

## **The Power of Politics: Can the System Deliver the City that Residents Want**

We find our cities around the globe in an age of unprecedented disruption and innovation and Perth is no exception. It could be said that each generation of the modern era has found their environment more complex and fast changing than the last, however, as of late, it would seem that the rate of change has increased to such an extent that now every day seems more complex and fast-changing than the day before. Within this context, I would like to consider how the present system of Power, which is governed by Politics, can effectively conceive and deliver the city that residents want.

Perth is a young city and like most things that are young, it has the potential to one day be great. In order to achieve greatness (whatever that might mean) many complex and interdependent issues need to be addressed in a clear sighted and systematic manner. For me, the big question is; can our current system of Politics, based on the short term election of Federal, State and Local governments deliver on this promise? It would seem that the answer to this question is a resounding 'yes'. There are many cities around the world that provide a better environment for their residents than Perth. Most of these cities are places which we like to travel to, or places which our children move to and most of these have a system of government much like our own. So first and foremost we must do the easy things right and learn from the systems of governance that allow other cities to conceive and implement effective change.

In an age of disruption and innovation it is easy to reach for the buzzy term 'smart city', after all, tech is nimble and algorithm based, exactly what we need in fast-changing times like our own. However, I would like to move the conversation away from the 'smart city', which is an unhelpful overarching abstraction. Of course we need to employ tech in our cities to improve the environment but equally we need to do the basic things right. These basic things I will term the 'dumb city' and are those things and places in cities that people have always enjoyed and will continue to enjoy. People are often obsessed about just how much things have changed, but they forget that people have remained very much the same for a very long time and therefore what they 'want' has been relatively unchanging.

First of all governments need to identify what residents want. This is probably a harder task than it sounds. Any contemporary understanding of the term resident must also include the yet unborn future generations, whilst an indigenous understating may also include the deceased. So, the first question is how do governments identify and understand the cultural, economic and social desires of the people?

The next consideration is how we deliver the city that people want against an ever increasing list of threats and complexities, which naturally push government into a technocratic position whereby the threat itself becomes governments objective, rather than the desires of the people. In order to ensure that governments keep their eye on the prize they must be long and clear sighted about the threats and changes over the horizon so that we can react in an effective manner and that the implementation of resources can take into consideration the residents as well as the threat itself.

Finally, to deliver all of the above, our system of Power needs to be organised in the absolute most effective manner possible, to deliver the simple outcomes the people want in an increasingly complex world.

This investigation will address all of the above by drawing on my reflections, realisations, encounters and research developed over almost 40 years of professional experience as a property developer and entrepreneur in Perth.