

SPEECH NOTES

Fremantle
Community Bank® Branch



By Marion Fulker, CEO
Wednesday, 2 April 2014
Fremantle Arts Centre, 5-7pm

Speech (10 minutes) following Griff Longley, CEO Nature Play

Theme: About Committee for Perth

- For those of you who may not know, the Committee for Perth was established in 2006 as an independent member-funded think tank to make a positive difference to the future of the Perth & Peel regions.
- The Committee's purpose is to promote and enable change that improves our cultural diversity, economic prosperity, sustainability and world-class amenity and it is those goals that drive what we do every day.
- I often say I have the best job in the state. Who wouldn't want to spearhead the thinking about Perth's future as our population grows at an unprecedented rate and then work to find solutions so that we leave a great place for future generations including my two daughters and three grandchildren.
- I also get to work with a great board and lots of motivated members and I'd like to acknowledge our Chairman, John Langoulant AO; Director Linda Wayman and Graham Holden, Chair of our newly established Transport & Congestion Taskforce who are here this evening.
- We are founded on the 'Committee for' model that was first established in Melbourne almost 30 years ago. And we're now part of a growing network of committees in capital cities and major towns across Australia and New Zealand. Our objectives are the same in that each of us want to improve the liveability of our regions using an apolitical, greater good approach.
- However using the idea of taking something good and making it better, Perth has adapted the model and created a unique way of doing things for three reasons:-
 - firstly, we were the only Committee not formed in a time of crisis;
 - secondly, we take a purely evidenced base approach through academic, desktop and on the ground research; and
 - lastly, and it would be so much more helpful if I could show you this in graphic form, our advocacy model. This is our long term sustained way of doing things and starts with catalysing activity through research and finding appropriate

solutions to challenges and ways of seizing opportunities, then moves to the advocacy stage in which we are vocal and share widely, then comes the decision making stage relating to awaiting a decision usually by government, if a decision is in line with our advocacy position then we move to the vision keeping stage which is where we monitor execution to ensure that projects are delivered to the vision and finally in the outcomes stage we undertake evaluation. If, at the decision making point, the outcome is not in line with our advocacy position we go back to the first two stages again. The timeline on our advocacy model is around 20 years.

- The most recent example of our advocacy in action is light rail. We catalysed the discussion and proposed the solution, were euphoric when the government commit to the MAX Light Rail Project in the lead up to the 2013 election and moved into vision keeping mode but now that the project has been deferred by 3 years we are back at the advocacy stage again. Not defeated just being more creative about how to get the outcome being mindful of state debt levels and their desire to reinstate the AAA Credit Rating.
- Research is where about 30% of our annual budget is spent and we have a joint venture research alliance with The University of Western Australia called FACTBase. We have also commissioned Curtin University to undertake research related to indigenous culture and transportation issues and more recently we have engaged two academics at the University of Queensland on the issue of gender equity.
- All our research reports are available on our website, so if anything I mention tonight piques your interest you can find it there.
- We are funded by a number of WA's well-known corporate brands, and their CEO's and MD's have set aside commercial gain, their sectoral interests and personal perspectives to come together under our brand to be a united voice on the issues facing the Perth in the future.
- Using the facts gained through our research and adopting a solution focused approach, the Committee works collaboratively with a number of local governments and state agencies and other stakeholders to get cut through on many seemingly intractable issues.
- Our early work created the *Cultural Compact: the 10 year challenge* which made recommendations for state and local government, the business and philanthropic communities and the sector itself with the aim of bridging the gap between sport and entertainment at one end and high arts/fine arts at the other end of our cultural life. The document has been a guiding light for some of the transformation that means we're now enjoying a more vibrant region. And a report we released last year *Examining Perth's Performing Arts Infrastructure* (featuring Freo Arts Centre) showed that Perth's audience numbers are growing, which is against the national trend of decline. However for this to continue we need extra infrastructure such as a lyric theatre for major musicals to cope with crowds larger than our historic treasure, His Majesty's can cater for.
- Over the past 7 years, we have gone where many fear to tread and were the catalyst for the corporate sector across Perth to strongly embrace reconciliation with Indigenous people. One of the first resolutions our board made in March 2007 stated that we believed that Perth to be the city in Australia that acknowledges, respects and celebrates its Indigenous people, their culture and traditions. A welcome by a Noongar elder or acknowledgement of traditional ownership is increasingly part of the way companies do business. It all started with doing things

in a culturally appropriate way and early on we appointed Dr Richard Walley OAM as our Indigenous consultant. Our work and influence has grown from there to include producing a Welcome to Country Guide and carrying out research to find ways that we could achieve our objective and our boldest recommendation is for World Centre for Indigenous Culture to be established in an appropriate location on the Swan River.

- Despite it being supported by our members and considered a good idea by government and more recently the Tourism Council, we lament the proposed Indigenous cultural centre, which was announced to be included in the Perth waterfront development, has been deferred. Having generated the idea through the Cultural Compact process, our concept describes a place like no other – as much a place for reconciliation, healing and reconnection as it is about stories, art and performance. And embraces both a curatorial and experiential approach which we hope would lead to greater levels of understanding and cause a fundamental attitudinal shift. While it might be currently on the backburner we haven't given up and are pursuing other non-government funded options.
- Like I said, we often take on issues that others are mandated or funded to do, yet on our modest budget, with our research and an inclusive approach with a clear outcome in mind we can make good things happen and usually with the blessing of those who have been trying for decades before us.
- That leads me into another difficult area. Last year we kicked off a major gender equity project - Filling the Pool. At University there are now a number of degrees where females are graduating in the same numbers as males, yet 10 years on they are moving away from corporate life like lemmings off a cliff. If it were simply a matter of women leaving the workforce to have children then we would be on par with other Australian capitals but we are by far the worst in terms of female participation rates, which are less than half the national average in terms of executive and board roles and the gap in the rate of pay is at a staggering 26.4%. Filling the Pool aims to make recommendations for corporates as well as women themselves to improve these woeful figures.
- You might wonder why does a think tank about the future of the region put resources and worry itself with this vexed issue. Simply because we need to have diversity in our decision making when we want to find solutions for the future and if we can't strike a balance for 51% of the population, what hope do we have for other groups in our community who have different ethnicities and faiths?
- Our largest research project to date has been focused on Perth growing to a region of 3.5 million people, which the state demographer says will happen around 2050.
- Over four years we undertook research as well as consultations to describe the region at double its current size by developing two scenarios for Perth in 2050 which resulted in *Towards a Bright Future* being launched in September 2012.
- In this report we outline the worst case scenario as 'Business as Usual' and in our view this is where the metropolitan region is heading. The Perth of the future is on a trajectory to be increasingly unaffordable, congested, polluted and unsustainable in a way that will compromise its current high levels of liveability and attractiveness for investment.
- However, the best case is for a 'Bright Future' which means we have to find solutions to all of these challenges that work at the neighbourhood level but are also scalable in order to make a great deal of difference across the region.
- The report's 20 recommendations centre around :-

- having a vision for the future that is developed with the community;
 - the reform of Local Government;
 - the development of an integrated land use and transport plan;
 - the creation of diverse and affordable housing options;
 - to build a resilient economic future;
 - the need to create knowledge, innovation and creativity hubs;
 - to foster tolerance and acceptance;
 - to commit to environmental sustainability; and
 - to reduce crime and place an emphasis on community health and safety.
- A bright future cannot be achieved if we don't think and act differently - as individuals, companies, governments and institutions. Quite simply we cannot do more of the same because it feels comfortable and familiar.
 - We are at a cross-road and our next steps could either send us down the right or wrong track and it is up to all of us to work for the greater good so that we have a place that future generations will thank us for.
 - So back to the beginning, in our eight year we have a huge body of research on which to draw from. We work with the willing and pleasingly that is becoming a larger pool of people all the time. Our work is focused on the long term – right out to 2050 yet we are mindful of the next steps to be taken to set us up for a bright future.