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## A Case Study in Deliberative Democracy: Dialogue with the City

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## A Case Study in Deliberative Democracy: Dialogue with the City

Perth, the capital city of Western Australia, and its surrounding metropolitan area ranks highly among the world's most liveable cities.<sup>1</sup> However, it is experiencing urban sprawl, and given the predicted high rates of growth, continued growth outwards is unsustainable. To harness the creativity of the community, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure decided to engage the people of Perth in determining their future. The process that was implemented, *Dialogue with the City*, became the largest deliberative forum in the southern hemisphere and a case study in deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democracy, or participatory democracy, has been described as a nascent social movement, a response to the perceived inadequacies of representative democracy.<sup>2</sup> According to Levine,<sup>3</sup> democracy requires deliberation for three reasons:

- To enable citizens to discuss public issues and form opinions;
- To give democratic leaders much better insight into public issues than elections are able to do;
- To enable people to justify their views so we can sort out the better from the worse.

Among the numbers of definitions of deliberation and deliberative democracy, the Deliberative Democracy Consortium<sup>4</sup> has one of the most practical versions:

Deliberation is an approach to decision-making in which citizens consider relevant facts from multiple points of view, converse with one another to think critically about options before them and enlarge their perspectives, opinions and understandings.

Deliberative democracy strengthens citizen voices in governance by including people of all races, classes, ages and geographies in deliberations that directly affect public decisions. As a result, citizens influence – and can *see* the result of their influence on – the policy and resource decisions that impact their daily lives and their future.<sup>5</sup>

More succinctly, Uhr describes deliberative democracy as “fair and open community deliberation about the merits of competing political arguments.”<sup>6</sup>

These are the principles that have guided the deliberative democracy initiatives taken by the Western Australian government, in particular, the portfolio of Planning and Infrastructure over the past four years. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Alannah MacTiernan, has outlined her reasons as follows:

My concern is that we are increasingly functioning in a climate where making good decisions becomes very difficult...

The media wants clear black and whites – big headlines, little words - it wants dramatic divergence – it wants outrage - not considered partial disagreement...

This mitigates against good governance.

In my view, we need to ‘retool democracy’ – to establish systems where we genuinely encourage community involvement in decision-making – where we present government not as the arbitrator of two or more opposing camps – each of whom are provided with incentives by the process in hardening their position – but as the facilitator of bringing divergent voices together to hammer out a way forward.

We need to reinforce that we are a democracy, the problems confronting government are the problems of the community and we have to work together to solve them. We need to make democracy richer, providing opportunities for everyone to participate creatively and critically in community affairs, connecting individuals, building trust, respect and confidence in our democratic processes and in the future.<sup>7</sup>

As a community engagement consultant to the Minister and Department for Planning and Infrastructure, it is my task to implement

innovative ways of engaging citizens in joint decision making with government. There is no unit or established resource base to help achieve this. Each initiative requires negotiation with the Department to create a small support team.

Over the past four years, we have trialled, modified and adapted a variety of community engagement techniques including citizens' juries, consensus conferences, consensus forums, multi criteria analysis conferences, televotes, deliberative surveys and 21<sup>st</sup> century town meetings.

From this experience, we have learnt that true deliberation is the key to effective community engagement. The end result of effective deliberation is not only good governance, but also the opportunity to remind participants what it means to be a citizen.

Through the four years of trying out different deliberative democracy techniques, we have begun to understand the necessary preconditions for effective deliberation and the building blocks to achieve it. The over-riding precondition is the development of a 'container',<sup>8</sup> an environment of trust, where open and honest dialogue can develop. This, in turn, provides conditions that enhance opportunities for participants to 'reframe' the issue<sup>9</sup> so alternative and emergent solutions or trade-offs are possible.

In our experience, creating conditions for trust and reframing is greatly facilitated by putting in place a number of building blocks that act synergistically. These include:

- participants who are representative of the population, seated in ways to maximise diversity;
- a focus on thoroughly understanding the issues and their implications;
- serious consideration of differing viewpoints and values;
- a search for consensus or common ground; and
- the capacity to influence policy and decision-making.<sup>10</sup>

These building blocks reflect the key elements of deliberative democracy.<sup>11</sup> For example, Carson and Hartz-Karp<sup>12</sup> characterise deliberative democracy as a process that requires:

- Influence: capacity to influence policy and decision making
- Inclusion: representative of population, inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values, equal opportunity to participate
- Deliberation: open dialogue, access to information, space to understand and reframe issues, respect, movement toward consensus.

To meet these requirements, our experience in Western Australia has demonstrated that what is needed is a deliberative process of engagement, rather than an event. An exemplar of such a process has been *Dialogue with the City*. This engagement process has taken over a year, and is now spawning a series of local dialogues.

*Dialogue with the City* was created to engage the citizens of the greater metropolitan area in the impending difficulties facing Perth, the capital city of Western Australia. The city is experiencing some of the highest population and economic growth rates of any city in Australia and this growth is placing a significant demand on land, resources and environment.

While planners have created plans to manage growth, actually achieving them is becoming increasingly difficult. While the principle of sustainability has the support of the community, it clashes at the local level with NIMBYism (Not In My Back Yard) and the demands of the free market.

This was considered to be an ideal situation to apply deliberative democracy -understanding what a large, representative group of Perth residents would want if they were well informed and had the opportunity to deliberate; building the future plan for the city on their common views; and involving them in the implementation process.

The stated aim for *Dialogue with the City* was to plan to make Perth the world's most liveable city<sup>13</sup> by 2030. The process moved from engaging the broad public in the issues, focusing on those often not heard, onto a large deliberative forum with 1,100 participants to determine the common direction; and then continuing the deliberation over the next eight months with over one hundred of the participants from community, industry and government, to create the community planning strategy.

Using the three critical components of deliberative democracy as defined by Carson and Hartz-Karp<sup>14</sup> - inclusiveness, deliberation and influence – the question can be asked, to what extent did *Dialogue with the City* fulfil these criteria?

### **Inclusiveness**

Theorists and practitioners have argued that to be inclusive, participation needs to be large scale and representative of the population.<sup>15</sup> This is to avoid the typical consultation scenario that involves only a small number of the community, overwhelmingly skewed by those who are either 'highly articulate' or those 'with an axe to grind.'<sup>16</sup>

*Dialogue with the City* aimed to be both large scale and representative. Prior to the large deliberative forum, the aim was to involve as many of the community as possible in understanding and talking about the issues. A number of strategies were used to achieve this.

A community survey was sent to a random sample of 8,000 Perth residents to determine the issues of prime concern to the community and to ascertain their values and views on the future development of the city.

To help inform the public, comprehensive issues papers were published on the web, and an interactive web site enabled browsers to access information, input ideas and exchange views. To make this information more accessible to the broader community, the daily newspaper provided full-page feature articles, each feature story based on one of the issues papers. The aim was to interest people in the issues, help them understand the complexities and varying viewpoints and encourage debate as well as participation at the large, interactive forum. For example, written information generated from the chat room was analysed for themes and used to help steer the agenda of the *Dialogue* forum.

Using a different medium, a one-hour television broadcast, a 'hypothetical' discussion was developed and broadcast during prime time, to engage citizens in thinking about potential futures for the city. Again, viewers were encouraged to register for the interactive forum. A variety of experts spoke on radio, including talk-back radio.

To include youth, a schools competition elicited the views of young people. This involved a painting competition for primary schools and a short essay competition for high schools on the sort of city the students would like to live in by 2030.

This broad public inclusion culminated in a huge deliberative forum that drew together approximately 1,100 participants from state and local

government, industry, business, academia, special interest groups, community groups and a large random sample of residents from metropolitan Perth. These people considered how to manage the future growth of the city in a sustainable way. The engagement techniques used were a combination of a '21<sup>st</sup> century town meeting'<sup>17</sup> and a regional planning game.<sup>18</sup>

Considerable attention was given to ensuring participation was representative of the population, inclusive of diverse viewpoints and values, with citizens having equal opportunity to participate.

Of those who participated, approximately one third came from an invitation to a random sample of the population asking them to participate; one third responded to invitations to a broad range of stakeholders including local government, other state government agencies, industry and industry bodies, environmental groups and a comprehensive range of social interest groups; and one third self nominated, answering advertisements in state-wide and local newspapers, reading, listening to or watching the media, or through their community and organisational networks.

It became obvious that some segments of the population were under-represented - young adults, indigenous people and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Grassroots enrolment of these groups took place to engage youth, Indigenous people and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds in listening and learning sessions. The aim of these sessions was to ensure that the people who are often not listened to were heard, had the opportunity to learn more about the issues, and felt sufficiently comfortable to take part in the large forum dialogue.

### **Deliberation**

Informed dialogue was a feature of the deliberation. Over several years, the WA Planning Commission had employed experts to research and write discussion papers to underpin a new planning strategy. Nine well-researched discussion papers provided the background information for the process. These issues papers were disseminated via the internet, through feature articles in newspapers, and through background briefing packs sent to all participants prior to the forum. The television hypothetical discussion on the futures of Perth was on prime time, and watchers could input their comments on internet. This video was shown again at the forum. During the forum, there were two overseas speakers who were renowned for successfully implementing plans to make their cities more sustainable. The speakers highlighted the choices that needed to be made for a sustainable city.

A variety of strategies were developed to encourage open dialogue, respect, access to information, and space to understand and reframe issues, and movement toward consensus. One of the most important of these was to encourage open and free discussion through small-group dialogue between diverse participants. Each group was supported by a trained facilitator, with the task of encouraging in-depth discussion and respect for others' views. A trained scribe at each group input data to a computer that the group deemed to be a fair representation of their discussion. The small group interaction provided a safe environment to input views, learn from others and reach a collective view.

There were over 250 volunteers supporting this deliberation - facilitating, acting as scribes, and taking other support roles. This team was acquired through a variety of networks, and encompassed volunteers from the

private sector, public sector and non-government organisations. People said they volunteered because this was an exciting initiative, dealing with an issue that was important to them, that offered them the opportunity to learn new skills. The entire support team underwent a full day's training to ensure they understood and were capable of carrying out their tasks.

To encourage participants to listen to different views, they were purposely seated at a table with dissimilar others, that is, a mixture of random sample participants with stakeholders and those who self nominated. Not only were commonly-held views fed into the computer, so too were strongly held minority views, and in many instances, each person's views.

The computers on each table were networked, transmitting the data to a 'theme team' who analysed the data in real time and broadcast the common themes back to the entire room via large screens along the breadth of the room. In a very short space of time, participants could see the build-up of collective views from the individual tables to the whole forum.

In the morning, the deliberation was broad ranging, focusing on hopes for the future, what participants wanted to keep and change, and what they might and might not value if different scenarios of Perth were to occur.

The afternoon was more focused on actioning, finding trade-offs and negotiating. By playing a hands-on planning game, participants were provided with the opportunity to test their assumptions and reframe the issues to find alternatives.

Each table chose one of four development scenarios. Each scenario was represented by a package containing different density 'chips' (or game pieces of differing colours and sizes), based on Geographic Information Systems data (a digital mapping and analysis system). The chips represented the housing densities, industry and commercial areas required by 2030.

Participants needed to decide where each of the chips would be placed on the map. Concurrently, they needed to conserve the spaces important to them and to draw in the transport links. Trade-offs could be made between different housing densities and different urban forms from the other scenarios.

The interactive dialogue at the tables was crucial. The table needed to agree on its plan. When table participants were in agreement, the backing on the chips were removed and they were stuck onto the map. This information was then transferred to the computers using mapping grids to ensure accuracy. These digitised images enabled effective analysis of the common themes from the whole room.

The final element of deliberation was the search for common ground. The '21<sup>st</sup> century town meeting' methodology allowed constant movement between small group dialogue and consensus, and the collective views of the entire room. A trained facilitator guided each table to discover commonly-held views. The networked computers acted like 'electronic flipcharts'. Immediately after the scribes typed in the data, it was transmitted through to a 'theme team' where the views were synthesised and beamed back to the whole room. The key issues were ranked individually and then collectively. To check the validity of the themes, following the forum, an independent 'theme team' and a computer software analysis re-checked the data. This analysis corroborated and added to the key themes. A similar process was used to analyse the planning game results.

The most important key direction to emerge from the engagement was the sort of urban form participants wanted for the future of Perth – network, multi-centred, compact or dispersed. Since this issue was pivotal to the engagement, it was considered important for consensus to evolve, and to be repeatedly tested in different ways. The process moved from information to dialogue, then from prioritisation to practical planning.

It began with a visual, computerised fly-through of the different scenarios, followed by discussion from different points of view in the one-hour ‘hypothetical’ video. Written information was provided to each individual outlining technical expert views of the basic differences between the four scenarios socially, economically and environmentally. Participants then discussed each scenario at their table, finding common ground on the positive and negative aspects of each. Individually, participants were then asked to rank each of the four scenarios in order of preference. The scenario that scored highest, the network city, was in fact not far from achieving the highest possible score for the room (while the same can be said in reverse for the scenario which scored lowest, the dispersed city). However, to avoid the ‘halo effect’, or any notion that there was somehow a ‘right’ model, this information was not given to participants until the close of the day’s deliberation.

The purpose of the planning game was to move participants from the theoretical realm of scenarios to the practical allocation of the housing, industry, commerce, etc. that would be required in such a scenario. Trade-offs and a search for alternatives would be necessary for the map to represent the agreed team view. This activity allowed participants to continually test their original thoughts. They could trade into other scenarios at any time.

Before commencing the game, each table discussed which scenario they wanted to use to begin. They could choose the scenario they had ranked first, or another-- providing the table agreed. Seventy two percent (72%) chose the network city model, 0% chose the dispersed city model; the remainder were fairly evenly split between the remaining two - the multi-centred and compact city. At the end of the game, each table was asked to judge out of the 100% total available, what percentage of their final product fitted each of the four scenarios. This analysis showed as the game progressed, there was an increased tendency towards developing the network city.

Participant observations of their maps were tested after the forum by a computer analysis of the digitised maps. Again, the network city clearly emerged as the preferred urban form. With the assistance of technical expertise, the Spatial Planning Team, consisting of 18 representatives from the forum, from the community, industry, local and state government, agreed that preliminary testing of the network city showed it to be sufficiently feasible to progress to the next stage. Again, this was tested with all participants of the forum, requesting their feedback. They were overwhelmingly supportive. The consensus that emerged early in the proceedings, persisted, not only withstanding the rigours of a complex deliberative process, but growing despite it.

Measuring the effectiveness of deliberation is complex. While strategies were implemented to maximise the effectiveness of deliberation - opportunities for open dialogue, respect, access to information, space to



understand and reframe issues, and movement toward consensus - they were not evaluated except through participant feedback forms, largely qualitative.

Qualitative analysis of participant feedback forms pointed to their high satisfaction with the deliberative process. Many talked of their initial cynicism about the political agenda and their anxiety about achieving productive dialogue or consensus with such a large, disparate group. Accordingly, they expressed surprise at the extent of common ground that had been forged, hope that politicians could be trusted to listen and respond to the people, and delight with the goodwill of fellow participants to engage in positive dialogue.

Quantitatively, forty two percent (42%) said they changed their views as a result of the dialogue, while many more admitted to broadening their views. Over ninety nine percent (99.5%) of participants thought the deliberations went okay or great. Most importantly, ninety seven percent (97%) indicated they would like to participate in such an event again.<sup>19</sup>

If the critical measure of deliberation is an increase in intellectual, social and political capital, this feedback would indicate that the *Dialogue with the City's* deliberative process was effective.

### **Influence**

At the commencement of the forum, both the State Premier and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure stated that this forum would result in “action on the ground”. During the forum, the Minister re-iterated that this was not a “talkfest”, that the outcomes would be actioned.

To reinforce the importance of the outcomes and the accountability of the process, at the conclusion of the forum, each participant received a Preliminary Report of the widely-held views developed during the day's proceedings. The Final Report was distributed to all participants two weeks after the forum. Each participant received a copy of the map developed by their table, as well as the integrated map of the whole room.

An implementation process that involved all the stakeholders was established following the forum. An Implementation Team consisting of thirteen representatives from the *Dialogue* process from the community, industry, local and state government, nominated by the Minister, oversaw the development of the plan. The Implementation Team had the final say on any issues that could not be resolved by other teams.

Three liaison teams – community, industry and local government – consisting of approximately thirteen representatives each, nominated by the Minister with the assistance of the Steering Team, had the task of establishing continuing communication links with their constituents. When contentious issues arose, it was the task of these teams to find out whether their constituent groups could ‘live with’ the proposals or not. This occurred with varying degrees of success.

There were six Working Groups, each consisting of fourteen to eighteen representatives from the community, industry, local and state government, chaired by a representative from the Implementation Team, with at least two representatives from each of the liaison teams. Each team had the support of a planning officer to write up the Group's views and provide the background research information. The task of each Working Group was to develop one of the critical planning issues, recommending strategies and actions.

The Working Groups worked to a very tight time schedule. There was concern that there could be a loss of momentum and possibly a loss of faith in the process if the time lag was too great between the *Dialogue* forum and the dissemination of a plan. This tight schedule proved to be both a bonus (interest was maintained throughout) and a problem (increased stress, especially for the planning officers).

The final result was a composite document - 'Network City: A Community Planning Strategy for Perth and Peel'.<sup>20</sup>

This was an intensive, iterative process. Most team meetings were facilitated. Teams met regularly, sometimes moving quickly through the issues, sometimes taking several meetings to resolve one issue. At key stages in the development of the Planning Strategy, the plans were discussed by all Team members, then disseminated to all forum participants, and subsequently taken by the liaison teams to the broader community for their discussion and input. As a result of the feedback received, the Strategy underwent constant revisions.

'Network City: Community Planning Strategy' was accepted in principle by the WA Planning Committee and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. It was submitted to Cabinet and again, was accepted in principle. It is currently undergoing the usual public comment period that will close at the end of January 2005. In the interim, a local government grants program has been established to support local governments willing to implement community engagement that is based on inclusion, deliberation and influence, on issues supporting the network city concept.

It would appear this is the first time that deliberative democracy has played such a crucial role in the development of such a major regional planning strategy. The Strategy outlines how this role should continue through to the implementation of the plan.

### **The Cost Benefit Analysis**

Critics of deliberative democracy have argued that it does not work. Reasons include that citizen participation:

- Minimises the influence of experts who have a far better understanding of the issues;<sup>21</sup>
- Is too slow,<sup>22</sup> and too costly;<sup>23</sup>
- Is often used for instrumental ends - to achieve political outcomes - rather than its critical purpose - to increase social, intellectual and political capital.<sup>24</sup>

The case study of *Dialogue with the City* indicates that:

- In terms of city planning, regardless of the technical merits of experts, experience has shown that if proposals do not reflect the values of the community, implementation is fraught with problems;<sup>25</sup>
- Prior to *Dialogue with the City*, the Department had invested more than \$200,000 over several years on technical expertise to develop background information and best practice urban plans. However, these expert plans were not 'owned' either by the Government of the day or the community, and hence were not likely to be implemented fast. Indeed, the Department had been persisting with a multi centred city model, which the *Dialogue* deliberations cast aside, clearly favouring the network city model.

The *Dialogue* process was extensive and would have been costly if industry partners had not shared the costs of the televised production, chat room, newspaper coverage, computer software and

hardware and major forums. It is estimated that the process would have cost at least AU\$570,000, excluding public service salaries, if it had been paid for totally by the government. The actual cost to government was AU\$250,000.

For some, this still might seem costly. However, in terms of cost benefit to the State, it is well worthwhile if this plan for a highly liveable city is ‘owned’ by the community, industry, local and state government, and can be substantially implemented without encountering great local resistance.

- The criticism that deliberative democracy initiatives are used for instrumental gain rather than increasing social capital assumes that these goals are incompatible. On the one hand, achieving the legitimacy to implement proposals easily and quickly is undoubtedly an important pay-off.<sup>26</sup> However, if the engagement process is perceived by citizens to be political manipulation, this legitimation will not occur. On the other hand, if the engagement is perceived by citizens to be fair, transparent and accountable, it reflects good governance, developing political capital,<sup>27</sup> and is likely to result in a ‘virtuous cycle’ that increases social and intellectual capital.<sup>28</sup>

*Dialogue with the City* has extended our understanding of deliberative democracy. Based solidly on the principles of inclusion, deliberation and influence, it has achieved an outcome that truly reflects the deliberative process. Throughout, it has made every effort to be transparent and accountable to the community. Although there will always be aspects in need of improvement, and members of the community who remain cynical throughout, from all accounts, *Dialogue with the City* appears to have impacted positively on intellectual, political and social capital.

### **Postscript**

One week prior to the release of ‘Network City: Community Planning Strategy’, a local council, unhappy that the plan might constrain its outward growth, disseminated views to the press that the proposal would create great hardships on the public, i.e.: that the community would lose their backyards, be coerced to travel on public transport, that public open space would be taken over by high-rise, and people would be forced to live in high density. For several days, the sole state-wide newspaper continued with this theme, until many who favoured the process and its results ‘fought back’. Participants who had been involved in the *Dialogue* process and community groups went on radio, participated in talk back shows, sent letters to the daily newspaper and local newspapers and published press releases that sharply contradicted the local council’s claims. The heated public debate flared, then subsided, and the sparks eventually died. The ‘Network City Community Planning Strategy’ has now returned to the realm of deliberation, with community and industry groups running their own forums and submitting their issues through the public consultation process.

### **Learning and Future Directions**

With the benefit of hindsight, there are always improvements that could be made in future engagements.

While every effort was made to ensure inclusive participation, the ethnicity, age, geographic location and socio-economic background of the participants was not measured. Neither was the diversity of their views. AmericaSpeaks, the founder of the ‘21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meetings’, utilises

individual electronic keypads to collect such data, which is then projected immediately back to the room. Unfortunately, this equipment is expensive. In the future, if individual, electronic keypads are not economically feasible, it could be worthwhile to ask forum participants to fill out a short, anonymous questionnaire prior to the deliberations to ascertain the extent of inclusiveness, and to announce the results during the deliberations.

Several participants expressed dissatisfaction that the information presented to participants was not comprehensive, eliciting all viewpoints – for example there were no speakers supporting the current urban sprawl and none who advocated a free market position. Instead, presentations were all on sustainability and the implications of government action and inaction. This was an accurate perception.

The agenda of Government-supported sustainability was a bias, based on what was broadly perceived to be a looming problem that many believed needed to be addressed quickly and authoritatively. Starting with an assumption—that is, that sustainability is a worthwhile pursuit—is bound to cause disquiet for some, even if that assumption is broadly shared by a government and most of its citizens, and even if that assumption is clearly articulated by the organizers. Numerous topics for public deliberation will imply some bias (for example, deliberations on world peace through non-violent action are biased against those who believe that war is a valid strategy). There are instances where deliberation may commence with a blank slate (for example the Wisdom Council). However, to set an agenda or set priorities, government-initiated deliberation is more likely to be focussed on contentious, complex issues, where it would be helpful to understand the views of an informed public who have had the opportunity to deliberate. Transparency of views is essential.

The Labor Government came to power with a clearly enunciated goal of improving long- term sustainability. When it became apparent that current trends were moving the city in the opposite direction, they asked the people to let them know how they thought the trend could be changed. The aim of improved sustainability was stated clearly from the outset because the debate about the efficacy of sustainability was thought to have been covered already. However dissent does not fade away just because a government reflects the wishes of the broader constituency. Some people do not agree with sustainable practices (for example, because of the financial implications of sustainable practices) and these views were aired during the deliberations.

Due to widely differing perceptions of the term ‘consensus’, the expression most frequently quoted in deliberative democracy theory, ‘the search for common ground’ was the term used throughout the *Dialogue with the City* engagement. Several participants complained that this focus produced generic themes that no-one could dispute, rather than hammering out the contentious issues. This criticism has also been made of other 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meetings.<sup>29</sup> It is understandable, since the methodology is very task oriented, focussed on deliberation more than dialogue, searching for commonalities rather than differences. It is one of the trade-offs of choosing one methodology over another. In this instance, the forum outcomes provided a broad agenda that in some ways differed significantly from the experts’ prior plans, and in other ways ratified them. This was highly useful information.

It can also be argued that the search for common ground downplays genuine difference of interests, a significant problem for those who feel unequal. This is a real issue for any deliberative methodology. In the *Dialogue* deliberations, several initiatives were introduced to address this. The additional ‘listening sessions’ held prior to the forum with disadvantaged groups, ensured their views were heard. The forum deliberation started with their views, and they were recorded separately in the feedback reports. Individual views were input to computers as well as group views, so if anyone felt disempowered at the table, their views were still considered by the theme team. Although these initiatives helped, this remains an ongoing problem that needs improvement.

While there are always areas for improvement, similarly, there are also elements that were done well and are worthwhile repeating. From the overwhelming feedback from participants, this was a wonderfully organised, democratic, hopeful, exciting and ground-breaking initiative that could become regular government practice.

In conclusion, *Dialogue with the City* significantly adhered to the principles of deliberative democracy – inclusion, deliberation and influence. It gave the present government the legitimacy to create a strategy based soundly on the principles of sustainability, despite some powerful interest group opposition. At the same time, it gave the community a sense of ‘ownership’ of the strategy – to the point where many took action to defend it against negative commentaries being made about it. Most importantly, it provided participants with an experience that reminded them of the importance of being a citizen.

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- <sup>1</sup> In 2002, the Worldwide Quality of Life Survey, published by William M Mercer, ranked Perth as overall equal eighteenth, together with Luxembourg, Toronto and San Francisco.
- <sup>2</sup> Bohman, J. (1998). "Survey Article: The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy." The Journal of Political Philosophy 6(4): 400-425; Dryzek, J. (1990) Discursive democracy: Politics, policy and political science. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press; Smith, G. and Wales, C. (2000). "Citizens' Juries and Deliberative Democracy." Political Studies 48: 51-65; Levine, P. (2003) The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy, USA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- <sup>3</sup> Levine, P. (2003) The New Progressive Era: Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy, USA: Rowman & Littlefield.
- <sup>4</sup> Deliberative Democracy Consortium (2003). Researcher and Practitioner Conference, Maryland, USA.
- <sup>5</sup> Deliberative Democracy Consortium (2003). Researcher and Practitioner Conference, Maryland, USA.
- <sup>6</sup> Uhr, J. (1998). Deliberative Democracy in Australia: The Changing Place of Parliament, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- <sup>7</sup> MacTiernan, A. (2004). "Harmonising Divergent Voices: Sharing the Challenge of Decision-Making", Keynote address, IPAA New South Wales State Conference.
- <sup>8</sup> Senge, P. et al. (1994). The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organisation, Currency/Doubleday, USA
- <sup>9</sup> Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (2003). Metaphors We Live By, second edition, University of Chicago Press.
- <sup>10</sup> Hartz-Karp, J. (2004). "Harmonising Divergent Voices: Sharing the Challenge of Decision-Making", Keynote address, IPAA New South Wales State Conference.
- <sup>11</sup> (Bohman 1998; Forrester 1999; Carson, L. and Hartz-Karp, J. (forthcoming). "Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs: Juries, Polls, and Forums", in Gastil, G. & Levine, P. The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century. Jossey Bass, USA.
- <sup>12</sup> Carson, L. and Hartz-Karp, J. (forthcoming). "Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs: Juries, Polls, and Forums", in Gastil, G. & Levine, P. The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century. Jossey Bass, USA.
- <sup>13</sup> Liveability criteria, e.g. 'liveable neighborhoods' and studies of the world's most liveable cities, closely follow sustainability criteria – the balance between social, economic and environmental impacts. For this initiative, it was determined that the term 'liveable' was more user friendly than 'sustainable'. To ensure the community was engaged in the same conversation, the meaning of 'liveability' was clearly elucidated in the extensive pre forum information.
- <sup>14</sup> Carson, L. and Hartz-Karp, J. (forthcoming). "Adapting and Combining Deliberative Designs: Juries, Polls, and Forums", in Gastil, G. & Levine, P. The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century. Jossey Bass, USA.
- <sup>15</sup> Weeks, E. C. (2000). "The Practice of Deliberative Democracy: Results from Four Large-Scale Trials." Public Administrative Review 60(4): 360-372; Lukensmeyer, C. J. & Brigham, S. (2002). "Taking Democracy to Scale: Creating a Town Hall Meeting for the Twenty-First Century." National Civic Review 91(4): 351 - 366.
- <sup>16</sup> Carson, L. (2001). "Innovative Consultation Processes and the Changing Role of Activism." Third Sector Review 7(1): 7-22.
- <sup>17</sup> AmericaSpeaks, a not-for-profit pioneer in large-scale civic engagement designed this new kind of town meeting. Carolyn Lukensmeyer and her team kindly offered helpful advice prior to the forum as well as the invaluable assistance during the forum of one of their associates, Mr Joe Goldman.
- <sup>18</sup> Fregonese and Associates, in particular John Fregonese, a not-for-profit pioneer in designing new ways of engaging citizens in urban design, including a regional planning game used throughout the USA, considerably allowed us to use their ideas to develop our own planning game.
- <sup>19</sup> 'Dialogue of the City : Participant Feedback, *Consultant Report to the Western Australian Department for Planning and Infrastructure*, Perth 2003

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- <sup>20</sup> The Network City describes how corridors of higher density, mixed use centres can be connected by frequent public transport and an aligned transport corridor for through-traffic; how existing centres can be revitalised; and how public open space areas can be linked to provide a continuous greenway.
- <sup>21</sup> Irvin, R & Stansbury, J. (2004). "Citizen Participation in Decision Making: Is it Worth the Effort?" Public Administration Review, 64(1): 55-65.
- <sup>22</sup> Rourke, F. E. (1984). Bureaucracy, Politics and Public Policy, Little Brown, Boston.
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- <sup>28</sup> Hartz-Karp, J. (2004). "Harmonising Divergent Voices: Sharing the Challenge of Decision-Making", Keynote address, IPAA New South Wales State Conference.
- <sup>29</sup> For example, see the commentary on 'Listening to the City': <<http://www.albany.edu/cpr/gf/GFJ-V6.htm>>, 10 December 2004

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