



## What's the future for our city centre?



There is a cornucopia of views, opinions and predictions for what Brisbane's city centre might look like once the pandemic's long-term impacts on social movement and personal protocols become evident – but who's right?

Some commentators predict a permanent and significant reduction in public transport use and travel to the city centre, necessitating a growth in suburban employment hubs linked to remote working.

Others have a view that there will be a permanent reduction in commercial leasing volumes in the city (a 20% – 30% reduction has been mentioned), with knock-on impacts for CBD retailers.

Others think that things will essentially return to normal, eventually, and foot traffic will increase in the CBD because human beings crave social interaction and the benefits of personal contact at work.

The short answer is – nobody knows. Especially as COVID's track around the globe remains unpredictable.

The Committee for Brisbane is keen to contribute to a discussion about the future of our city centre, starting with the third annual Inner City Vitality Report to be released in mid-November.

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As presented in our September newsletter, this much anticipated “health report” will assess Brisbane’s Inner City Vitality across five key indicators:

1. Commercial and residential real estate
2. Hotel stays/tourism
3. Retail activity
4. Higher education
5. Transit/mobility

The Vitality Report essentially reports “lag” data – it presents information about activities that have already occurred.

But what of the future? What will the Report suggest that we need to plan for in 2021 and beyond?

The Committee is preparing to conduct a “Reimagining the city centre” project in early 2021, starting with a panel discussion to consider a range of scenarios/futures, based upon research to be conducted later this year.

Whether the long-term changes to Brisbane’s inner-city life are minor or substantial, there is general agreement by knowledgeable commentators that there will be impacts.

The Committee’s intent is to play a responsible role in planning for the city’s future. Stay tuned.

Save the date: 19 November lunch and panel event – Inner City Vitality Report.

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**What have we asked the next State Government to do?**



The Committee for Brisbane recently called on the major political parties to develop a campaign to attract and incentivise interstate corporations to relocate to Brisbane as a logical place for the new remote-work business community.

The “Brisbane as HQ” request was one of 10 policy commitments sought by the Committee in submissions to the ALP, LNP, Katter’s Australian Party and The Greens (the full submission can be found here: <https://committeeforbrisbane.org.au/uncategorized/queensland-2020-state-election-policy-commitments-requested/>):

1. A Commission for the New Economy: Establish a “Commission for the New Economy”, drawn from corporate leaders and senior government bureaucrats, that is charged with considering and stress-testing big ideas to present to the government to restructure and boost our State economy.
2. “Brisbane as HQ” program: In partnership with the private sector, develop a suite of business and talent attraction incentives for companies to headquarter in Queensland.
3. SEQ City Deal: Re-engage with the Federal Government and COM(SEQ) to progress the south east Queensland City Deal as a matter of priority.

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4. The 45-minute region: Fund the business case for a 45-minute region to connect our key activity and growth centres.
5. Circular economy and carbon neutrality: Undertake a detailed review of State Government operations, policies, energy production and use, and supply chains to embed circular economy and carbon neutral principles into “Business As Usual” activities, to rebuild the State economy with strong environmental credentials.
6. Review of planning frameworks: Review ShapingSEQ (the South East Queensland Regional Plan 2017) and update the State Infrastructure Plan to account for post-COVID impacts.
7. Review of project financing and procurement: Undertake a review to improve the financing, contracting, procurement and approval processes for development, construction and infrastructure projects – to stimulate and support economic recovery; and conduct a review to improve project risk-management/sharing.
8. Social and affordable housing: Commit to the 10-step plan to make social and affordable housing a key pillar of Queensland’s economic recovery – as proposed by the National Affordable Housing Consortium and the Property Council of Australia (a Committee for Brisbane Affiliate) – and conduct a proper consideration and assessment of realistic build-to-rent projects.
9. Advanced manufacturing: Undertake an analysis of advanced manufacturing opportunities for greater Brisbane.
10. Percentages for art: Establish the “1% Fund for Music” – a permanent facility to nurture Queensland’s important live music sector; and establish a “Percent for Art” scheme across the development of public buildings and provide incentives for a similar scheme in the private sector.

The Queensland response to COVID-19 has put the capital city in a strong position to attract and retain new businesses and talent. We are hearing regularly from our members, particularly professional services firms, that southern-based staff are relocating their families permanently to Brisbane/SEQ to take advantage of new remote working arrangements, married with our enviable lifestyle.

This presents a unique opportunity for Brisbane and south east Queensland.

Why would a corporation keep its managers and workforce in a southern CBD – with half empty offices because huge numbers are working from home – when greater Brisbane offers better commercial and residential affordability and provides a sub-tropical lifestyle that is more attractive for the growing work-from-home phenomena?

“Brisbane as HQ” incentives could include:

- fast tracked approvals for new housing for relocated staff;
- a stamp duty holiday for interstate executive transfers;
- sliding scale pre-payments from government on commercial rents for interstate company relocations (with a higher incentive to relocate to a Greenstar building);



- an SEQ lifestyle rebate or tax treatment so interstate immigrants receive a “lifestyle credit” to spend on local tourism/hospitality outlets and stimulate spending in COVID-impacted industries.

The long term benefits to Queensland would include more jobs and career pathways and more taxes paid to the State.

One of our other key recommendations was the establishment of a Commission for the New Economy, drawn from corporate leaders and senior government bureaucrats, that is charged with considering and stress-testing big ideas to present to the government to restructure and boost our State economy.

The economic disruption from COVID will be long-term, and terminal for some parts of the Queensland economy, and a “business as usual” approach to forward planning and policy-making will fail. Innovation and adaptability will be key to Queensland’s new economic success.

Queensland’s corporate leaders have the expertise and life and business experience to help chart the bold courses back to economic success, including opportunities for structural reform.

The task of designing Queensland’s economic recovery can be championed by those who drive the economy, working in partnership with the State Government, industry associations and others.

Economic recovery and stability has the best chance of success when government policy levers and funding decisions are informed by the knowledge and experience of the business sector that has skin in the game, understands risk and makes the business decisions that drive the economy and innovation.

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**Our vision is for greater Brisbane to be the world's most liveable place. How can we measure up?**



Committee for Brisbane Associate, Emeritus Professor Martin Betts (most recently of Griffith University) has been appointed to Chair a new CFB Steering Committee to investigate international “Liveability Indices” and their relevance to contemporary society. He shares his views below:

There are some people, families, organisations, and governments struggling to maintain hope at the moment as the pandemic continues to impact our daily lives.

One major impact of COVID-19 has been a reduction in the numbers of international students relocating to cities to undertake study, become members of communities and economies, and explore the prospect of migration as emerging professionals.

Previous patterns of international study and migration before 2020 were based on assumptions of city preferences informed by word of mouth, marketing campaigns, and assumptions of city attractiveness.

Talent attraction and recruitment in the commercial world used similar processes. These all were based on assumptions that are now out-of-date, aren't they?

I feel sure there is hope. There will inevitably be a COVID-19 vaccine, a winding back of travel and border restrictions, a resumption of international travel for study and migration, and a restarting of the really

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significant economic and cultural benefits we all gain from this.

When this happens, there will be a need for up-to-date data on how various cities present as choices for international students and business migrants and mobile professionals.

These will need to reflect changed experiences, priorities, practices and reputations that countries, regions and cities will have developed by then, largely through how they have managed, responded to, and come out of the pandemic.

A population of future international students, business migrants and mobile professionals will need a new set of independent and objective benchmarks to guide their decisions.

There will also be scarce resources for investments in rebuilding economies and cities when the pandemic has receded to the point where large-scale travel and migration resumes.

The case to be made for plans for rebuilding and re-investing will have to be offered against opinions formed and positions taken during the unusual and temporary political and economic conditions of this pandemic period.

Many businesses, governments and tertiary education providers will benefit, down the track, from an objective evaluation of the impacts of international study and business migration, to inform post-pandemic decisions.

I would argue that the time is now to review current city ranking indices such as Mercer's Quality of living city ranking and the Economist Intelligence Unit's The Global Liveability Index and the one student city ranking operated by QS as the Best Student Cities.

We need to critique these from the viewpoint of post-pandemic circumstances that will pervade, and almost certainly need a new ranking methodology.

This could be developed with the help of our universities, city and state governments, and the many companies that are dependent on international travel and students. What we need is to all work together to re-engage future potential international students and professional migrants.

We need to find out what they believe will make a city a preferred destination in the post-pandemic environment.

I see great value:

- For our governments, with international education being our third largest export earner,
- For universities, that have used international student fee income to create world-class universities and their research, and
- For tourism, student accommodation, travel, entertainment and other businesses, that form one of the largest sectors of our economy, to all come together.

As a team, they need to make the new arguments as to why future international students and professional migrants should choose our region as a destination, and provide the data that allows true measures of



what makes a great and safe place to be.

I believe it is a project that offers real hope to all of our futures.

## We're back live again!

The Committee's first live event since mid-March will be held at the Parliament Annex on Tuesday 13 October, highlighting some of the city's entrepreneurs and their global achievements.

Brisbane's Brightest Ideas, sponsored by CFB Founder, St Baker Energy Innovation Fund, will hear from some of Brisbane's most successful innovators about the future of innovation research, investment and talent attraction in Brisbane.

Tickets are available

here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/brisbanes-brightest-ideas-how-our-innovations-have-gone-global-tickets-121131655041>



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## Welcome to new members.

The Committee for Brisbane welcomed six new members and one upgrade in September:

### **Patron**

- Blight Rayner

### **Corporate Member**

- O'Neill Architecture (upgrade from Associate)

### **Associates**

- Doug Waller
  - Martin Betts
  - Alex Bauensteiner
  - Nikita Turner
  - Rob Honeycombe
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## Annual General Meeting reminder

The 63rd Annual General Meeting of the Committee for Brisbane will be held on **Tuesday 10 November**, starting at 5.30pm, in the offices of BDO on level 10, 12 Creek Street, Brisbane.

Nominations for Management Committee positions will open on **Friday 8 October** and close at 5pm on **Friday 23 October**.

The Notice Paper for the AGM will be sent to all members on Monday 26 October

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