




COMMITTEE FOR  
**PERTH**

# Working Group Submission

## Diversification

Shaping the Future of Perth:  
Strategic Bets for Economic Diversification

December 2025



## Acknowledgement of Country

Committee For Perth acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

# Foreword

Following the publication of the Perth 2050 report, which identified three key themes, Committee for Perth invited all members to nominate for our proposed working groups: Decarbonisation, Densification and Economic Diversification. We sought individuals passionate about exploring ideas and opportunities that could deliver ‘quick wins’ as well as longer-term strategies to address these challenges. While we recognise that a single working group cannot solve every issue, bringing together passionate experts creates the potential for fresh, practical suggestions for Government and the community to consider. Each group was tasked with developing practical initiatives to help guide Perth’s long-term future.

I am so incredibly proud of Francien Boom and Kelly Campbell who led the three groups independently organising the selection of the Chair and Deputy Chair roles of each group and the meeting rhythm and cadence, all the while having the end of the year vision to present the three white papers to Government, Opposition, members and the community with recommendations and proposed solutions to assist future proofing Perth.

Thank you to Ben Haddock (ARUP), Chair of Densification, and Deputy Chair Dan Pearce (Hatch); Julie McKay-Warner (Keystart), Chair Decarbonisation, and Deputy Chair Steve Mills (CME WA); and Lance Glare (KPMG), Chair of Economic Diversification. Your hard work and dedication in maximising the value and impact of this collective effort has been profound. This is especially impressive when you consider that every member and leader holds demanding, high-profile full-time roles. Thank you for volunteering to lead the groups, your commitment has ensured the white papers will deliver real value for Perth’s future.

I reflect on the incredible value these working groups have delivered. It is like having three consulting teams applying their significant expertise to our three key levers for transforming Perth’s future.

Here’s what the numbers show:

### Diversification



#### Guest speakers

- John Langoulant, ACIL Allen
- Sian McGill, DEED

### Decarbonisation



#### Guest speaker

- Prof. Peta Ashworth, Director of Curtin Institute of Energy Transition (CIET)

### Densification



#### Guest speaker

- Malcolm Smith, Arup

### Collectively



Collectively, that’s 452 hours of work outside regular day jobs, all dedicated to shaping recommendations that will help Perth achieve its best possible future in 2050 and beyond. This effort focuses on practical, forward-looking solutions for environmental sustainability, urban growth, and economic resilience.

A massive shoutout to our three volunteer working groups, who have generously donated their time and expertise to tackle Perth’s biggest challenges. In total, this represents months of expert thinking, freely given—equivalent to three months of full-time professional work, valued at up to almost \$100,000 in consultancy terms.

This extraordinary gift of time and knowledge demonstrates the power of member-led ambitious thinking in crafting a sustainable and resilient future for Perth.

We know there were moments of frustration and fatigue, but together you delivered. On behalf of the Committee for Perth board and members, I applaud and celebrate what you have achieved.

Paula Rogers  
CEO  
Committee for Perth



# Contents

Foreword	4
Contents	6
1.0 Executive Summary	8
2.0 Introduction	10
3.0 Strategic Bets	12
<b>3.1 Perth amongst the world's top five most liveable cities</b>	<b>12</b>
Global Insights	
Liveability as a strategic asset	
Recommendations	
<b>3.2 Perth as a global gateway</b>	<b>16</b>
Global Insights	
Western Australia's Opportunity	
Recommendations	
<b>3.3 Inclusive housing as a foundation for diversification</b>	<b>18</b>
Theme 1: Tax, Planning and Financial Enablers	
Theme 2: Social Infrastructure and Targeted Support	
Theme 3: Data, Transparency and Market Efficiency	
Theme 4: Workforce Capacity as a Housing Enabler	
Recommendations	
<b>3.4 Building Perth's 2050 workforce: a three-tier talent strategy</b>	<b>20</b>
Tier 1: Distinguished Research Chairs - Building Frontier Capability	
Tier 2: Vocational & Trades Workforce - The Backbone of Diversification	
Tier 3: K-12 Future Skills - Building the Homegrown Workforce	
Recommendations	
4.0 2050 Vision	24
5.0 Conclusion	25
6.0 Appendix	26
7.0 Working Group Members	29



# 1.0 Executive Summary

Imagine Perth in 2050: a vibrant, green, globally connected city where cultural experiences, strong communities, and world-class industries thrive. To achieve this future, Perth must act decisively from 2025 onwards to diversify its economy and strengthen resilience against global and domestic challenges.

Picture yourself in Perth in 2050. How old will you be? Where might you be living? Will you be working, travelling, seeing family? How will you be getting around the city? Who will you be interacting with? What will the skyline, the beach, the parks, and the infrastructure look like? What will be in the media headlines? What will be working well - and what will we still be working on? And if you can picture yourself standing in Perth in 2050, ask yourself this:

Diversification is not only an economic imperative but also a social and cultural opportunity. It requires an integrated approach across liveability, global engagement, housing, and workforce development. This report proposes four strategic bets that we believe should be progressed from 2025 to deliver broad and lasting benefits, positioning Perth and WA for a more diversified and globally competitive economic future.

“ What are the things you are so glad were sorted out from 2025 that enabled Perth to reach its full potential for economic diversification in 2050?

In 2050 we will be glad that in 2025 we...



Made Perth a **top-five liveable city** celebrated for Indigenous-led tourism, vibrant culture, global wellbeing leadership, and **promoting unique cultural experiences** and products to an international audience.



Strengthened WA as a **global gateway**, forged bold partnerships across Asia and Africa, and launched new direct flights that **unlocked new opportunities** in trade, education, and investment.



Unlocked **inclusive housing** and first-home ownership by reforming taxation to **encourage business investment** over property speculation.



Developed and executed a comprehensive **workforce strategy** to build the skilled talent needed to underpin WA's economic diversification and **global competitiveness**.





## 2.0 Introduction

**“Perth has the potential to not only ask the question of ‘what do we want to be when we grow up?’, but to make it happen and evolve as a globally competitive city. To get there, we need a vision and a decisive plan to guide us on our way – one that affords the permission to be bold and the audacity to be imaginative, pushing the boundaries of possibility. The time is now.” – Dr Ben Hamer, Futurist, Committee for Perth, Perth 2050 report**

Perth, the capital of Western Australia (WA), has long benefited from its position as a hub for the nation’s mining and resources sector. As the administrative and service centre for a vast mining economy, the city has enjoyed strong economic growth, high wages, and significant infrastructure investment. However, this dependence and lack of economic complexity has also made Perth vulnerable to fluctuations in global commodity markets and investment cycles.

Economic diversification is critical to Perth’s future. Strengthening sectors such as renewable energy, international education, tourism and events, defence industries, MedTech, robotics, and automation can help Perth transition into a more dynamic, resilient, and globally competitive city. Diversification will not only reduce exposure to commodity cycles but also attract and retain talent, foster innovation, and ensure long-term prosperity for future generations.

Whilst there will always be a strong future in mining for Perth and WA, growing global momentum toward decarbonisation, automation impacting mining-related jobs, and increased competition for international investment present long-term risks to economic stability and social equity. To put it simply: we need to diversify our economy for future generations.

Building and maintaining a strong social licence will be essential to Perth’s economic diversification journey. Genuine community engagement ensures that new industries, innovations, and investments reflect the aspirations and values of local people. By involving communities early in decision-making, building transparency, and ensuring equitable access to emerging opportunities, Perth can foster the trust and collaboration needed to support long-term transformation. Social license and community participation act as key enablers of diversification – helping to smooth transitions, attract investment confidence, and create a sense of shared ownership in the city’s economic future.

This white paper presents a set of recommendations to the State Government to drive economic diversification, supported by enabling conditions and aligned with the ambitions of the government’s own strategies, such as Diversify WA and Made in WA. It is not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it distils the Working Group’s most compelling ideas, insights, and opportunities – a targeted contribution designed to spark further policy development, collaboration, and public conversation. It is structured around four priority targets the Working Group believes will help to unlock Perth’s global competitiveness by 2050.

# 3.0 Strategic Bets



## 3.1 Perth amongst the world's top five most liveable cities

To achieve meaningful economic diversification, Perth must compete globally as a destination of choice to live, study, work, and invest. Cities with strong liveability and wellbeing profiles consistently outperform others in attracting talent, innovation, and investment.

By 2050, Perth can be a top-five liveable city globally - celebrated for Indigenous-led tourism, a vibrant cultural identity, and leadership in wellbeing. Its unique value proposition lies in its Aboriginal heritage, rich natural environment, and potential to be a city where ancient wisdom and contemporary creativity coexist. While Perth is often already ranked amongst the world's top-ten most liveable cities, this is not something we

can take for granted going forward. There is a real risk of our liveability being eroded as our city experiences expected strong population growth over the next 25 years and as emerging challenges such as congestion and cost of living become more pressing.

Liveability is not a lifestyle feature; it is a strategic economic asset that underpins productivity, population retention, international competitiveness, cultural and creative sector growth, and talent attraction. Global research shows that cities investing in culture, community cohesion, and wellbeing experience stronger economic resilience and higher levels of innovation.

### Global Insights

Cities that elevate Indigenous culture, authenticity, and wellbeing are seeing compelling economic and social returns.

#### Japanese Cities

Japan demonstrates the economic power of cultural authenticity. By embedding traditional values into modern life and elevating heritage as a global asset, Japan attracted 36.9 million visitors in 2024, with tourism contributing 7.5% of GDP (growing by 5.7% over the 2019 peak). More than half of visitors engage in cultural experiences.

#### Santa Monica, USA

Santa Monica's Wellbeing Index transformed its budgeting and planning processes, aligning city investment with human outcomes. The model is now replicated globally, with cities reporting stronger policy coherence and improved international branding.

#### Dubai, UAE

Creative industries contribute USD \$6 billion

to Dubai's economy (4.6% of GDP), driven by initiatives like the Dubai Design District and world-class cultural events. The city has positioned itself as a global creative and knowledge hub.

#### Wellington, New Zealand

Guided by the Tiaki Promise - an expression of responsibility for people and place - Wellington transformed from a declining government-services centre into New Zealand's creative capital. Its cultural economy played a major role in its top-five global liveability ranking in 2021.

#### Inari, Finland

The Sámi Parliament's Responsible Tourism framework protects cultural integrity while expanding economic opportunity. It ensures visitors engage directly with Sámi storytellers, strengthening both cultural preservation and local income.

**When culture leads, economic and social dividends follow.**

## Case Study: Vancouver Island

Vancouver's tourism sector illustrates how Indigenous cultural leadership generates shared prosperity. British Columbia's Indigenous tourism industry comprises more than 400 businesses, contributing \$705 million in direct GDP and 7,400 full-time jobs, almost half filled by Indigenous people (Destination BC). Nationally, Canada's Indigenous tourism sector employs more than 33,000 people and contributes \$1.4 billion to annual GDP.

Situated on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, Vancouver integrates Indigenous governance into its broader identity. The city's Healthy City Strategy - focused on social connection, equity, and environments where residents thrive - demonstrates how wellbeing-centred planning can drive both cultural authenticity and economic performance. Indigenous culture is now central to Vancouver's international reputation and competitive advantage.



# 3.0 Strategic Bets

## Liveability as a strategic asset

By 2050, liveability will be defined as much by wellbeing as by infrastructure.

A **Perth Wellbeing Index** could track six dimensions:

- physical and mental health
- cultural connection
- environmental quality
- economic security
- social belonging
- personal fulfilment

Such an index would function as both a policy compass and a marketing tool, demonstrating Perth's leadership in human-centred development.

The strategic impacts of wellbeing-based policy are significant: reduced healthcare costs, increased productivity, stronger community resilience, and enhanced ability to attract global

talent.

Economically, this approach could contribute an estimated 5-7% of GSP through cultural tourism, education exports, and creative enterprise. Socially, wellbeing-centred development strengthens inclusion, health outcomes, and civic participation. Environmentally, embedding Aboriginal principles of care for Country enhances biodiversity and sustainability.

**When culture leads, people thrive.**

**When wellbeing is measured, progress endures.**

**When Indigenous voices shape the narrative, a city finds its soul.**

Perth can be that city - where ancient wisdom and modern aspiration unite to create a future that is uniquely Western Australian and globally inspiring.

## Recommendations

### 1. Position Aboriginal Culture as Perth's Defining Identity

Embed Aboriginal knowledge, language and stories throughout the built environment, governance and city design. This is not a "nice to have" - it is **essential** to Perth's social, economic and cultural success.

#### Actions:

- Integrate Aboriginal cultural frameworks into urban planning and architecture.
- Ensure Indigenous language, art and storytelling are visible and embedded in public spaces.
- Establish co-governance structures with Aboriginal leaders for major cultural and tourism initiatives.

- Create authenticity marks for Aboriginal-made products (e.g., New Zealand's Toi Iho or Canada's Igloo Tag) to protect cultural intellectual property and elevate Indigenous enterprises in art, design, food and tourism.

#### Impact:

Positions Perth as a city that honours ancient wisdom while fostering contemporary innovation, attracting visitors seeking authenticity and enabling a thriving Indigenous-led creative economy.

#### Partnerships:

Collaborate with UNESCO, universities and research institutes to position Perth as a global hub for Indigenous learning, cultural diplomacy and creative research.



### 2. Develop a Perth Wellbeing Index as a Strategic Compass

Measure liveability through wellbeing, not just infrastructure. Develop an index tracking physical and mental health, cultural connection, environmental quality, economic security, social belonging and personal fulfilment. The first measurement will provide a baseline from which to improve over time.

#### Rationale:

Cities like Santa Monica and Copenhagen demonstrate that wellbeing metrics guide better policy alignment, investment decisions and global positioning. OECD research indicates that every 1% improvement in civic wellbeing correlates with a 2-3% increase in labour productivity and reduced healthcare expenditure.

#### Actions:

- Tailor the index to local conditions.
- Use it as both a policy tool and an international marketing asset.
- Benchmark Perth globally while directing investment toward what most improves lives.

#### Impact:

Positions Perth as a leader in human-centred development; attracts global talent seeking sustainable and wellbeing-oriented environments; reduces social costs; and strengthens community resilience.

### 3. Make Culture the Economic Driver

Set up a fund like the Health Innovation Fund and invest in creative and cultural industries as core economic infrastructure. Position culture as a primary driver of economic diversification, identity and global competitiveness, targeting 5-7% of Gross State Product by 2050.

#### Focus Areas:

- Cultural tourism and Indigenous-led experiences
- Education exports and international student attraction
- Creative enterprises in design, technology and sustainability
- Gastronomy leveraging Aboriginal food heritage and multicultural cuisine
- Fashion, music and contemporary arts

#### Rationale:

Global evidence shows that cities with strong cultural ecosystems outperform others in attracting talent, investment and visitors seeking authentic experiences. Culture is a high-value export, a catalyst for innovation, and a foundation for global identity.

#### Impact:

Indigenous-led tourism alone could generate 15,000+ jobs across Western Australia. Investment in cultural precincts stimulates business ecosystems, supports creative enterprise growth and strengthens Perth's international brand as a culturally rich, distinctive and ethical destination.

# 3.0 Strategic Bets



## 3.2 Perth as a global gateway

To strengthen economic diversification, WA must harness its geographic position as a competitive advantage. Sharing a time zone with 60 per cent of the world's population – including China, Indonesia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia – Perth is uniquely placed to strengthen its role as Australia's western gateway for trade, talent and investment.

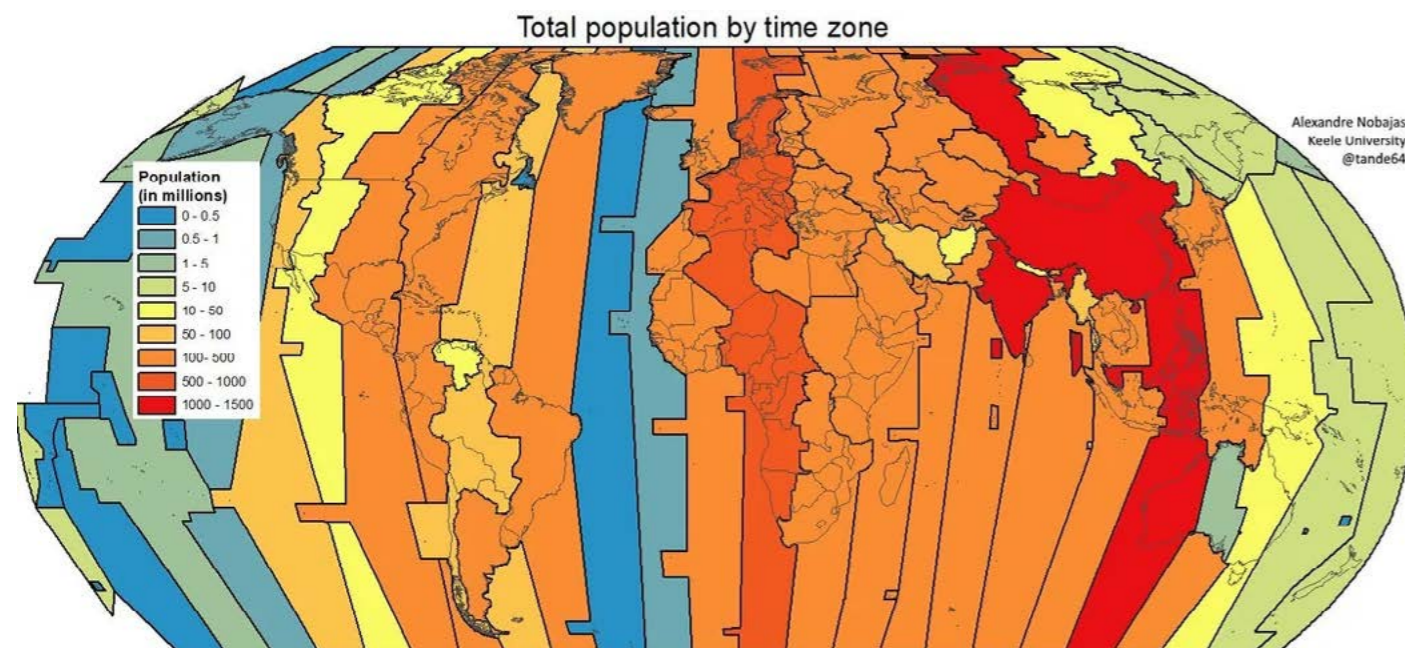
Rather than seeing distance from other Australian states as a constraint, Perth can reframe its geography as a source of distinctiveness, creativity and strategic value. Our proximity to some of the world's fastest-growing markets enables deeper partnerships, faster decision-making, and a more natural alignment with the economies shaping the Indo-Pacific.

### Global Insights

Cities that capitalise on geography and connectivity become powerful gateways:

- Singapore leveraged its location to become a global trade and education hub
- Dubai used aviation connectivity to build a diversified service economy
- Doha and Addis Ababa positioned their national airline carriers as engines of economic strategy, transforming their cities into continental gateways.

These cities demonstrate that strategic connectivity – not just physical location – drives investment, tourism, skilled migration and innovation.



Source: Wikipedia Commons



### Western Australia's Opportunity

Strategic Asset: Becoming a Hub for Flows  
Perth can attract and facilitate:

- Flows of people: students, skilled workers, tourists, creative talent
- Flows of goods: premium agriculture, resources, manufactured exports
- Flows of ideas: education, research, innovation partnerships
- Flows of capital: investment attraction and venture activity

Enhanced air connectivity is a critical enabler of these flows. Strengthening direct routes to India and Africa, in particular, will help to unlock opportunities in trade, education and tourism.

### Recommendations

1. Continue to expand WA's network of trade and investment offices, with a focus on emerging Indian Ocean markets.
2. Accelerate development of targeted partnership programs with airlines to attract new direct flight routes to Asia and Africa.
3. Strengthen Committee for Perth's engagement with WA Trade Offices to better leverage industry and diaspora connections.
4. Deepen collaboration with StudyPerth to rebuild international student share and promote Perth as a global education destination.

# 3.0 Strategic Bets



## 3.3 Inclusive housing as a foundation for diversification

Perth's ability to diversify into advanced industries – such as MedTech, robotics, automation, and creative technologies – relies on the strength of its enabling environment. Affordable, well-located housing, efficient transport, and inclusive urban planning are essential foundations for attracting and retaining the talent, investors and innovators needed for a more knowledge-driven economy.

Liveability cannot be delivered without a

housing system that keeps pace with population growth, industrial change, and shifting social needs. Current affordability pressures, rising homelessness, limited pathways for first-home buyers, and a shortage of culturally appropriate housing are barriers to long-term economic resilience. Further, Perth cannot build the homes it needs without a construction workforce; investment in construction skills and trades must be integrated into any housing strategy.

### Theme 1: Tax, Planning and Financial Enablers

Reforming tax and planning settings is essential to boost supply, encourage density.

#### Tax and Stamp Duty Reform:

- Stamp duty relief
- Support Build-to-Rent and Rent-to-Buy models, including tax-free income periods for developers (e.g., 5 years).

#### Planning System Reform:

- Accelerate supply in well-serviced areas.

- Reduce approval delays and delivery costs.
- Accelerate transit-oriented development.

#### Innovative Financial Mechanisms:

- Expand shared equity and low-deposit lending (e.g., Keystart).
- Establish revolving loan funds.
- Strengthen rent-to-buy schemes and mixed-tenure developments.

### Theme 2: Social Infrastructure and Targeted Support

Housing affordability must be paired with strong social infrastructure, especially for vulnerable groups.

#### Integrated Social Housing Pathways:

- Transitional housing (rent-to-buy, budgeting support).
- Long-term support for non-profit organisations that provide social services.
- Grants and guarantees for vulnerable groups, including women over 50 and youth.

#### Domestic Violence and Homelessness Prevention:

- Expand emergency accommodation and Safe Places programs.

- Seamlessly integrate domestic violence shelters into broader housing strategies.
- Use early-warning systems informed by community agency data.

#### Indigenous Housing Solutions:

- Community-led, culturally informed housing models.
- Support home ownership through concessional grants and tailored programs.
- Co-designed initiatives that promote governance, economic participation and long-term stability.

### Theme 3: Data, Transparency and Market Efficiency

Better data unlocks better planning, decision-making and investment.

#### Improved Data Availability:

- Expand access to rental bond data and housing condition surveys to private developers and other stakeholders for insights into key areas of development.
- Use data to track affordability trends and identify acute needs.

#### Systemic Policy Alignment:

- Leverage existing WA initiatives – Transitional Housing Program, Community Disability Housing Program, and ongoing social-housing and affordable-housing expansion commitments – to drive unified reform.

### Theme 4: Workforce Capacity as a Housing Enabler

Diversification will stall without a construction workforce capable of delivering high-density and diverse housing typologies.

#### Construction Workforce Development:

- Expand training, migration pathways and apprenticeships for construction trades.

- Prioritise WA-led incentives for construction and building-related skills.
- Align Housing and Workforce Strategies to ensure supply can meet demand.

## Recommendations

#### 1. Reform Tax and Planning Systems to Unlock Density and Affordability

Accelerate approvals; increase density in well-serviced areas; expand Build-to-Rent and shared-equity models.

#### 2. Strengthen Social Infrastructure for Vulnerable Groups

Integrate domestic violence shelters into broader strategy; scale transitional housing pathways; improve homelessness prevention systems; provide targeted grants and guarantees.

#### 3. Partner with Indigenous Communities to Deliver Culturally-Led Housing Solutions

Co-design models; support home ownership through concessional grants; align Indigenous Land Use Agreement funding and Indigenous First Homeowner Grants.

#### 4. Invest in Construction Workforce Capacity

Expand training, migration and apprenticeships for trades; align workforce planning with housing supply targets; ensure Perth can build the homes it needs.

#### 5. Improve Data, Transparency and Policy Coordination

Enhance rental and condition datasets; establish market dashboards; align reforms with initiatives such as the Transitional Housing Program, Community Disability Housing Program, and ongoing social-housing and affordable-housing expansion commitments.

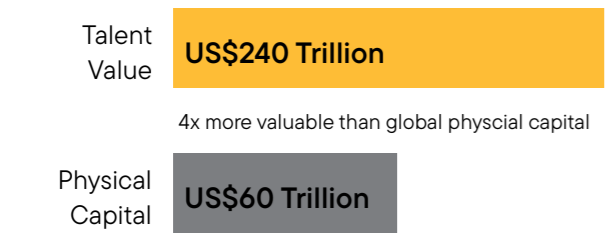
# 3.0 Strategic Bets



## 3.4 Building Perth's 2050 workforce: a three-tier talent strategy

WA's competitiveness in 2050 will depend on one core determinant: the depth of skilled talent working in industries such as clean energy, critical minerals, AI and autonomy, climate adaptation, construction, and advanced manufacturing. Research shows that talent is the world's most valuable resource – worth an estimated US\$240 trillion globally, four times more valuable than physical capital (Brookings Institution). Economies grow when they develop and deploy people to maximise productive potential.

### The Global Value of Talent vs Physical Capital



Source: Brookings Institution

“Productivity is what creates fiscal room for generosity, social room for imagination and personal room for choice.

Therefore, delivering a workforce strategy for diversification requires a holistic approach that aligns all levels of education, industry, and government behind a shared ambition. This means recognising the interdependencies between tertiary reform, vocational pathways, and emerging sectors, and embedding mechanisms that build social interest in emerging skills and roles while enabling lifelong learning through ongoing skill building through short form learning. By integrating these elements into a single, adaptive plan, Western Australia can create a talent pipeline that evolves with technology and market needs,

ensuring adaptiveness the ability to maximise productive potential, competitiveness and resilience to 2050 and beyond.

At present, WA faces a narrowing window. Strategic Industrial Area investments – valued at **over \$104 billion** (Diversify WA 2024 Update) – require a workforce pipeline aligned to hydrogen, defence industries, minerals processing, climate resilience, automation, construction, and biotech. Yet global demand for this talent is intensifying, and WA risks falling behind without urgent, targeted action. Global evidence shows that regions that successfully diversify do so by investing in talent deliberately, combining frontier research capability, strong vocational pathways, and future-ready schooling, and adaptive mechanisms for skills translation. WA can do the same by adopting an integrated workforce strategy, integrating across three tiers of capability.



### Tier 1: Distinguished Research Chairs – Building Frontier Capability

#### A Global Talent Window

Geopolitical volatility has triggered unusual mobility. When France offered €15 million for climate researchers, nearly 300 applied within weeks, supported by a wider €500 million European Commission talent initiative. Meanwhile, the US has recorded the largest decline in international students outside the pandemic (NY Times). WA's stability, natural laboratories, and Indo-Pacific position create a rare opportunity to attract global expertise.

Perth can position itself as the Indo-Pacific's magnet for researchers seeking academic excellence and industry impact – building careers while building industries.

Targeted talent attraction accelerates regional economic development. One of the strongest global models is **Canada's Research Chairs Program**, which invests **\$311 million annually**, supporting **~2,000 chairs** (Government of Canada).

Independent evaluations (National Academies Press; Canada Research Chairs Evaluation Reports) show that chairs:

- increase research productivity
- expand industry and international collaborations
- create graduate training pipelines
- strengthen institutions that previously lacked research density
- generate patents, start-ups and leadership roles more effectively than project grants (European Journal of Education, 2025)

For WA, a Chairs Program would seed the advanced workforce needed for 2050.

#### Each chair typically supervises:

- 2-4 postdocs
- 6-10 PhD candidates
- 10-15 Honours/Masters students

#### A cohort of 50 – 60 Chairs would yield over their terms:

- 200 – 300 postdoctoral researchers
  - 1,000 –1,200 PhD graduates
  - 1,500+ highly skilled workers
- directly feeding WA's hydrogen, minerals, biotech, climate and AI sectors.

This complements existing tertiary strategies. Research on regional innovation ecosystems shows that successful clusters “nucleate” around deliberate combinations of ideas, talent, partnerships, and investment (Issues in Science and Technology, 2025). WA already has proof this works: the Forrest Research Foundation has recruited 60+ global scholars and postdocs, positioning Perth as a knowledge hub. A state-backed Chairs initiative would scale this model.



# 3.0 Strategic Bets

## Tier 2: Vocational & Trades Workforce - The Backbone of Diversification

WA's prosperity to 2050 also hinges on a strong vocational and trades workforce. This workforce underpins every priority sector - construction, defence industries, advanced manufacturing, hospitality, tourism, resources, clean energy.

While Vocational Education and Training (VET) participation declined over the past decade - influenced partly by perceptions that vocational pathways are less prestigious than university - this trend is now shifting. Publicly funded training enrolments have grown from **~130,000 in 2016** to a record **~165,000 in 2024**, with **46,476 Fee-Free TAFE enrolments** signalling renewed interest (WA Government). However, **apprenticeship commencements have fallen nationally**, including a **22% drop in construction apprenticeships between 2022 and 2023** (Master Builders Australia, 2024). This is a critical constraint, despite apprenticeship pathways delivering strong outcomes: 95.4% of trade apprentices were employed in 2024 (NCVER).

The decline in apprenticeship availability reduces the supply of future tradespeople in precisely the sectors WA is relying on for diversification. Internationally, countries like Singapore and Germany have elevated technical careers through prestige, clarity, incentives and long-term planning. The World Economic Forum (2025) and

United Nations (2025) highlight that technological change, ageing populations and sustainability transitions will reshape labour markets - making adaptive, respected vocational systems essential.

### WA has a strong foundation:

- modern TAFE infrastructure
- deep industry partnerships
- models like the Kwinana Industries Council (KIC) pathway program, linking schools, TAFEs and employers

Scaling such precinct-based partnerships - e.g., defence in Henderson, MedTech in Bentley, arts and tech in the CBD, and tourism/hospitality statewide - would align training supply with demand in high-growth industries.

A long-term, bipartisan Skills Future WA 2050-2075 Plan could unify workforce development with industry investment. Singapore's own SkillsFuture program demonstrates the power of a multidecade skills strategy aligned to national transformation priorities and supported by a strong cultural narrative around the value of skilled work.

**For WA, the lesson is clear: enduring capability depends on consistent investment, coordinated planning, and a shared narrative to develop pride in technical and skilled work.**

## 3.4.3 Tier 3: K-12 Future Skills - Building the Homegrown Workforce

WA cannot rely solely on attracting global expertise or reskilling adults. A sustainable workforce strategy requires building capability early. Australia faces deep structural challenges:

- 44% of Australian adults have low literacy skills (ABS 4228.0 15/02/2013)
- Teachers face burnout, attrition, and curriculum overload
- AI is expected to create 11 million jobs and displace 9 million, reshaping demand (World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025)
- Many automatable jobs - clerical, administrative - are disproportionately held by women (United Nations, UN News, May 2025)
- Creative and analytical skills are now the most valued core competencies globally

High-performing education systems worldwide teach core knowledge explicitly and then build structured opportunities for creative and critical application - not a false choice between "back to basics" and innovation (OECD (2024), PISA 2022 Results (Volume III)).

### WA's Opportunity

WA is already a national leader in innovative teacher training through FORM's Creative Schools, delivered in 235 programs across 134 schools (over 10% of all WA schools) with a 98% success rate in improving student engagement and teacher wellbeing (Dr Mathilda Joubert, ACARA). The model strengthens problem-solving, literacy, numeracy, Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS) and science outcomes while reducing teacher burnout (FORM Building a State of Creativity, Dr Mathilda Marie Joubert, Laura Motherway. Seven Years of Impact. 2025).

Similarly, YEAWA, based at Curtin University, builds entrepreneurial mindsets aligned with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration, preparing students for a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world.

Together, these programs provide scalable, evidence-backed models for building WA's future workforce from the ground up.

## Recommendations

- 1. Establish a Distinguished Research Chairs Program to Build Frontier Capability**  
Target 50-60 Chairs over a decade across clean energy, critical minerals, AI and autonomy, climate adaptation, biotech, defence, and water security.
- 2. Deliver a Long-Term Skills Future WA 2050-2075 Plan**  
Align TAFE, industry precincts, and economic diversification priorities to elevate trades, improve participation, and strengthen status and pathways.
- 3. Strengthen Construction Workforce Pipelines**  
Integrate workforce development with housing and infrastructure planning; expand apprenticeships, migration pathways and industry-led training to prevent bottlenecks.
- 4. Scale Creative Schools and YEAWA as Flagship K-12 Capability Programs**  
Embed creative, critical, entrepreneurial learning statewide to strengthen future skills and improve foundational outcomes.
- 5. Create Indo-Pacific Talent Attraction Incentives**  
Target researchers and technical specialists in climate, minerals, automation, hydrogen, biotech, and AI as global talent flows intensify.



# 4.0 2050 Vision

By 2050, Western Australia will be recognised for a globally competitive, integrated workforce system spanning:

- frontier research leadership
- world-class vocational and technical excellence
- future-ready, creative and analytical K-12 talent

Perth will attract the world's best researchers, train highly skilled trades and technical workers, and build a homegrown workforce capable of powering clean energy, advanced manufacturing, critical

minerals, climate innovation, construction and the industries of 2050.

A workforce strategy built on these three tiers- Distinguished Research Chairs, vocational excellence, and future-ready schooling-offers WA a clear, achievable path to economic diversification and global competitiveness.



# 5.0 Conclusion

Western Australia stands at a pivotal moment. Our economy has long been fuelled by global demand for resources, but the forces shaping the next quarter century – **decarbonisation, technological disruption, demographic change, geopolitical shifts and global competition for talent** – demand a broader, more resilient economic base. **Diversification is not a slogan. It is a strategic necessity.**

The four strategic bets outlined in this paper provide a clear, achievable pathway for transformation:

- **A more liveable Perth** that leverages its Indigenous-led cultural identity, creative industries and wellbeing leadership to attract the world's most mobile talent.
- **A globally connected Western Australia** that embraces its time zone advantage, deepens partnerships across Asia and Africa, and expands direct aviation links to drive trade, education and investment.
- **An inclusive housing system** that enables density, affordability, workforce participation and stable social infrastructure – the foundations of a competitive, modern city.
- **A three-tier workforce strategy** that builds frontier research capability, elevates vocational and technical excellence, and strengthens K-12 creative, analytical and entrepreneurial skills.

Together, these actions form an integrated approach to building an economy that is more productive, more innovative and more globally connected – underpinned by people, place and possibility.

What makes this moment unique is not just the scale of the challenge, but the scale of the

opportunity. Global talent is more mobile than ever. Industries like hydrogen, critical minerals, automation, biotech and climate adaptation are accelerating. Major investments in the Strategic Industrial Areas are already underway. WA has natural strengths, global credibility and a (narrowing) window of time to act.

If we wait for diversification to happen on its own, it will not. If we act decisively from 2025, we can shape the Perth and WA we want to inherit in 2050.

This paper is not a comprehensive blueprint, nor is it intended to be. It is a set of bold, catalytic ideas – ideas we will be grateful for in 2050 if we act on them now. They are designed to provoke discussion, generate momentum and support Government in charting a clear course for the future.

Western Australia has the talent, the partnerships, the natural advantages and the imagination to lead. What we need now is the confidence to choose a direction and the commitment to see it through.

**In 2050, Perth can be one of the world's most liveable, inventive and globally connected cities.**

**Looking back, we will be glad we started in 2025.**

# 6.0 Appendix

## Recognition of current reports/plans/policies

- Diversify WA 2024 Update
- Committee for Perth 2050 Report
- A State Budget Overview - Made in WA
- Diversify WA Economic Development Framework
- WA Future Industries Fund
- Defence and Defence Industries Strategic Plan
- WA Innovates / New \$4B investment in science & innovation
- Tourism WA – Action Plans
- International Education Strategy
- Digital Strategy for WA Government
- Future Battery & Critical Minerals Strategy
- WA Workforce Strategy
- VET and TAFE Modernisation Program
- Skills Ready Initiatives
- International Education Strategy
- University City Precinct Plans (e.g., QEII, Murdoch Health & Knowledge Precinct)
- Industry Training Advisory Framework
- Sport and Recreation Strategic Directions
- Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Multiculturalism
- WA Arts & Culture Plan (Creative Industries Strategy)
- Local Government Act – Community Development Functions
- Major Events Strategy (Tourism WA)
- Active WA: Outdoor Recreation Strategy
- WA Disability Strategy 2020–2030
- Age-friendly Communities Framework

## Additional Sources and References:

### Talent as Economic Asset:

- Brookings Institution on talent value: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/talent-is-americas-most-precious-resource-its-time-economic-development-organizations-focus-more-on-developing-it/>
- Talent agglomeration and economic development: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11066640/>
- Talent management in higher education: <https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/64542>
- Canada Research Chairs Programme:
- Recent \$690M investment (2025): <https://www.canada.ca/en/research-chairs/news/2025/10/government-of-canada-invests-to-support-research-excellence.html>
- Programme overview and structure: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada\\_Research\\_Chair](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada_Research_Chair)
- 20th anniversary investment and evaluation: <https://www.canada.ca/en/research-chairs/news/2020/12/government-of-canada-makes-largest-investment-in-canada-research-chairs-program-and-celebrates-20th-anniversary.html>
- Canada Excellence Research Chairs (\$248M, 2023): <https://www.canada.ca/en/research-chairs/news/2023/11/government-of-canada-welcomes-world-renowned-researchers-that-will-push-the-boundaries-of-innovation.html>
- UBC programme implementation: <https://research.ubc.ca/federal-research-chair-programs/canada-research-chairs>

### Talent Programme Research:

- International talent programmes review (National Academies): <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/27787/chapter/7>
- Talent funding effects on research careers (European Journal of Education): <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ejed.70194>

### WA Economic Context:

- Diversify WA 2024 Update: <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/diversify-wa-2024-update>
- Future State strategy: <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/diversify-wa-future-state>
- Harvard Growth Lab WA economic analysis: <https://growthlab.hks.harvard.edu/applied-research/western-australia>
- WA tertiary sector review: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/university-mergers-proposal-refloated-australias-west>
- Regional Economic Development:
- Universities and regional growth (Arizona State): <https://economist.asu.edu/universities-knowledge/universities-regional-economic-growth>
- Regional innovation clusters (National Academies): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK100322/>
- Innovation, education, and regional growth: <https://issues.org/innovation-stem-education-regional-growth-babbitt-wang/>
- Localising R&D economic impact (Brookings): <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/localizing-the-economic-impact-of-research-and-development/>
- US Department of Commerce Regional Initiative: <https://www.commerce.gov/bureaus-and-offices/ousea/regional-economic-research-initiative>
- NSF Regional Innovation Engines: <https://www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/regional-innovation-engines>

### Place-Based Innovation:

- Science parks and talent attraction: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336386212\\_Science\\_Parks\\_talent\\_attraction\\_and\\_stakeholder\\_involvement\\_an\\_international\\_study](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336386212_Science_Parks_talent_attraction_and_stakeholder_involvement_an_international_study)
- Higher education and creative economy: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280915809\\_Higher\\_Education\\_and\\_the\\_Creative\\_Economy\\_Creative\\_Graduates\\_Knowledge\\_Transfer\\_and\\_Regional\\_Impact\\_Debates](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280915809_Higher_Education_and_the_Creative_Economy_Creative_Graduates_Knowledge_Transfer_and_Regional_Impact_Debates)

### Merger Context (for balanced perspective):

- Adelaide University merger outcomes: <https://www.indailysa.com.au/news/just-in/2025/10/09/how-merged-adelaide-uni-scores-in-world-rankings-before-opening>
- Australian merger trends: <https://research.com/universities-colleges/trends-in-college-and-university-consolidation>
- International merger analysis: <https://newsletters.qs.com/what-might-the-future-of-university-mergers-look-like/>
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), National Report on Schooling in Australia 2023: Chapter 6 – Participation in Vocational Education and Training (VET), March 2024.
- [https://dataandreporting.blob.core.windows.net/anrdataportal/ANR-Documents/ANR2023/nationalreportonschoolinginaustralia\\_2023\\_Chapter6.pdf](https://dataandreporting.blob.core.windows.net/anrdataportal/ANR-Documents/ANR2023/nationalreportonschoolinginaustralia_2023_Chapter6.pdf)
- Construction Training Fund (CTF) WA, Industry Snapshot – April 2022.

[https://api.ctf.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CTF000146\\_Snapshot-April-2022-V3.pdf](https://api.ctf.wa.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CTF000146_Snapshot-April-2022-V3.pdf)

- Department of Training and Workforce Development (WA), Apprentice and Trainee Contract Data and Reports, March 2025.

# 6.0 Appendix

<https://www.wa.gov.au/service/education-and-training/vocational-education/apprentice-and-trainee-contract-data-and-reports>

- Kwinana Industries Council, Education Partnership Program Overview, 2024.  
<https://kic.org.au/education/>
- Government of Singapore, SkillsFuture Singapore: Annual Report 2023/24.  
<https://www.skillsfuture.gov.sg/annualreport>

# 7.0 Working Group Members

As an apolitical, future-focused and independent organisation, Committee for Perth draws upon the expertise of its diverse membership, representing over 40 different industry sectors across the Perth region. The goal is to bring together our member’s collective expertise to foster thought leadership and produce a white paper lead to real, practical and achievable impact.



**Chair: Lance Glare**  
Partner, Infrastructure,  
Government and Healthcare  
| Client Lead Partner, WA  
Transport Sector  
KPMG



**Dana Robertson**  
PVC Communications and  
Engagement  
The University of Notre Dame  
Australia



**David Harrison**  
CEO  
Kwinana Industries Council



**Dr Lisa Cluett**  
External Relations Director  
Perth USAsia Centre



**Dr Qassim Saad**  
Associate Professor, School of  
Design  
Curtin University



**Gia Jac**  
Research and Reporting Officer  
City of Gosnells



**Giles Tuffin**



**Hanlie du Plessis**  
Executive Manager People  
Keystart



**Kate Parker**  
Senior Principal – Social and  
Change  
Element Advisory Part of SLR



**Kelly Campbell**  
Executive Support Officer  
Committee for Perth



**Kylie Johnston**  
Group Executive People –  
People and Capability  
RAC



**Luke Willcock**  
Manager Economic  
Development and Advocacy  
City of Joondalup



**Megan Cramp**  
Special Counsel  
Hall & Wilcox



**Paula Rogers**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Committee for Perth

# 7.0 Working Group Members



**Prof Maryam Omari**  
Executive Dean, School of  
Business and Law  
Edith Cowan University



**Rashid Zaman**  
Associate Professor  
Curtin University



**Renae Sayers**  
Director – Strategic Initiatives  
– School of Earth & Planetary  
Sciences  
Curtin University



**Suzanne Hullick**  
State General Manager WA  
Westpac Banking Corporation



**Tabitha McMullan**  
Chief Executive Officer  
FORM Building a State of  
Creativity



**Warwick Carter**  
Executive Dean, School of  
Business and Law  
Perth South West Metropolitan  
Alliance



COMMITTEE FOR  
PERTH