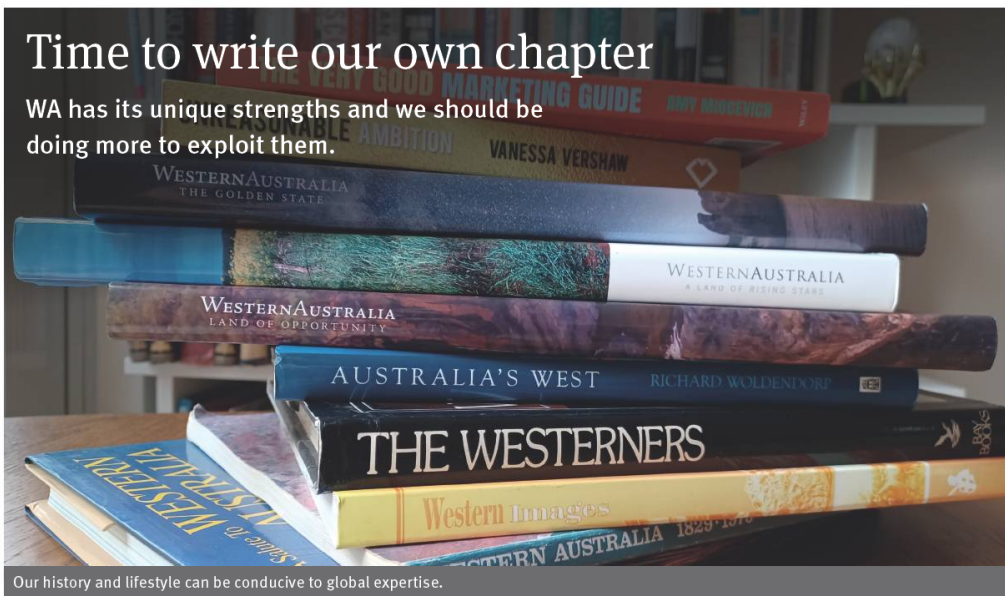


## Time to write our own chapter

WA has its unique strengths and we should be doing more to exploit them.



Our history and lifestyle can be conducive to global expertise.



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“[T]here seems to be a cultural cringe around Perth holding out lifestyle as its major attraction

**T**HE Committee for Perth has hung out the ‘under new management’ sign and is now seeking the kind of strategic reset that occurs naturally from a changing of the guard.

That was certainly the impression gleaned from a well-attended breakfast session recently, one of two events that sought to engage with committee members and other stakeholders.

I thought I would reflect on a few thoughts that jumped out at me as new (four months) chief executive Paula Rogers and her relatively new (18 months) chair Tony Joyner jointly handled a question-and-answer session.

Firstly, there seems to be a cultural cringe around Perth holding out lifestyle as its major attraction.

While I agree we need to show our state has more than great beaches, a lot of sunshine and relatively limited peak hours, I think our lifestyle is a great drawcard; perhaps even more so since the advent of COVID and other states’ experience with lockdowns.

With more capacity and an acceptance of working from home – most notably for nomad executives, consultants and those with small, global-focused businesses – our lifestyle wins hands down.

Admittedly, there are alternative lifestyles that people value in big cities, such as 24-7 nightlife and endless world-class events on their doorstep, but there are plenty of people who prefer a surf in the mornings, sailing (including windsurfing and derivations) in the afternoons, plenty of cyclepaths, endless hectares of sporting fields and some of the world’s best produce to consume.

Let’s sell those attractions to the vast majority of people who want them. Even Sydney, with monster traffic jams and unaffordable housing, still highlights surf at Bondi, sailing on the harbour and views of its opera house.

I might also add this thought: there are numerous calls for diversification of our economy and I support the need to have alternative industries to offer choice to our small population.

However, we need to rethink the relationship with resources, which, despite its so-called booms and busts, has delivered a smoother ride than most economies I can think of.

In the past 20 years, resources extraction has evolved from a very simple sector focused on exploitation alone to a sophisticated industry demanding high levels of skills across areas as diverse as IT and automation to communications and social work.

I don’t hear the megarich of Silicon Valley calling for diversification of their economy. I reckon we should celebrate the advantages of being a world headquarters for everything from LNG and iron ore to lithium and rare earths.

All jokes aside, I similarly don’t hear the good burghers of Pamplona saying they are sick of being associated with the dangerous-but-exciting (obviously) running of the bulls.

Of course, I believe in ambitions of greatness beyond resources but, in the end, with barely 2.5 million in this state, we should maybe be a little grateful for what we have, too.

### Global audiences

SPEAKING of global ambitions, I was sent two self-help-style books recently, both by Perth-based authors. I do like to promote local where possible and, while I have not read either in their entirety, each in some way helps prove my point from above.

Firstly, it is notable that both Vanessa Vershaw in *Unreasonable Ambition* and Amy Miocevich in *The Very Good Marketing Guide* claim to have solved intractable problems. The former describes a way of unleashing inner entrepreneurial capability that was otherwise obstructed by fear of the unknown; the latter outlines a fail-proof marketing system for businesses that can’t afford to bring in the big consultants.

Both have learned their science here, although while Ms Vershaw has a roll call of Western Australia’s top executives endorsing her skills, Ms Miocevich anonymises her case studies by using first names only.

From my sampling and scans, both are well written and should resonate outside WA’s boundaries. Perhaps that is proof that ambitious global expertise, well distanced from the resources sector, can reside in a place where lifestyle is fundamental and primary industry pays the bills.