

# OPINION

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## EDITORIAL

### Coherent plan is needed to get best from ideas on CBD

There is a well-known saying that there's no such thing as a bad idea. But any sensible person will realise that of course it isn't true. Clearly there will be some ideas that just are not going to work.

Nevertheless, the sentiment is a positive and can-do approach which can help bring valuable suggestions to the table.

So with all the recent discussion about the problems facing Perth's CBD — such as struggling retailers, empty shops, homeless people on the streets and anti-social and drug-fuelled behaviour — it is pleasing that there are plenty of potential remedies being raised and debated in the public arena.

Ideas offered in recent weeks include more residential apartments built near the main retail precinct, a university in the city, more and cheaper car parking, and a swimming pool floating on the river near Elizabeth Quay.

One valuable conduit for such suggestions is The West Australian and 7NEWS Perth's current affairs panel show, Flashpoint, which airs on Monday nights.

On the program last night, suspended City of Perth lord mayor Lisa Scaffidi claimed opportunities were being lost due to "inaction" by both levels of government.

She played down the idea of a bigger university presence in the CBD — something this newspaper supports as a way to encourage vitality and energy — and said police needed more powers to stop vandalism, graffiti and drug use.

City of Perth Chair Commissioner Andrew Hammond suggested giving council rangers more power to tackle homelessness in the CBD.

Mr Hammond told Flashpoint that the gap between rangers' powers and what police could do was "pretty big".

He said increasing the powers of council rangers could be the long sought-after solution.

"That's one area that we're missing," he said. "You've got people making a nuisance in town, not necessarily a crime, but making a nuisance and for some, people would perceive that as making the area unsafe."

"So perhaps there is another level, perhaps like a transit officer. They've certainly done a good job in cleaning up the railway stations. Perhaps we can look at a model like that," he said.

It is an idea worth examining. But it must not be in isolation.

Rather, a coherent approach, including some form of shelter or shelters for the homeless, is needed.

And there remains one big elephant in the room.

Restrictive trading hours.

They make no sense, are of no value and must change.



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## Fear of speaking can be work curse



GARY MARTIN

For many employees it is the stuff of nightmares — being told by your boss it's your turn to jump on stage to address your colleagues.

Your heart begins to pound like a jack hammer and your mouth dries up faster than a sponge in the sun as dozens of expectant eyes bore holes in you in anticipation. You summon up the courage to open your mouth but all you manage is a supersonic squeak.

Like literally hundreds of others you suffer from a condition that is reaching epidemic status across our workplaces — the fear of public speaking, otherwise known as glossophobia.

While some workers experience some nervousness at the thought of public speaking, many are overcome by full-on panic and fear that includes symptoms of heightened blood pressure and increased perspiration, nausea and even intense anxiety.

Not surprisingly, new research by Jobsite has found that public speaking occupies top spot among the raft of workplace-related fears or phobias, ahead of claustrophobia (for those fearful of confined or crowded spaces, relevant to some office layouts), acrophobia (for those working in high-rises or at heights), or even aerophobia (for those required to fly for work).

Until now, sufferers of glossophobia had been able to bury their workplace

Many career specialists say a fear of public speaking will hold back or even derail some careers.

But a rapidly changing workplace means presentation skills are increasingly being regarded as an essential job skill — not simply a "nice to have" — to leave many glossophobes marinating in misery.

Some employers, for example, are now requiring a presentation at the point of interview to be able to assess a candidate's competence.

Perhaps even worse, the switch from teleconferencing to web-based videoconferencing means that while someone with a fear of speaking was able to hide behind the telephone handset, they are now forced to take centre stage and be virtually viewed by all when presenting to their work colleagues.

Think also about the move to presenting across various social media platforms — the ability and requirement to deliver your company messages live in front of an unlimited digital audience are rapidly becoming the norm.

On top of that, the popularity and influence of TED talks have changed expectations. Not only are you expected to speak publicly but you must present exceptionally well.

The bad news does not stop there. Many career specialists say a fear of public speaking will increasingly hold back or even derail some careers.

Some of these experts suggest that those who fail to find an antidote for their fear of public speaking will not only earn less in the longer term but will regularly be overlooked when it comes to promotion to higher paid management or senior roles.

Reasons for a fear of speaking are numerous and varied. Some fear they will forget what to say and stutter and stumble. Others are terrified of rejection or appearing to lack substance and another group will be afraid that a public speaking episode will leave their reputation in tatters.

For those glossophobes who face a stunted career trajectory because of failure to conquer their No. 1 fear, the booming virtual reality market has stepped in to lend a hand — or rather, a headset.

There are now virtual reality programs to help you overcome your fear of public speaking.

Through strapping on the latest virtual reality headset, those with glossophobia can face their fear head on and obtain unlimited public speaking practice in simulated settings.

But if you are a workplace glossophobe as well as a technophobe the age-old advice of imagining your audience is in their underwear retains some merit.

Professor Gary Martin is chief executive, the Australian Institute of Management WA