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## Future use of the old Royal Adelaide Hospital and Environs: **APPA Position Paper**

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### Summary

There is overwhelming public support for the return to Park Lands of the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site.

The relocation of the Royal Adelaide Hospital and associated facilities is an opportunity that comes but once in a generation, a unique and invaluable opportunity to reinstate a very significant component of the Adelaide Park Lands.

As the hospital and other institutions are moved out, reinstatement of open parklands becomes possible. The original hospital was built on Park Lands, a huge blunder, exacerbated as the medical and university buildings occupied further areas of the Park Lands. Unbelievably, even a substantial slab of the Adelaide Botanic Garden was commandeered for hospital expansion, where the east wing is now located. This generation now has the opportunity to rectify these culpable blunders.

The only potential exception is the retention of those few former hospital buildings which are included on the State Heritage Register: Margaret Graham building, Women's Health Centre, Eleanor Harrald and the McEwin / Bice group. It is noteworthy that all the other buildings have recently been rejected for listing. However, the possible retention of listed buildings must be for public purposes, not for private purposes.

One way to pay for the cost of reinstatement of the site, which the government has recognised as being highly contaminated, would be to open a public subscription for bonds. This is a very common method of funding and undoubtedly and overwhelmingly, people would support such a fund.

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

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

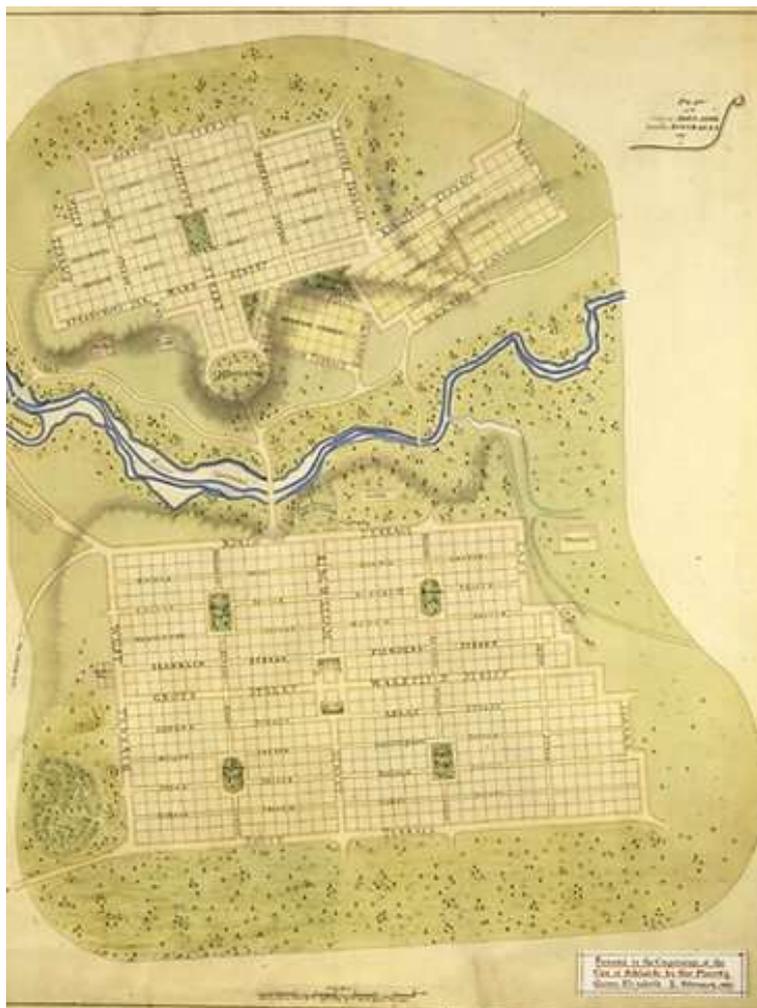


Figure 1: Light's plan, 1837: ACC CC001383.

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. There was a great public park spreading to the north and south of the River Torrens, providing an *open and accessible public space*. Keeping the river, its banks and adjoining areas as Park Lands, available for use by the general public and fully accessible to the public, was an enormous benefit to the citizens of Adelaide, not generally available in the UK. The governor of the day in 1839, Governor George Gawler moved to purchase the Park Lands, to forestall private landholders. The Park Lands are "held for the public benefit of the people of South Australia".<sup>1</sup> The relocation of the RAH represents a once in a generation opportunity to undo one hundred years of blunders.

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.**

<sup>1</sup> Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005 s4(1)(b)

## 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. It is certainly not the place for private apartments, nor a hotel or retirement village.

APPA posits that most of the site should revert to Park Lands, with *open access such as for Botanic Park*. APPA particularly wishes to see removed the buildings shown in Fig 3, including the IMVS, ADH, Medical School, and north car park. The only potential exceptions are the Margaret Graham, Women's Health Centre, Eleanor Harrald 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. It might be noted, land availability for those classes of building in Adelaide is way beyond demand. **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.

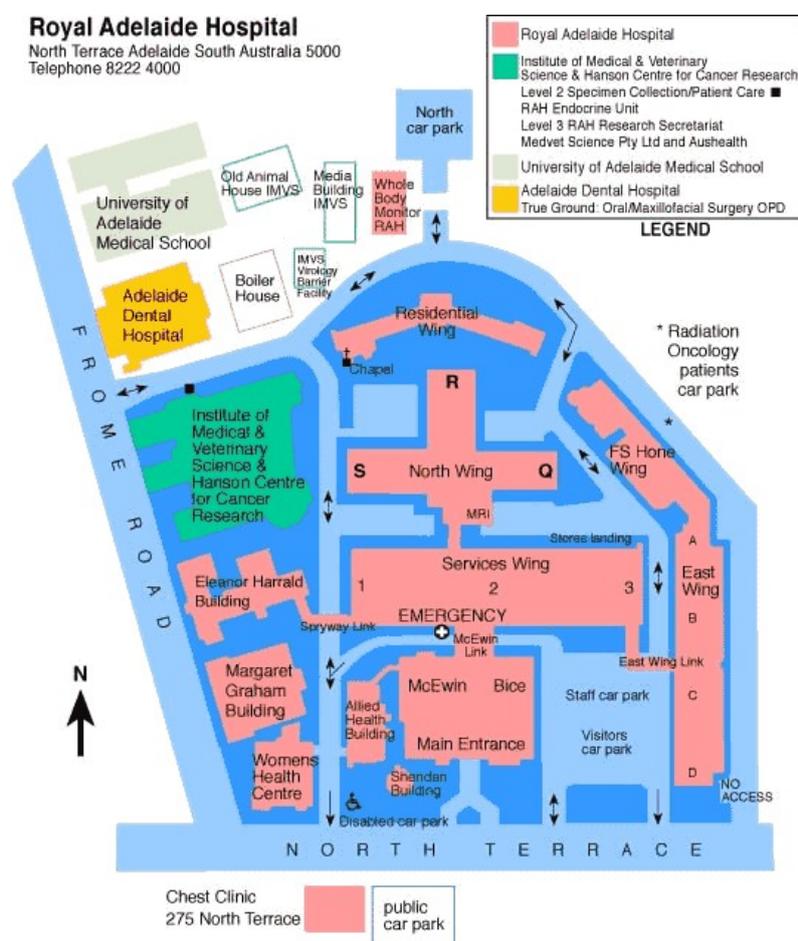


Figure 2 Royal Adelaide Hospital and University alienation of Park Lands

APPA is particularly concerned to see the removal of the East Wing, Hone Wing, Services Wing, North Wing, Residential Wing and North car park, the Dental and Medical schools. Those buildings demonstrate the absolute nadir of obtrusive architectural expression in Adelaide. The IMVS and Boiler House, and the Medical School are all resolutely ugly intrusions, recently rejected for listing on the State Heritage Register.

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. The East Wing (see Fig 2) is particularly egregious: it was built on land annexed from the Botanic Gardens. It will be far more cost effective to demolish those decrepit buildings, rather than attempt the very financially risky process of renovating them.

It may also be noted, the proposed privatisation of the land, either by long leasehold or freehold title, would require legislation to amend the *Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005*, and amendment of the relevant Development Plan. It is already clear there is strong public opposition to alienation of these Park Lands, and it is not clear yet that such legislation would be passed.

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. Without being prescriptive, one potential way to pay the cost of reinstatement as Park Lands, would be to open a public subscription for bonds. This is a common method of funding such projects in the USA. Recently major park reinstatements have been financed by issuing bonds in Salt Lake City (\$100M), San Francisco (\$195M), Portland (\$68M), and elsewhere. The bonds are repaid utilising property levies, similar to the NRM levies in SA.