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Learning from Controversial Landmark Developments

Elitist, wasteful, ugly, damaging to the environment and detrimental to heritage buildings and cultural heritage and are among the many criticisms and concerns generated by major development and infrastructure projects in Perth and Australia in recent history.

Often controversial from the start, the history and outcomes of landmark projects in Perth and in Australia including Perth's Bell Tower, Perth Passenger Rail, Hillarys Boat Harbour, Raffles Waterfront Development, The Graham Farmer Freeway and Northbridge Tunnel, Perth Arena and the Old Swan Brewery as well as Brisbane's West Village Development; Sydney's Barangaroo development; and Melbourne's Federation Square are examined in the Committee for Perth's *What We Thought Would Kill Us – Learnings and Recommendations* report to be released today.

The report, the most recent addition to the Committee's decade-long *What We Thought Would Kill Us* series, identifies the common factors associated with controversial development projects, and examines the lessons that can be learnt from the past and the key ingredients to reducing controversy in the future.

"The report indicates that some level of controversy is often par for the course when government or industry embark on landmark development or infrastructure projects. It's part of living in a democratic society" said Committee for Perth CEO, Marion Fulker.

"History also shows that, once the dust settles, controversial projects often become celebrated additions to the regional landscape. I don't think many people in Perth today could imagine getting around the city without the Graham Farmer freeway or Perth's passenger rail services or living without an entertainment facility like the Perth Arena" she said.

The report highlights that development controversy, and factors that contribute to it, are not unique to Perth. Common features of highly controversial development projects include locations of high social, heritage, cultural or environmental value; bold design elements; a lack of up-front consultation with stakeholders and the community; and perceptions of poor project selection and management.

"What this report finds is that, by looking back and analysing past projects, we can make positive change to improve the delivery of landmark projects in the future".

The Learnings and Recommendations report makes 10 recommendations to assist with minimising controversy over the life of a project, providing a best practice guide to the planning and delivery of future major projects in Perth and Peel.

"Providing for community consultation in the initial phases of the development process was an overriding message to come out of the What We Thought Would Kill Us case studies".

"Engaging in meaningful conversations with the community and Traditional Owners early in a project process will assist with awareness, and more likely acceptance over time. Engaging with the community early in the consultation phase is important and can help to prevent a public backlash because of little or no upfront information," explains Mrs Fulker.

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