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Royal Adelaide Hospital and Environs:

APPA Position Paper – March 2016

1. Summary

The Royal Adelaide Hospital and environs represents a unique and invaluable opportunity to reinstate a very significant component of the Adelaide Park Lands. What is possible as the hospital, IMVS, Medical School, Dental School and other institutions are moved out represents a very unique opportunity to reinstate open Park Lands, an opportunity that reaches back to Light's original plan. It is pertinent to recall, the original hospital was built on unsurveyed Park Lands. It was a blunder by the hard pressed government of the time for which there has been ongoing criticism. Over the ensuing one hundred years, that blunder was repeated again and again as the medical and university buildings occupied further areas of the Park Lands. The take-over of part of the Botanic Gardens by the hospital can now be reversed. It is incontrovertible that the current hospital and associated alienation of Park Lands was a huge past mistake, and this generation now has the opportunity to rectify that. No deference should be given to the current situation, the result of an accumulation of blunders and short term opportunism.

The only potential exceptions are the Margaret Graham, Women's Health Centre, Eleanor Harrald and the McEwin / Bice group of buildings. Each of these buildings is on the SA Heritage Register. However, the possible retention of those buildings must be for public purposes, not for private purposes. One way to pay the cost of reinstatement as Park Lands would be to open a public subscription for bonds. This is a very common method of funding such projects in USA. Undoubtedly some people might object, but overwhelmingly people would support such a fund.

Generally APPA is convinced there are considerable opportunities for **extensive reinstatement of glorious Park Lands by reduction in the overall 'footprint' of buildings on the Royal Adelaide Hospital site.**

2. The Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005

The *Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005* contains, at Section 4, the following statutory principles:

- (a) the land comprising the Adelaide Park Lands should, as far as is reasonably appropriate, correspond to the general intentions of Colonel William Light in establishing the first Plan of Adelaide in 1837;*
- (b) the Adelaide Park Lands should be held for the public benefit of the people of South Australia, and should be generally available to them for their use and enjoyment (recognising that certain uses of the Park Lands may restrict or prevent access to particular parts of the Park Lands);*
- (c) the Adelaide Park Lands reflect and support a diverse range of environmental, cultural, recreational and social values and activities that should be protected and enhanced;*
- (d) the Adelaide Park Lands provide a defining feature to the City of Adelaide and contribute to the economic and social well-being of the City in a manner that should be recognised and enhanced;*
- (e) the contribution that the Adelaide Park Lands make to the natural heritage of the Adelaide Plains should be recognised, and consideration given to the extent to which initiatives involving the Park Lands can improve the biodiversity and sustainability of the Adelaide Plains;*
- (f) the State Government, State agencies and authorities, and the Adelaide City Council, should actively seek to co-operate and collaborate with each other in order to protect and enhance the Adelaide Park Lands;*
- (g) the interests of the South Australian community in ensuring the preservation of the Adelaide Park Lands are to be recognised, and activities that may affect the Park Lands should be consistent with maintaining or enhancing the environmental, cultural, recreational and social heritage status of the Park Lands for the benefit of the State.*

3. General intentions of Colonel William Light in establishing the first Plan of Adelaide in 1837

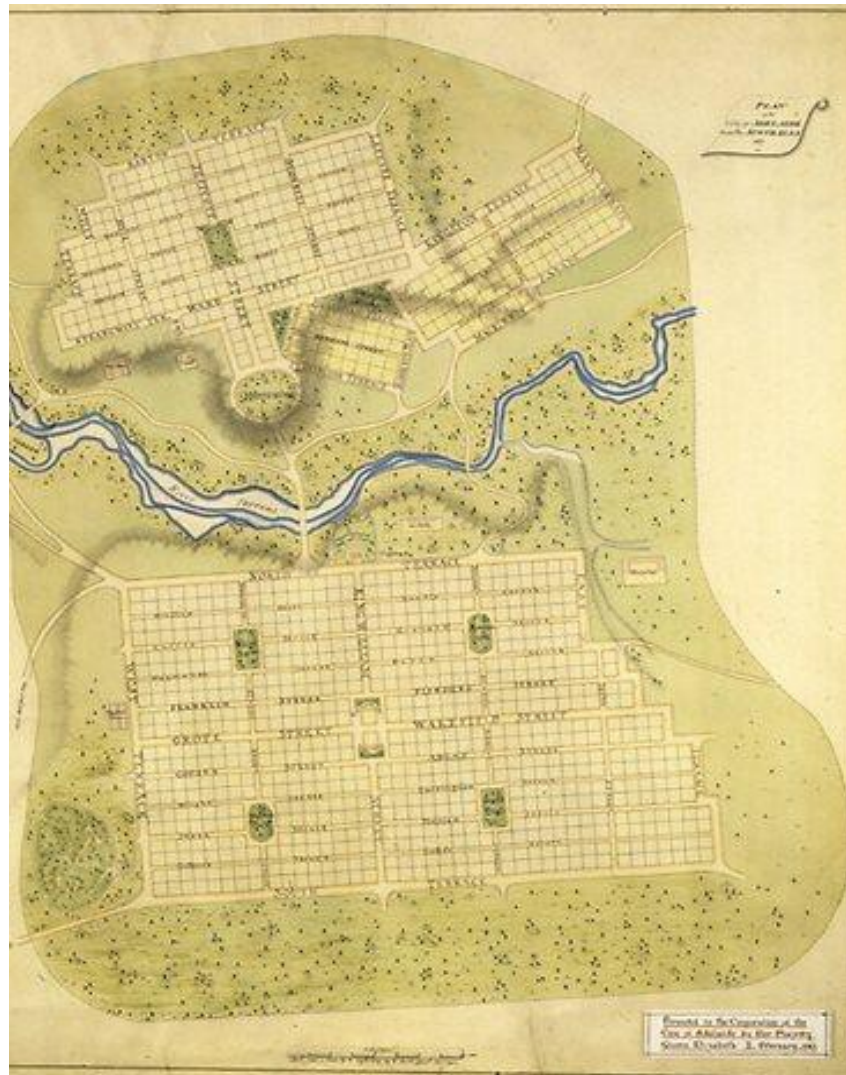


Figure 1: Light's plan 1837: ACC CC001383.

Light's plan is not capricious: it was carefully constructed to meet the long term vision of a permanent free settlement. In the context of the physically restrictive nature of British cities, Adelaide is bountifully open, representing a new era and opportunities unimaginable in the old country. When Light laid out his plan for the city, he had drawn a great park spreading to the north and south of the Torrens River, providing an *open and accessible public space*. Crucially, the public streets of both the city proper and North Adelaide front onto the Park Lands; the parkland was not cordoned off by private property. These were revolutionary ideas: keeping the river, its banks and adjoining areas as Park Lands, available for use by the general public and fully accessible to the public. It's an enormous benefit to the citizens of Adelaide, not generally available in the UK, where most rivers were and remain privately owned and where the public can't even freely row a boat down many streams let alone recreate along the banks. The relocation of the RAH represents a once in a generation opportunity to undo the hundred years of blunders.

4. Royal Adelaide Hospital and Environs

From the outset, the whole of the area shown in Fig 2 needs to be understood to be Park Lands, not as a potential building site for occupation by public or private vested interests.



Figure 2 Royal Adelaide Hospital and University alienation of Park Lands

It is incontrovertible that the current hospital buildings and associated alienation of Park Lands is a huge mistake from the past, and this generation now has the opportunity to rectify that. No deference should be given to the current built fabric: most of those buildings are a despoliation; they are a manifestation of decrepit functionalist architecture, arising from an accumulation of blunders and short term opportunism that we would be well rid of. It will be far more cost effective to demolish those decrepit buildings, rather than attempt the very financially risky process of renovating them.

Generally APPA is convinced there are considerable opportunities for the **extensive reduction in the overall 'footprint' of buildings on the Royal Adelaide Hospital site. APPA is committed to the substantial reinstatement of the RAH site to open Park Lands.** The future of the Royal Adelaide Hospital site is of prime concern to APPA.

APPA posits that most of the site should revert to Park Lands, with *open access such as for Botanic Park, or as reinstatement of Botanic Gardens*. APPA particularly wishes to see removed the buildings shown in Fig 2, including the IMVS, ADH, Medical School, and north car park. The only potential exceptions are the Margaret Graham, Women's Health Centre, Eleanor Harauld and the McEwin / Bice group. Each of these buildings is on the SA Heritage Register. However, ***the possible retention of those buildings must be for public purposes, not for private purposes.***

APPA is definitely and vehemently opposed to any proposal for residential or commercial privatisation. **The Government should reject outright the use of any retained buildings for apartments of any type, or similar private occupations.** Mixed-use development incorporating civic, residential, commercial and retail possibilities are out of the question.

APPA is particularly concerned to see the removal of the East Wing, Hone Wing, Services Wing, North Wing, Residential Wing and North car park. Those buildings demonstrate the absolute nadir of obtrusive architectural expression in Adelaide. The IMVS and Boiler House, and the Medical School are all are resolutely ugly intrusions. This is a unique opportunity to reinstate a very significant component of the Adelaide Park Lands, an opportunity that reaches back to Light's original plan. It is incontrovertible that the current hospital is a huge mistake from the past, and this generation now has the opportunity to rectify that.

5. Cost of demolition and clean-up

Who should cover the cost of demolition and clean-up? It is likely that the site is contaminated and there is a need to reinstate the area as Park Land. The usual practice is that the land owner is responsible for those costs, and APPA argues that the land belongs to the people of South Australia. One way to pay the cost of reinstatement as Park Lands that should be seriously considered would be to open a public subscription for bonds. This is a very common method of funding such projects in USA. Undoubtedly some people might object, but overwhelmingly people would support such a fund.