

WORLD OF CHANGE

# Fresh ideas could enliven our city

PAULA ROGERS shares thoughts from the road

**D**uring four weeks travelling in Europe, Committee for Perth chief executive Paula Rogers was thinking about what we can learn from the cities she visited. She says: "I went to my birth home, Dublin, and travelled around Italy, visiting Rome, Venice, Sicily and Lake Como. Since starting with Committee for Perth, I now actually look at cities and think about what's different and how could we learn from them."

These are the top 10 things she has learnt, in her own words.

**1** The world is on the move and it's a great opportunity to attract visitors to Perth. Time and time again, I told anyone who would listen that Perth can now be accessed by direct flights from both Paris and Rome — we are the gateway destination for Australia.

**2** Shops open late and stay open late, from 11am-7pm. The pride retail staff took in their work was impressive. They clean windows and floors each and every day and all look immaculate. The pride in the retail and service profession is palpable.

**3** Urban living, particularly in Italy. You see densification and the outcomes of it, with mini-marts and small inner-city



I love this message on the side of Sicilian trains. Imagine if we could have #LovePerth on our trains.



Above, an excellent message from the Venice Architecture Biennale. Right, Paula Rogers on holiday.

petrol stations to service urban dwellers. You can shop locally and buy seasonally.

**4** The importance of long-term planning. In Rome, you could not help but notice the wonderful tree canopy, and that got me wondering about the difference this makes to the city. The historic centre of Rome is home to about 330,000 trees, with parks and gardens offering crucial green spaces for the city's inhabitants. Rome is the city with the most green spaces in Europe. This did not happen overnight — it took long-term vision and planning to make it happen, and we all now benefit. Thank you, Rome.

**5** We went to Mt Pellegrino, a beautiful mountain peak that overlooks Palermo, and saw first-hand the impact of the Mafia destruction of beautiful art deco buildings between the 1950s and 1980s. Now unattractive apartment blocks surround the old centre. It reminded me again of the joy we see in Fremantle, where many of



**COMMITTEE FOR PERTH**

The Committee for Perth is focused on making a positive difference to Perth's future.

It aims to provide a unified, apolitical and informed voice for its members, which are all passionate about the future of the Perth and Peel region. A spokesperson says: "Our vision is that Perth is a global region of choice to live, work, invest, study and visit. Committee for Perth challenges and advocates for change that advances the economic prosperity, cultural diversity, sustainability and world-class amenity of Perth. We are a future-focused apolitical think tank that seeks to positively influence debate and policy through our unbiased fact-based research."

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our old builds have been saved.

**6** Venice, "the floating city", was my highlight of all highlights! I had been forewarned about its dirtiness but, I have to say, I could not believe how clean Venice was. Venice Mayor Luigi Brugnaro is passionate about this place and is doing all he can to protect and maintain its importance in the world. It demonstrates the role leadership plays in the life of a city.

**7** Pride of place. Throughout trips in both Ireland and Italy, you really feel the passion citizens have for their "place". Everyone shoulders the load to celebrate tourists and provide a welcome each step along the way.

**8** If there is a queue — explore other options. There are vast numbers of tourists who have a checklist of things to do and see. We just loved wandering around and, as an example, we went to the National Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art in Rome, which was divine, and devoid of tourists.

**9** Trains. We did not hire a car and used trains most of the time in Italy.

It is a glorious way to travel. For example, the trains in Sicily tend to hug the coastline, often giving the best view.

**10** Perth is my home and I love leaving, but I love coming back to this special place.



The beach at Ortigia in Sicily was so rocky they had to build sunbathing platforms. Pictures: Paula Rogers

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