sencuzku to hear about the plans for the Metcalf Theatre to be the heart of ‘Northbridge Village’ by implementing a ‘no lights out’ policy and having something of interest on every night of the week.

• Our major project for 2011/12 is to produce a report on Perth at 3.5 million that comprehensively explores the issues of liveability through research, information and ideas exchange and which will make recommendations for action by governments, the business sector and the community. The second discussion paper is in its final stages of preparation.

• A consideration with all proposals put forward by the Committee is ‘what do youth think about this?’ as our work is the legacy that they will receive in the coming decades. Yannick Spencer of Left Right Think Tank asked me to address their group on our advocacy model. We have now begun an active relationship with the group which I hope will be mutually beneficial.

• Met with my colleagues from the Committees for Cities & Regions network and welcomed newly formed Committee for Echuca Moama. These regular get-togethers are a great way of keeping informed about issues across Australia and New Zealand as well as providing the opportunity to share best practice.

• At the invitation of the City of Perth, I attended the swearing in of the Lord Mayor and Councillors.

• Attended a luncheon held by Curtin University on How Business Innovation Can Transform an Economy: The Story of Cambridge UK. Dr Shai Vyakarnam talked about how the University is the centre of an innovation cluster of some 3000 businesses.
Chair of our Perth’s Alumni group, Sam Walsh AO, was recently awarded the Richard Pratt Business Arts Leadership Award – one of the Australia Business Arts Foundation (AbaF) awards.

The AbaF awards are designed to recognise partnerships that encourage fruitful relationships between arts and business organisations and Sam’s work as chairman of the AbaF West Australian chapter, the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA as well as the Black Swan State Theatre company are just some of the ways in which he helps to advocate for and promote the critical role of arts in our state.

In a recent interview with The Australian he said, ‘I can see it [participation in cultural activities] can make a huge transformation in the community…The arts encourages you to look at life differently.’

Through his role as CEO of Rio Tinto Iron Ore, Sam has put into practice his belief that there are many synergies between business and arts that each can benefit from the other. ‘Rio Tinto’s initial involvement with Black Swan was so we could get performances travelling up to the Pilbara and around the state,’ he told Victoria Laurie of The Australian.

Similarly he recognises how hard it is for individual arts organisations to approach either corporate or government funding sources with any impact and believes business has a role to play here.

Sam’s opinion on funding of the WA cultural sector is well known and he has made repeated calls for increased levels of both government and corporate sector funding. The Chamber of Arts and Culture WA has made some progress in this area and looks forward with more optimism to the 2012/13 budget which he hopes will reflect ‘a clear understanding of the need for infrastructure and [bigger] operating budgets.’

He believes that facts need to be tabled in order to change the views of government and corporate representatives and a recent study published by English think tank Demos does exactly that.

Demos undertook a study into the funding of arts and cultural ventures in the UK to prove that although music, fashion and games start up businesses are seen as too risky by banks and investors, they are actually more successful than hotels.

Aware of the risk of losing good artistic talent overseas, Demos’ study Risky Business sets out to shatter the myth that they are a risky financial investment. ‘Indeed it even goes so far as to claim that creative industries might even be less risky ‘as a result of the passion, dedication and skill of the individuals involved.’

Through mapping survival rates of new businesses in the UK, Demos found that 49.7 per cent of new firms in the creative industries were still trading after five years, compared with 46.9 per cent in the economy overall.

Last year, creative industries employed almost 8 per cent of the UK’s workforce. The fashion industry alone contributes more than £20bn, double that of car manufacture and London theatres took £512m at the box office last year, generating £76m in VAT for the Treasury.

Helen Burrows, co-author of the report, said: ‘Banks need to stop saying no to everyone who says they run a music company even before they have finished the sentence. And the Government needs to understand and take into account the sector.’

The study offers optimism for creative workers in the UK looking for funding and arms them with valuable facts and figures, much in the same way as the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA aims to do for our home grown West Australian talent.

The full study Risky Business can be downloaded from: http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/riskybusiness.

AbaF award winners

Other West Australian organisations that were recognised with national AbaF awards include:

- The Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts – AbaF Giving
- The Canning Stock Route Project Alliance and FORM and BHP Billiton Iron Ore and Freehills – Toyota Community Award
- The Art Gallery of Western Australia and Water Corporation – Visy Arts & Environment Award

Artistic Passion for Perth

The Committee for Perth’s photographic competition - Passion for Perth - closes on 18 November so be sure to submit your best photographs that represent the unique spirit and characteristics of Perth’s iconic lifestyle to be in the running for an opportunity to win $1500.

Images can depict lifestyle activities, architecture, landscape or events with the only restriction being that photos must be taken in 2011.

Full details of the competition and prizes as well as how to enter are available on our website: www.committeeforperth.com.au.
Light Rail: Calling for Commitment, Integration and Funding

In a submission responding to the draft Public Transport Plan for Perth in 2031, the Committee for Perth has congratulated the State Government for identifying light rail as part of Perth’s future but also called for stronger funding commitments to enable light rail delivery, expressed caution regarding the complexities of light rail planning and funding and highlighted the importance of taking an integrated, collaborative and participatory approach to get Perth’s transport and land use future right.

The submission, which was prepared to meet the government’s 14 October deadline, was strongly informed by our CEO’s recent visit to light rail cities in the United Kingdom and United States along with input from the Committee for Perth’s Reshaping Working Group.

Marion visited five cities in the UK – London, Nottingham, Sheffield, Blackpool and Manchester - hosted by the All Party Parliamentary Light Rail Group. She also visited Portland, hosted by First Stop Portland, part of the Portland State University and Melbourne to meet with the CEO of Yarra Trams. During her visits, Marion met with local and regional government representatives, elected and executive, as well as developers, operators, retailers and engineers.

This tour highlighted the importance of learning from domestic and international experience when it comes to developing light rail options for Perth.

‘International and domestic light rail examples clearly demonstrate how successful light rail can be in transforming cities and providing more sustainable people movement, but they also reveal the complexities of light rail planning and funding, Marion said.

‘Yet Perth would be joining the light rail revolution, not leading it and we are therefore in an advantageous position to learn from the successes and failures of others,’ she said.

Indeed, light rail success stories around the world have distinct commonalities.

Integrated Planning

The first of these is that successful light rail systems have been planned through a fully integrated and co-operative approach involving all agencies and stakeholders concerned with transport and land use planning, including road planning agencies, and this need for an integrated approach in Perth was a key theme of our submission.

Internationally, integrated planning is considered essential if the ultimate aim of light rail is not only to increase public transport patronage but to make the city less car dependant. It is also critical to enable light rail to deliver what is its biggest documented benefit over other transport nodes – enabling transformational change in the city by stimulating urban regeneration.

The need for integration was highlighted by all the successful light rail cities visited, including Melbourne.

According to Michel Masson, Managing Director of Keolis Australia and CEO of Yarra Trams, urban development and public transport are two sides of the same coin. ‘Tell me what your urban development strategy is, and then I can find the transport solution,’ he said.

Celebrated light rail systems in the United Kingdom, the United States and Europe have used light rail to shape the city and promote investment and regeneration in strategic locations.

In Portland, this approach has been termed ‘Development Oriented Transit’ and has resulted in extremely high quality urban regeneration outcomes, in particular the revitalisation of Portland’s renowned Pearl District.

It has also stimulated an enormous amount of property investment and development along the light rail route.

According to a report produced by the Portland Office of Transportation and Portland Streetcar Inc, in the decade following the identification of Portland streetcar route in 1997, $3.5 billion was invested in property within two blocks of the streetcar alignment, 10,212 new housing units were developed, and over 500,000 square metres of office, institutional, retail and hotel space was constructed.

Overall, more than half the development that has occurred in Portland’s CBD since 1997 has been within 1 block of the streetcar, and properties located closest to the line are being developed at higher densities with lower car parking ratios than those elsewhere in the region.

Outcomes such as these emphasise the potential for light rail development to reshape cities, and our submission therefore stressed the need for the State Government to make sure that potential routes are well planned, because they could ultimately be the biggest drivers of future development patterns in Perth.

Associated with this, the submission called for the Public Transport Plan to incorporate clear goals for detailed light rail route planning, including goals to: ensure future light rail routes are planned to connect strategic trip generating centres; maximise system speed; enhance pedestrian accessibility along the route; maximise opportunities for and shape transit oriented development; increase social equity; and improve liveability of areas ‘on route’.

The submission also highlighted that, in our view, initial light rail investment in Perth should focus on the routes with the greatest capacity for development stimulus and which connect the highest trip generating activities.

Innovative Funding

However, the biggest issue for light rail development world-wide is funding and this is also the most significant weakness of the draft Public Transport Plan for Perth.

Our submission expressed disappointment that, while the draft plan speaks of bold visions for public transport in Perth, it actually plans for reduced investment in fleet expansion and capital expenditure over the next two decades.

The draft plan also fails to identify adequate funding mechanisms for ‘transformational’ projects including light rail - something that has opened it, and proposals for light rail, to unnecessary levels of scepticism and criticism.

Examples of light rail delivery around the world indicate that the cost of light rail systems is very high.

‘The successful delivery of light rail obviously hinges on obtaining adequate funding, and given the high costs involved, international examples have shown that it is not feasible for state or local authorities to bear the entire load,’ Marion Fulker said.
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< As a result, internationally, light rail has only been achieved through innovative and multi-pronged funding approaches involving a combination of different mechanisms including local and State Government funding; Central Government non-repayable capital grants and repayable loans; percentage levies on payroll tax; increases in property tax; private sector funding mechanisms such as developer contributions; institutional and organisational capital contributions; and private public partnerships.

Our submission therefore called for the final Public Transport Plan to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the potential options available to fund light rail in Perth and the process for their investigation, to demonstrate that there is both the commitment and the capacity for the projects to be delivered.

It also emphasised the importance of resolving funding issues as a number one priority.

‘International experience shows that successful light rail delivery requires funding issues to be resolved up front,’ Marion said, ‘and in our view it is essential that the State Government provides a commitment to finding a funding solution for light rail before moving into detailed planning for routes.’

‘This is also essential because the location and design of the route will affect the potential and the effectiveness of mechanisms such as value capture or organisational and developer contributions,’ she said.

The submission identified funding options that should be investigated including value capture models, public-private partnerships, institutional, organisational and developer contributions, cash in lieu parking levies and opportunities to obtain funding from Infrastructure Australia.

The Committee for Perth has commissioned independent research on value capture models to assist this process which will be forwarded to the Department of Transport and to the Minister in November.

However the submission also asserted the need for the State Government to commit to being a primary funder of light rail projects by allocating more funding for public transport to demonstrate its commitment and capacity to deliver the draft plan’s vision.

Collaboration & Participation

Experience nationally and internationally shows that the planning and delivery of light rail is not easy and success hinges on co-operation and collaboration between sectors including State Government departments, local authorities, institutions, organisations and developers along the route. This success is not achieved through consultation but through active participation and collaboration.

The Committee for Perth has therefore appealed to the State Government to take a collaborative and participatory approach to delivering light rail in Perth.

Similarly our submission highlighted the need for the State Government to ensure that the community is on board and involved in the planning process.

The up-front support of community members is particularly critical for light rail in comparison to other public transport projects because of the high level of investment involved; the potential need for the community to pay the additional taxes and levies to enable funding; the major changes communities face to their urban environment; and because they face significant disruptions during the development process.

According to the Portland Office of Transportation, ‘Without public support, projects of this magnitude can get bogged down to the degree that public investment cannot move in tandem with the development.’

The Next Step

The Committee for Perth is convenor of the Knowledge Arc Light Rail Steering Committee which was formed to facilitate strategic and co-operative dialogue between the critical organisations, local authorities and stakeholders potentially involved in delivering light rail to Perth.

We will continue to work with this group to provide assistance to government to ensure that light rail is an integral component of the future land use and transportation development of Perth and that the rail routes and infrastructure provide the greatest possible advantage for the metropolitan region from both a land use and transportation perspective.

The Committee for Perth has also made an invitation to government in its submission to assist in bringing international light rail experts to Perth to assist the State Government in the planning and design for light rail and in developing appropriate models for funding and operating the system.

According to Marion the international light rail sector has, throughout her recent study tour, shown an extraordinary willingness to share their secrets and assist other cities to achieve light rail success.

‘I hope that the State Government will take us up on our offer of assistance to draw on the vast international expertise that is available in light rail planning and development because ultimately we all want Perth’s light rail system to be the best in the world.’

A full copy of the submission is available on the Committee for Perth website: http://www.committeeforperth.com.au/submissions
Achieving Work + Life balance and its implications

Over one hundred guests joined us at a Committee for Perth special event in October, supported by UN Women, to hear from Professor Barbara Pocock.

For the past 30 years Barbara has been researching work, employment and industrial relations in Australia, and has published a number of books that examine the complexities of how work affects our families, home life and social life. Her books include *Living Low Paid: The Dark Side of Prosperous Australia* and *The Labour Market Ate My Babies: Work, Children and a Sustainable Future*.

Barbara shared her thoughts on how we can create a healthy work and life balance and as a result a more sustainable community with a number of pertinent key messages.

Her message was that the world of work is changing. In the last decade Australia has seen significant social and employment changes with an increased participation in paid work as well as an ageing workforce that requires special attention to keep workers in paid work for longer and, at the same time increase further the overall workforce.

Over five years, Barbara and her team have been researching this area and have amassed significant data through national surveys and over one thousand interviews.

Some of what this data reveals is that although the workforce has changed and, overall there has been a fall in average hours worked, the percentage of people that believe work interferes with their personal lives remains constant (2007 – 42.2%, 2008 – 42.6%, 2009 – 43.3% and 2010 43.0%).

All data seems to point to the fact that we are continuing to head in the direction of busy, pressured lives and many Australians have an unhealthy work-life relationship.

In addition, in every year of data collection the team observed that managers and professionals have the worst work-life interference. Some of this is due to their longer work hours, but it’s not all an hours effect, a large part of this could be due to having a boundary-less job – a phenomenon that only increases as technology makes it increasingly difficult to leave work behind. For many in these occupations, their jobs can be done anywhere and anytime and this blurring of boundaries is contributing to significant work-life strain.

One area in which Barbara believes work + life balance can be achieved is through the establishment of flexible work practices. But while she believes there is sufficient legislation in place to allow for flexible working practices, there is still a significant amount of fine tuning to be done in making this work for people.

For example it is not enough to simply implement a job share arrangement or reduced number of hours worked each week without revising the workload and job description of the worker. If this does not take place, the worker is left trying to achieve the same amount of work as before but in fewer hours.

After sharing a lot of statistics and trends that are visible from their research, particularly relating to ideal hours worked and the topic of annual leave, Barbara joined Basil Mustilis, Ernst & Young, Kate Sommerville, BHP Billiton and Jason Rickets, Freehills for a panel discussion which provided plenty of opportunity for further discussion around the topic of work + life balance and how it can be achieved.

Our thanks go to Kailis for their generous donation of a door prize of a pearl necklace as worn by the CEO and featured on the front page of this newsletter.

Women In Leadership Project

The event also provided the perfect platform to announce the appointment of a Steering Committee, to be headed by Emeritus Professor Margaret Seares, AO, that will guide the development of the Committee for Perth’s Women in Leadership Project.

This is an exciting, thought leading and collaborative eleven part project that aims to proactively identify and articulate practical initiatives to assist women to be successful in corporate Perth; and assist Perth based businesses to identify practical ways to attract, develop and retain talented women and provide them with leadership opportunities both as executives and board members.

The twelve month project is therefore envisaged to be a resource tool, specifically focused on the corporate landscape of Perth, with dual outcomes, both for women and corporations.

The first step in the project is to secure funding, followed by a literature review, supported by a series of interviews and surveys sampling Perth’s female and male leaders and emerging leaders. The research will be specific to Perth’s corporate environment and will be followed by a project phase that is designed to empower women to help themselves further their careers.

A project team has been established and we are currently seeking corporate partners to assist us in the funding for this research. If you are interested in discussing funding opportunities, please contact Marion Fulker on 08 9481 5699.

Committees for Cities & Regions

During the month the CEO attended a meeting of the Committee for Cities & Regions network in Werribee. Hosted by the Committee for Wyndham and with attendees from many well established Committees for, we also welcomed the newly formed Committee for Ecuha Moamma.

The purpose of these twice yearly catch ups is to share best practice, receive briefings on projects and their ensuing outcomes and, importantly, consider issues that affect major cities and regional areas.

The major concern arising from our most recent meeting is the lack of quality debate by our federal politicians that we believe is affecting Australia’s reputation in the international marketplace. This will be an area of focus when we meet in March 2012 here in Perth. As host, I am hoping to include an opportunity for members to meet with representatives from other C4s in the program.

My thanks to Committee for Wyndham who put together an interesting agenda which included a behind the scenes look at Werribee Mansion and a dinner at its stunning Joseph’s restaurant. Finally our congratulations to the Committee for Geelong who are celebrating 10 years of making a difference to the debate and outcomes in their region.
With local elections successfully completed, we thought it appropriate to consider some of the changing faces of local politics by asking a few of the new and continuing Mayors for an insight into their visions for their mayoral terms.

We invited the Mayors of our two major Local Government Members for comment along with Mayor of Vincent to get a perspective on the role that Vincent plays as an inner city council adjacent to the City of Perth. Following on from last month’s article focusing on Albany, we also invited the new mayor of that area for his thoughts.

Forrest Place in 2012.

Alannah MacTiernan Mayor of Vincent

‘City of Vincent has 5 of Perth’s most dynamic urban villages—Beaufort St, Oxford St, Angove/Fitzgerald St, Mt Hawthorn and upper William Street.

‘I want to ensure that the City matches the creativity of the business sector with great design and smart investment into the public realm of these centres. We want each to retain a unique character and sense of place.

‘We have a very switched-on population and, with the right leadership, Vincent could be at the forefront in creative urban planning, in development of stunning public spaces and in embedding 21st energy systems in our developments.

‘We are also experiencing an extraordinary inner city baby boom which presents us with exciting challenges of catering for the kids in Perth’s more intensely developed suburbs.

‘I am very keen to establish a close collaboration with the City of Perth, and indeed other authorities, so we can deal with interface issues but equally importantly so we can share resources and ideas.’

Lisa Scaffidi Lord Mayor of Perth

‘I believe the City of Perth Council term that commenced on 15 October will be a very busy time for the City of Perth as once CHOGM is completed we are virtually into the Festive Season and all that it brings.

‘By 2012 we will be preparing for the commencement of the Waterfront Project which we know is scheduled for an April start. This will mean preparing people for the work ahead and ensuring clear communications with all stakeholders and users of the city.

‘While it will be business as usual for the City, we are also working on the new lending library and ongoing works like the Jeppe Hein public artwork/library and ongoing works like the Anzacs in the most appropriate way.

‘I am confident that this work will only work to better Albany. Let’s do it.”

Sue Doherty Mayor of South Perth

‘I see my four year term as a period of opportunity to positively position the City to promote and protect the interests of the people of South Perth.

‘To this end I am going to be working to bring about the community’s vision of the City – based on the blueprint to guide the future direction of the City and our community. We have a vibrant and strong sense of community, understanding the values and hopes of people through engaging with them will create a place where they want to live, work and visit.

‘Prior to the election, I did a lot of door knocking and heard a many issues that concern the community. While there will always be a variety of views on how South Perth should develop, I am mindful of capturing the broad spectrum vision in moving forward.

‘I will be paying particular attention to areas such as how best to make the River – one of our biggest assets — more accessible and available; the need to increase childcare services to assist our families and children; an examination of infrastructure, particularly around the growing footprint of Curtin. I am committed to working collaboratively with the State Government in promoting light rail in our area and carefully considering increasing population needs through the metropolitan area of South Perth and how we are going to address that.

‘I have been on council since 2002 and was responsible for initiating the broader vision for the city. I plan to facilitate ways to remain accessible to the local community and ensure that what we leave behind will positively change people’s lives.’
The Western Edge case studies are extracted from information provided by creative workers in Perth, Vancouver and Glasgow who are participating in Curtin University’s Creative Workforce Initiative. The case studies aim to highlight the integral role of creative workers within cities and the value that their work contributes to their local communities.

Jeremy Goodchild - Opportunities in Smaller Markets

Perth caricature artist Jeremy Goodchild juggles full time engineering work with the creation of unique pieces of artwork that serve to capture a person’s real (or even imagined) personality. Caricature art fills a unique niche in terms of artistic expression and the creative process. This is because whilst it forms part of the visual arts, it is also a performance art.

‘It is one of the most interactive art forms, which can directly entertain at a live function but can also be appreciated up on a wall for years to come,’ Jeremy explains.

Jeremy’s international experiences as a live caricaturist have made him realise how underdeveloped the art form is in Perth. For example, in 2009 he travelled to Northern Ohio to attend the annual convention of the International Society of Caricature Artists. Attracting hundreds of caricature artists each year from around the globe, the event features seminars, competitions and artwork sessions. Recalling his experience at the event, Jeremy says,

‘[It] was an eye-opening and amazing experience, and revealed how underdeveloped this art form is in WA at the moment. My most rewarding experience there was drawing one of my idols of caricature, Joe Bluhm, and seeing him laugh at the result.’

Back home in Perth, Jeremy says that the local caricature scene suffers from a lack of recognition. This includes a lack of formal education courses, competitions, or exhibitions of caricature art. One reason for this, he explains, is the lack of recognition of caricature as a serious art form.

‘I think caricature needs to be raised above the ‘big-head-little-body’ stigma that cheapens it. Capturing the essence of the human face is, in my mind, as much of an art form as, say, abstract art, and arguably more so.’

As Tamara Winikoff, executive director of the National Association for the Visual Arts explains, visual art can take on many forms, with caricature art offering immediately incisive visual commentary.

‘It gets to the essence of the character and intention of those who play an important role in public life and determining our futures. We should treasure, celebrate and nurture it, particularly in Australia where we have long prided ourselves on our preparedness to say it like it is.’

As such, the biggest challenge to Jeremy’s development as an artist is ‘getting the word out there’ to promote caricature as an art form, coupled with a shift in the general attitude towards art and culture in Perth.

‘Local media doesn’t normally seem to consider the use of high quality caricature as part of their illustration repertoire - e.g. newspapers, magazines. Also, I’m more focused on digital caricature at the moment, and there is a stigma associated to this as well: that it is ‘cheating’. The reality is that digital paintings require just as much skill - if not more - than traditional painting. Perhaps this isn’t understood as much in Perth than in artistically aware cities such as Melbourne?’

One way for caricature art to be developed, Jeremy says, is through workshops and educational programs. He is actively developing these opportunities with activities such as two-hour caricaturing lessons with Primary Extension and Challenge (PEAC) students. The way in which Jeremy organises and supports his creative practice typifies the pattern of work experienced by many of Australia’s creative workers and tells us much about the thinking behind their decision making. Whilst part-time arts practice is more common in smaller markets such as Perth, Jeremy explains that the novelty of his art within the local market creates new opportunities and means he is able to undertake the majority of work on offer whilst retaining other employment.

‘It works in my favour in a way because people don’t normally consider it a form of entertainment or gift, so it has a lot of room for expansion and growth. When it’s presented to people they are more likely to go with it, because in Perth it’s ‘new’ and more likely to have ‘not been done’ before.’

For more information about Curtin University’s Creative Workforce Initiative, please contact Associate Professor Dawn Bennett at d.bennett@curtin.edu.au.

Additional details on Jeremy Goodchild can be found at: http://drawattention.com.au
Environmental Innovation

As identified in our Perth @ 3.5 Million discussion paper, in 2000 ‘it was reported in the media that Perth had the biggest pollution problem of any city in Australia – with levels in the air of the cancer causing benzene and other toxic chemicals reaching levels normally associated with big cities such as Sydney and Los Angeles and that it was a problem that was occurring year-round (ABC, 2000).’

Good air quality is very important to any city, but to a medium sized, isolated lifestyle city like Perth which prides itself on its outdoor lifestyle, maintaining good air quality is perhaps even more important. While Perth has historically been a city with clean air and it is in the best interests of the environment and the community’s health to ensure that it stays that way, little has been done at a local level.

On a global scale, cities are beginning to realise that issues of air pollution, often linked to population growth, are seriously affecting their liveability and attractiveness and are looking for ways to counter the impact even as they continue to grow.

In 2008 Milan was labeled the ‘pollution capital of Europe’ with incredibly high levels of air pollution that were leading to significant illness, particularly in children. An even earlier report by the World Health Organisation (2004) estimated that in Italy’s most polluted urban centres 9 per cent of non-accident-related deaths among the over-30s were due to the inhalation of small particulate matter known as PM10s.

However Milan has been working hard to address ways to improve the city’s air quality and has developed a number of concepts of merit that could be considered in other cities around the world. These include Stefano Boeri’s Vertical Forest and Ecosistema Urbano’s Eco Boulevard or Air Trees.

Vertical Forest (Bosco Verticale)

Whilst it may look like a conceptual rendering, construction of these brand new apartment buildings is currently underway in Milan.

The project is designed to aid metropolitan reforestation that contributes to the regeneration of the environment and urban biodiversity without the implication of expanding the city upon the territory. It is a model of vertical densification of nature within the city.

The first example of a Bosco Verticale comprises two residential towers of 110 and 76 meters height, and will host 900 trees (each measuring 3, 6 or 9 m tall) along with a wide range of shrubs and floral plants. On flat land, the amount of trees used in each tower equals 10,000 square metres of forest.

The Bosco Verticale is a system that optimises, recovers and produces energy and aids in the creation of a microclimate and in filtering the dust particles contained in the urban environment. The diversity of the plants and their characteristics produce humidity, absorb CO2 and dust particles, producing oxygen and protect from radiation and acoustic pollution, improving the quality of living spaces and saving energy.

Plant irrigation will be produced to great extent through the filtering and reuse of the grey waters produced by the building. Additionally Aeolian and photovoltaic energy systems will contribute, together with the microclimate, to increase the degree of energetic self sufficiency of the two towers.

Eco Boulevard

Vallecas, in Madrid, had all the very poor characteristics typical of suburban developments. The EcoBoulevard project, undertaken by Ecosistema Urbano was designed to mitigate the effects of this rampant urban development that had little concern for environmental and social conditions.

The designers had a vision of a public space that would be in the clearing of a forest where trees offer shade and act as air filters to create a pleasant recreational space. As such a forest will take many years to grow, an interim solution – the ‘air tree’ – was designed to bridge the gap while young sapling trees planted nearby become established.

Consisting of a number of ‘air trees’, these self-sustaining structures powered by solar energy, create public space whilst also tempering the hot climate through climbing plants and atomisers that cool and moisten the air. Any excess energy is sold back to the grid and helps fund the maintenance of the structures.

Being demountable, the idea is that the ‘air trees’ can be moved to different locations as and when needed.