

State Administrative Tribunal
Vista Lecture Series

Grand plans and accidents: the future of central Perth

Edited transcript of the address

on

26 March 2008

by

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I think all of us feel that Perth is once again entering a wave of development as it did when the convicts arrived, when gold was found, when agricultural commodities were in demand, and when the value of nickel and other minerals soared. Now in the era of China as the world's manufacturer there are potentially great changes for the city. I think all of us have confidence, mixed with certain anxieties, that this time it will turn out well.

I shall be looking at some of the things that happened during the last waves of development in Perth. There were changes which we now wish had not happened, and changes which we wish had happened but didn't. Crucial to achieving good outcomes for the city is a public conversation and debate about the city, a grown-up capacity to talk about ideas, to criticise each other's ideas. So I think it's fantastic that the State Administrative Tribunal under Michael Barker's leadership, in establishing these lectures, is contributing very significantly to that debate.

City Vision has stimulated ideas and public discussion about the city for twenty years. There are now more organisations in Perth contributing to the conversation, such as the Committee for Perth and Linda Dorrington's FORM and other groups. This lecture series is exactly what enables us as a community to share ideas, and to disagree, in an open and constructive and grown-up way.

In those conversations, the thing which is hardest for us to embrace is the fact that a city has *large structures*. These large structures relate to the geography and character of the city. A city has a grain, a pattern of streets and places, an inherited topography, a historic tendency to grow in certain ways and directions – an underlying anatomy, pattern and shape – which I shall refer to as its real but relatively hidden ensemble of large structures.

The city is not just made up of a series of places. A good city is not the result of a series of projects. There are structures which are much larger than places and projects, and they are fairly hard for people to see. We have to detect them because they grow out of the city's natural endowments and historic patterns of growth. Cities grow in an organic way. They stop and start, as Perth has. They lurch in various directions, taking bad turns as well as good. Cities result from the decisions of thousands of people acting more

or less independently. The amazing result of all these decisions is the most complex of all human artefacts. The cities we love are the result of this combination of deliberate planning, happenstance and accident. The large structures emerge as the city unfolds. The grand plans that succeed are the ones that work with those large structures. We respond to these large structures but they are hard to see.

One of the great contributors to urban planning and design, Christopher Alexander, conducted a fascinating experiment in rebuilding part of San Francisco following the failure of a grand plan. The Embarcadero freeway was to have been built between the CBD and the waterfront. The area had been cleared of a historic district of waterfront buildings before the citizens put a stop to it. A grand plan was seen as an accident, and once abandoned it left behind a wasteland. Alexander and his colleagues and students at Berkeley simulated the gradual rebuilding of this part of the city through an intense year-long experiment. He commented on the difficulty of seeing the underlying large structures.

In our experience of simulating urban growth, and trying to produce wholeness in the experiment, we found that the most consistent error, the most consistent blindness – whether of the people concerned, or of the process – was always the blindness to large structure. (Christopher Alexander et al. *A new theory of urban design*. Oxford 1987, page 50.)

I shall discuss the large structures of Perth that should be central to discussions about the city's future. Failure to see the large structures causes grand plans to crash, and turns relatively innocuous projects into great controversies. Our faith in our ability to make good decisions about urban development is then further undermined. Instead, we need to move the conversation to the big picture, to make that conversation more inclusive, to engage with the talented people who have an interest in the city, and to commit the resources needed for creative people to do the planning and design work. Cities do need constant attention from all of us. Yet we don't seem to be very good at assembling the teams and providing the funds for people in sufficient numbers to work on the cities.

This is strange, since Western Australia is known for a model of planning which has succeeded extremely well. The planning which is so well regarded is not at the city centre scale but at the regional scale. I came back to chair the Planning Commission because we have such a good, strong regional planning system in Western Australia. Ultimately, these planning arrangements go back to the 1928 *Town Planning and Development Act* – the first in the country and a lovely little Act that allowed you to do lots of things if you exercised your imagination – now consolidated into the *Planning and Development Act 2005*. More specifically, the regional planning arrangements go back to 1952 when the State Government cast around for the world's leading planner to plan for Perth's future. At the same time they sought to recruit Australia's best planner for the role of Town Planning Commissioner. The two of them, Gordon Stephenson and Alistair Hepburn,

produced the regional plan for the metropolitan area which we've been basically operating under ever since. The McClarty Liberal government appointed them, the Hawke Labor government received and adopted their report, the Brand Liberal government implemented the crucial elements of the report, and the Tonkin Labor government continued its implementation.

Successful regional grand plans

We have had at the level of regional planning a stable, bipartisan approach to the metropolitan planning for Perth which, because of its stability and because of the bipartisan support, has gone on steadily getting better. The most obvious product of this approach is the metropolitan region scheme as shown on the screen. Accepted by the Parliament in 1963, amended a few times every year ever since, it has provided a transparent framework for urban development, and Perth wouldn't be the same without it. A statutory region scheme was one of three crucial ingredients in a very grand plan for managing Perth's growth. The other two ingredients were a metropolitan region improvement tax, which is a small levy on commercial and investment property that has funded metropolitan improvement ever since, and an independent expert body to administer the scheme and the fund, initially the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, then the State Planning Commission and now the Western Australian Planning Commission.

One of Stephenson and Hepburn's grandest plans was to build a metropolitan park system, as illustrated in the maps on the screen. It has been consistently planned and funded in an environment of bipartisan and community support over the 45 years since 1963. The first act of the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority was to start buying back the face of the Darling scarp, and the maps show how the 'parks and recreation reservation' has grown since – starting with an ambitious plan to acquire the face of the Darling scarp, the wetlands, the banks of the Canning River, and parts of the Swan River foreshore here and there. Every decade it got bigger. Every decade the state planning agency, after long deliberation, reserved more land, gained government approval, presented the plans to Parliament and then stood in the market to buy the land whenever it became available. As you can see from the maps, this is an amazing achievement, resulting from a credible statutory scheme adopted by the government, endorsed by the Parliament, administered by an independent expert body with guaranteed ongoing funding.

The most recent equivalent is the building of a contemporary, integrated rail and bus urban transit system. The railway came close to closure, which would have been a planning accident of monumental proportions. It is already hard to recall that the railway at one stage consisted only of the Midland and Armadale lines, traversed by slow diesel railcars with few passengers in them. The importance to the region and the city centre of the extension of the line to Mandurah, together with extensions north and to Thornlie, as shown on the maps, can hardly be exaggerated. It is not just the doubling of the system. The 'network effect' greatly multiplies the effectiveness of the integrated bus

and rail system as an urban transit service. The WAPC is currently funding earthworks to take the railway further north.

This great achievement is not only an example of an outstanding grand plan based on seeing the big picture and the large structures at a regional scale. It has to be said that it also illustrates the benighted state of public discussion of big planning issues, with the print news being a partisan barrage of white elephants, delays and blowouts, when construction achievements and cost containment, at a time of massive increases in other projects, were just as newsworthy.

The current formal metropolitan strategy, Network city, is itself a grand plan or a great project. It's a contemporary framework for managing the growth of the region in the face of all sorts of extraordinarily complex and difficult challenges, not least climate change and the fact that we morally have to do everything we can to reduce carbon and other greenhouse gases, and therefore, for example, reduce travel in the gas guzzlers that most of us are getting around in.

The structure of central Perth

Apart from the fact that this is a long-term planning framework, the reason I have Network city on the screen is because, talking about the centre of Perth, you have to start at the regional level. Understanding the future of the city of Perth starts at this level. Regional structures determine the opportunities and the fate of the city centre and how well it works, particularly the distribution of the population, where the jobs are, where the retailing is located, and crucially how the interconnecting transport system works.

These are extremely difficult challenges. There is an enormous amount of inbuilt inertia or existing momentum for continued outward expansion and dispersal. While the railway on one hand shifts travel from private cars to public transport – let me repeat, this is just as much about more effective bus services as it is about trains – and shifts activity to the centres along that greatly extended system, it is also of course expanding the urban region as well as extending the reach of the city centre. This is one of very many factors that are part of the complexities of what is happening to the future of Perth. Will office and other growth in the CBD be unconstrained? To what extent will we succeed in guiding and encouraging (even under certain circumstances forcing) development into the major centres outside Perth, such as Joondalup? At Joondalup, for instance, we want to see a CBD emerge, with a large residential population and higher-order uses serving the northwest corridor. To what extent would success at Joondalup impact on the Perth CBD, or, equally, to what extent will unconstrained growth in the CBD make development of a high level CBD in Joondalup more difficult or impossible? In short, much of the planning of the city centre begins at this regional level.

The next level in, the core of the region as shown on the screen, is where most of the activity is and most of the jobs are. We want to enhance the

magnificent urban places and centres in the core, and are confident that many will go on getting a whole lot better. We will probably want to concentrate activities in those centres and activity corridors. We are confident that people will want to live in that more urban and active environment. If we can remove constraints to intensification people will elect to live closer to where the action is, and closer to the centre of Perth. Again, what effect will that have on our efforts to develop areas like the City of Armadale, the City of Mandurah, the City of Midland and so on into contemporary high-order CBDs?

Continuing to zoom in to the centre of Perth, the large structure physically consisted of the river banks shown where they used to be and, on the north side, the wetlands and swamps known as lakes (where the rail yards later went) ultimately running down into the river at Claisebrook. The ridge in the middle is essentially on the line of Hay Street. The response to that topography was a road on a terrace halfway down the slopes towards the river, St Georges Terrace, and a road in the valley, Wellington Street. Barrack Street connected them. The most important north-south street linking Perth with its hinterland, where people lived and food was grown, was William Street, to which we have delivered any number of indignities in the years since.

What emerged was a business, civic and political axis along St Georges Terrace, as shown on the map. William Street, despite what we've done to it, is still important as a cultural axis centrally linking the river at one end to the hinterland at the other. Their intersection was the very centre of not just Perth but the whole of Western Australian society and economy. The four corners were occupied by the gold buyers in the Bank of New South Wales, the stock and station agents at Elders, the insurers and land speculators at the AMP and mine host at the Palace Hotel – where the people buying and selling the gold and the stations and the real estate would meet.

Hay Street and Murray Street were ultimately important shopping streets. The transverse arcades form a critically important structure in Perth to which I'll return. A very important north-south pedestrian link has emerged latterly in that area through to the cultural centre. Perhaps the most momentous elements are the two new underground railway stations. The significance of this part of the large structure eluded people. You don't commit to that level of public investment, building two underground railway stations in the heart of the city, without many positive multiplying effects. Ever since that project was approved, the questions of how to leverage off it, and how to take advantage of the fact that it was happening on William Street, has been the main game. This is a critical part of the large structure, and we're still trying to get there.

The big end of town shown on the maps is well-entrenched and is now known as the resource area of the city. The traditional heart of Perth – essentially at the intersection of Wellington Street and William Street – is re-emerging, and I shall say some more about that shortly. And now there is a new focus which has us all captivated down on the waterfront. There is a lot happening in the city, as shown in this roll call of projects: the Law Courts, numerous office buildings, commercial buildings, residential buildings, the Esplanade station,

EPRA buildings, the new performing arts centre at the corner of, again, William Street and Roe Street, the arena on Wellington Street, 140 William Street, over the railway station at William Street, Raine Square opposite – that's a very big shift in gravity for the city centre.

Previous grand projects

This is the **foreshore of Perth** as it was at the time of the Stephenson-Hepburn plan. There is already a great deal of fill there. Developing a whole new foreshore from Langley Park to the Esplanade was a major public work and a very intentional project. The early map shows what the foreshore used to look like. The lots in Adelaide Terrace ran down to the mudflats; the land was subdivided right to the water's edge and as in Fremantle progressive reclamation then followed. By the mid-century, the banks of the river north and south of Perth Water and around Mounts Bay were filled in and tidied up with seawalls.

Some see the grass expanse as a building site going to waste, or at least as a development site to trade-off for less development elsewhere. I've seen it called the front lawn of the city, supposedly as underutilised as all front lawns - except when it's being used by hundreds of Corporate Challenge participants and various others, or for major events. I don't know that all 'empty space' in that sense in that sort of location is a potential building site. It was put there very deliberately and obviously meant a lot to those behind this civic project. Creating the grass expanse along the river was the result of a grand plan and is a fundamental component of the large structures of Perth, not to be dismissed without considerable thought and reflection about what it meant at the time and has come to mean since.

Another very grand plan was the building of the **Kwinana Freeway**, the Narrows Bridge and the massive interchange in what had been Mounts Bay. It was a huge project; very expensive, very bold, and you would wonder whether we would, or could, do it that way now, but one of the reasons it was done that way was because it seemed necessary at the time to encircle the city with freeways, shown here in the first metropolitan region scheme in 1963. There were to be two river crossings to the east, a north-south freeway to the west, which is now there of course, and that continuous ring of freeways right around the CBD. This image shows exactly that approach in Houston, Texas (it also shows vast amounts of surface parking in the Houston CBD and unused land – resulting from the fact that there is a limit to the amount of office space and other land uses that a local economy can support – as we need to bear in mind in Perth.)

The redirection of the northern leg of the ring of freeways around Perth and the construction of the Graham Farmer Freeway and the relocated Windan Bridge made possible another grand plan, the very successful **East Perth project**. It started about 20 years ago and is still going. Building cities takes a long time and is all the better for sufficient time to evolve. Relatively speaking, the East Perth project moved very quickly and had early successes. It had sufficient up-front capital funding from the Australian Government to

make it happen and significant capital investment by the State, as all such projects require.

As with all of these big projects, the plan evolved. East Perth is nothing like the initial 1990 plan on the screen. This quite different plan dates from a few years ago. The more input from interested people, the more talent allowed to contribute, the more there is open conversation about it, the more grown-up we are about being critical, the better is the end result. I think East Perth is a triumph and it must surely have benefited from that kind of input.

Grand planning that has exercised people for a very long time is for the area close to what is the traditional **heart of Perth** at the cultural centre. This image comes from a turn-of-the-century plan to replace the steam railway with an inter-urban electric tramway – they were extremely new at the time – allowing development of the rail yards and the building of a big new town hall and other civic and cultural buildings between William and Beaufort Streets. George Temple Pool proposed moving the rail line and station further north to enable a town hall, opera house and other civic buildings to be built on the railway land. You can see this was very much the heart of the city in people's minds. Stephenson and Hepburn proposed a partial sinking of the rail line and station and the expansion of the art gallery and the library into a cultural centre, comprising free-standing box-like buildings.

Up on **Parliament Hill**, Stephenson and Hepburn planned a government quarter looking just the way they did in the 1950s – parallel rectangular boxes. In this image Parliament House has been greatly extended. All of the civil service is gathered up there on the hill. Later the idea developed that the building should be oriented along axis east-west for excellent solar energy efficiency reasons, resulting in the fairly daunting precinct shown on the screen. Only the left-most building, Dumas House, was built, and indeed it is well designed in terms of climate. The rest didn't get built largely because traffic congestion was already causing delays to politicians and the Directors General.

An even grander proposal was that Perth's major new buildings should be oriented on an east-west axis. After Dumas House came the Don Aitken Centre, which was built on the east-west axis in East Perth for Main Roads. The art gallery was built on a north-south axis, as was the State library and the TAFE. These are legacies of a very grand and rather odd scheme to change the axis of Perth, not by now for the good solar reasons of Dumas House, but seemingly to obliterate the old with something new and different.

However regrettable were many projects of this kind, they often present positive opportunities for the next generation, not by, once again, obliterating the recent past but by adapting and building on the failed grand plans. The big north-south buildings of the **cultural centre** have given us a very interesting space in the middle, and if we have a closer look at that space it has great potential. The linked routes and spaces through the city centre to the cultural centre form a large structure that has been overlooked. The current orthodoxy for dealing with this area simply says, 'Since it is a bit

frightening at night we'll put the road back, build on all the left-over spaces and fill shopfronts with cafes.' This would be a tragic missed opportunity, for perhaps this space reminds you of somewhere else. It is remarkably similar, as it happens, to Federation Square, which, as you know, has been hugely successful and popular in Melbourne and is the place where people gather for all kinds of big public events. The configuration of Federation Square is surprisingly like the neglected and overlooked space at the heart of our cultural centre and has remarkably similar institutions around it. In this overlay, that central space and the famous, wonderful, popular Federation Square is seen to be almost the same. And both are located on the edge of the CBD adjacent to the main railway station. These are no more than intriguing coincidences, but it is one that we shouldn't ignore before we just decide that all we need there is James Street and cafes. An approach which seeks to understand and even honour the legacy of the previous grand plan is likely to be more successful than an approach which simply seeks to start again. More importantly, a comparable investment could deliver a captivating civic space of great design and construction quality. People and institutions would respond, using the space in many ways which, as at Federation Square, would evolve over time, creating new traditions.

Because of the long east-west nature of Perth's blocks, and because of the configuration on the sand hill that runs along Hay Street, we've ended up with the very interesting cluster of **arcades** shown on the screen. Gathered into a two or three of city blocks are three and a half kilometres of active retail frontage, assembled in a way which maximises the opportunity for retail outlets and services which would not be viable elsewhere. The compression of activity is like that in a very large ('big box') shopping centre, but instead of the single control of one owner and manager there is something like a genuine market place with real competition and diversity. The same length of shopfronts spread out along a couple of two-kilometre shopping streets as shown on the screen just would not work in the same way. If the shops survived at all, the streets would not be as lively and as busy, and they would not provide the same range of opportunities. Such intensification of market activity in a city centre is rare and hard to contrive. This large structure needs to be understood, valued and looked after. Fortunately, as you can see, the new retailing being built in Perth is either in the arcades or reasonably closely connected to them.

What led to the arcades was the physical structure of the city, mentioned earlier, and in particular the ridge running parallel to the river. The functional structure results firstly from the long east-west street blocks planned by surveyor general John Septimus Roe, leading to transverse pedestrian links, and secondly the multilevel connections planned by Paul Ritter to take advantage of the topography. As a result there are upper and lower levels of arcades which, because Hay Street is one storey above St Georges Terrace and Murray Street, are both at ground level. This is Perth's contribution to city centres, a double layer of arcades both at ground level. The top layer is at ground level at James Street, continues across the rail station concourse and Padbury Walk over Murray Street to be at ground level at Hay Street. The lower layer is on the ground at Roe Street, Wellington Street, Forrest Place

and Murray Street, passing under Hay Street to be at ground level at St George's Terrace. Combined, this provides the city centre with a very attractive and lively north south pedestrian route which, at the Hay Street level, flows seamlessly into the heart of the cultural centre and what could become the city's greatest pedestrian space and activity node.

It is important to draw attention to this crucial component of Perth's large structures. Well-educated urban designers say you must never have multiple levels because it's against all their principles to have any activity above or below ground level. Reacting to some attempts in the sixties to separate pedestrians from traffic (in the US, Canada, even Melbourne) they say that all activity must be at street level to keep the street busy with people: multiple levels reduces activity. We have the opposite effect here. We have the Perth effect, and we need to get it into the urban design textbooks. The map shows one of the levels – this being the Murray Street ground level, a complex network of pedestrian friendly and active connections and spaces – and now sitting on top of that another rich network of pedestrians spaces at the Hay Street level. The result is an intensification of activity and opportunities which would die if, as we saw earlier, it were spread out along two shopping streets.

A second reason to draw attention to this large structure is that we are in the process, inadvertently, of breaking up the pedestrian system. We have just taken down the bridge across Forrest Place. There is universal agreement that the bridge was too heavy and obstructive. It was also thought to be unnecessary because few people used it to reach Albert Facey House or the Horseshoe Bridge and the cultural centre. Yet it was a vital link in a network which will be much more important when the new theatres are built at the corner of William and Roe Streets, when the cultural centre revives and when the Fremantle rail line goes underground allowing the reconnection of William Street and the pedestrianisation of the Horseshoe Bridge. The 'network effect' applies to pedestrian networks even more than to public transport systems: each additional link makes a magnified contribution to the network's effectiveness while each link removed causes a disproportionate reduction in its actual and potential functions. So in this drawing I have put back the bridge across Forrest Place. It is a contemporary, lightweight structure supported by thin cables. It is highly functional, linking the existing network from Hay Street and the station concourse to the route people will take from the William Street station to the theatres and the art gallery once 140 William Street is built above the new station. My bridge is also a stage for performances, a viewing point for watching events or just taking in the scene, a canopy for audiences like those which were delighted by performances of Small Metal Objects at the 2006 Perth Festival, not to mention offering shelter to those crossing the square. It is also, in itself, an artwork, in the manner pioneered in Melbourne of building infrastructure as public art.

[At this point, positive and cautionary lessons from big projects in other cities – Southbank in Melbourne, Southbank in Brisbane, Darling Harbour in Sydney – were illustrated with images and maps.]

Unfinished business

I conclude with a brief survey of unfinished business for Perth which will contribute to the kind of large structures that I have been talking about. There's no doubt that the most critical task in the centre of Perth is to **sink the Fremantle railway line**. This is not just because it's a bit of a bore going over the Horseshoe Bridge – it is because the rail crossing sits right at the traditional and future heart of Perth. This is not the epicentre of business or the best address but it is the public or people's city centre and is strongly re-emerging. It is the most accessible place in the city, for bike riders, for bus rail and CAT passengers and even for car drivers. It will have the newest shops, restaurants and bars at 140 William Street, Raine Square and the refurbished GPO. It connects the cultural and entertainment quarter to the arcades and the commercial, legal and civic quarters. Above all it rescues, from a series of indignities, William Street as the grand city street it once was, where it passes through that re-emerging heart, where it expresses the cultural life of the city, and where it connects residential (north) Perth with the river.

The **arcades** are not often in the front of people's minds but they should be. We should be extending, enriching and protecting the arcades and understanding just how important they are, and how they create the compressed, vibrant, interconnected multilevel pedestrian pathways and spaces which are specific to Perth and essential to its character.

We should re-energise the **cultural centre** as a place for ideas, art, performance and celebration, with a great urban place at its centre. The 'cultural centre problem' is not just a burden that has to be solved. The grand plans of the sixties and seventies may have been misguided, working against the large structures of Perth. Nevertheless, genuine aspirations and innovations went into its transformation – not to mention political and real capital – which should be understood and perhaps honoured as rare attempts to invest in and improve the city on a grand scale for the long term. In any event, ideas for the future of the cultural centre should be part of the essential public conversation I referred to at the outset. Here is another opportunity to move the conversation to the big picture, to be inclusive, to welcome input from talented people and to commit the resources needed for the planning and design work. This part of the city, the peoples' part from the arcades to the cultural and entertainment quarter, needs constant attention from all of us, supported by funds and teams to work on it. Few issues could be more important for the future competitiveness of the urban region, or the success of the Network city strategy.

It is really important that we invest in high-quality pedestrian and bike routes and spaces throughout the city centre. This may be just good house-keeping but it is also strategically important. We should prioritise the actions over the long term based on an understanding and discussion of the large structures of Perth. We should have much higher standards and expectations in relation to the design and construction of surfaces, street furniture, planting, way finding, public art, public activities, information, noise, lighting, etc. We should continuously improve options for movement and travel to and in the city

centre. We should debate and work at accommodating in the city the greatest range of activities, high and low – high art and low art, high rent and low rent, high order and low order, respectable and not respectable, mainstream and fringe, fanciful as well as utilitarian.

How to begin? We have a tried and tested model in the way we have done the long term, strategic regional planning, which I described earlier. If we are so good at it at the regional scale, why not apply some of those approaches and mechanisms to the city? It is easy enough to do. It means that we have to invest in the city in the way that the WAPC has invested one-and-a half billion dollars in 'metropolitan improvement', mainly transport corridors and the open space system. We have to regard the city as a place for significant public investment which generates very high rates of return. We do not have a mechanism or a mindset to appreciate this high rate of return because it is somewhat intangible, not in the dollars that Treasury counts. As an example, investing in the sinking of the Fremantle line would confer significant value on the adjoining public land and transform the setting and accessibility of the fantastic new performing arts centre. If such city-building projects with profound and positive effects always have to balance their own books we are selling the city short and investing in the wrong things.

For upfront, ongoing, long-term strategic expenditure we will need a dedicated funding source, such as the fund we have for the region. It is recognised that the metropolitan region improvement fund reinforced the large structures of the region – the metropolitan park system, the river banks, the ground water resources, the movement corridors including the route of the Mandurah railway – without which Perth would not be the same place. Perhaps we need an equivalent for the city centre, contributed to by those who will derive immediate benefit from expenditure on 'city improvement' such as city businesses, managed at arm's length from day-to-day politics, bipartisan, in the hands of an independent, expert, credible, representative body. There is already such a body, the Central Perth Planning Committee which brings to the table the state and local agencies concerned with making Perth a better place. It receives advice and work from all agencies and advises both the city and state governments, as well as adopting policies and approving development applications using, under delegation, all of the powers of the WAPC.

The way the waterfront project was put together by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and LandCorp was a model for involving people and getting people inside the tent. It is the way that project should continue, open to input, talent, evolving analyses and designs, and in particular open to perspectives which look at the large structure of the city to ensure that the waterfront works with and reinforces the large structure rather than against it. Over time, the project is the best vehicle for moving the public conversation to the big picture, for inclusiveness and for inviting input from talented people, and it is the best reason to commit the resources needed to form a strategic team of creative people to enable this planning and design evolution to take place.

My final image is of an idea to capture much of what I have been discussing – large urban structures, public ownership of the city, long term aspirations expressed in a public conversation. This is an image of Perth at night showing a line of lights running down William Street and out over the water. (It shows Perth as it is now, not yet showing the ultimate form of the waterfront project).

The proposition is for an artwork or an installation that dramatically expresses a key axis, knitting the city and river together, from Northbridge through the heart where the people are, through the historic centre of business, down to the waterfront and into the river. This carbon-neutral procession of impressive lighting standards down William Street makes visible the re-emerging cultural axis of the city and makes a statement about who we are, where we are and where we are going. It says that we celebrate the city, that we see the city as a whole, we see the big structures and we think of the long term...

