

## Lord Mayor's Speech Adelaide Park Lands Forum

The Adelaide Park Lands: Threats, challenges and solutions

➤ I am very pleased to be here to open this public forum, and would like to congratulate:

- The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, University of South Australia
- The Centre for Settlement Studies, Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design, UniSA
- The Adelaide Park Lands Preservation Association

on their innovative and practical organisation of this weekend, including the symposium, the Park Land tours and this forum. I hope this has been a great success.

- Today's forum is titled the Adelaide Park Lands: Threats, challenges and solutions.
- Let's start with threats, and a current and important threat is water, or lack of water, in the Park Lands. South Australia is currently at Stage 2 water restrictions. We are likely to go to stage 3 restrictions, and possibly even further.
- Every South Australian grew up knowing that this was the driest state in the driest continent in the world. The Federal and State Governments are trying to come up with long term solutions to water issues in the country and the State.
- As a Council, we know we are going to be faced with tough decisions on watering, particularly because of our responsibilities for the Park Lands.
- The number one challenge and priority for the Council is to save our trees. All of them for preference, but especially the significant trees. The turf can die off or brown, but there must not be damage to the health of the trees because of the water restrictions.
- In the meantime, the State Government has introduced water restrictions and that is something the whole State has to deal with.
- At this point, let me acknowledge the assistance of the Minister for the City of Adelaide and the Capital City Committee who helped in our discussions on water restrictions with SA Water.

The objectives for the State Government and the Adelaide City Council are to provide for the appropriately reduced use of water while still:

- Maintaining the look and feel of the Capital City to support economic, environmental and cultural outcomes
  - Ensuring that the City is capable of safely hosting major events of economic, sporting and cultural significance
  - Ensuring the Squares and Park Lands maintain their recreational and health benefits for residents, workers, students and visitors in the City
  - Ensuring that the Park Lands continue to play a central role in reaching climate change targets set by the State Government
  - Ensuring the survival of Adelaide's trees
- The importance of the Park Lands at the economic, environmental and cultural centre of our State can't be overstated.
- In 2005 – 2006, there were almost 800 events held in the Park Lands, including 130 significant or major events.
  - More than 200 weddings take place each year in the Park Lands
  - There are 33 sporting licence holders and 8 lease holders, in the Park Lands, and many more sub-licence holders. They all encourage the physical activity the State Government has strongly supported through the Department of Health and its sport and recreation programs.

- The Park Lands receive approximately 27,000 visitations per day according to a study completed in April 2006. Using equivalent figures to those used in Sydney for the valuation of parks, this would result in health benefits to South Australia worth more than \$500 million per annum and more than \$600 million when other values are added.
- As our population density increases the Park Lands and its facilities will be a key element in Adelaide being a sustainable City. Some simple examples include Park Lands Week, which is identified in our Visitor Growth Plan, and Healthy Parks Healthy People, a national program, which will assist people to maintain their own health in an environmentally friendly manner in the Park Lands.
- It is important that we have flexibility for our watering if the Park Lands are to be used in the way that we would all like them to be used.
- For example, it is just physically impossible to water Parks the size of Elder and Bonython Parks if we could only water on two days of the week, the allowed limit for public parks.
- On the other hand, the Adelaide City Council has a wider responsibility to the State to show leadership and to not only take the restrictions seriously, but be seen to be taking them seriously publicly.
- SA Water have asked us to save on the volume of water we use, by about 11%, rather than impose on us the strict time and day restrictions on watering faced by domestic users and others.
- I believe we have reached a sensible and workable solution with SA Water that will help us to preserve most of the Park Lands during Stage 2 water restrictions.
- For example, we are observing Mondays for the Murray, the State Government's requirement for no sprinkler watering on Mondays. And we are reducing water use in some of the turf areas of the outer northern Park Lands.
- On the other hand, we are still watering as usual, other than on Mondays, in some of the major parks, to keep them up to fit for use standard, as well as ensuring they retain their health and visual appeal. And we have arranged the manual watering of many of our trees all over the City.
- However, you only have to look over the border to see that greater water restrictions are looming unless we get some serious rain.
- One of the long term solutions to the problem of water will be the use of recycled water, including grey and black water where appropriate. We are looking at how we can recycle the water used at the Adelaide Aquatic Centre as water for the Park Lands now.
- I hope we will hear more about recycling proposals, including proposals from the State Government, in the very near future.
- The Adelaide City Council is also setting a standard of greenness for the Park Lands. Given that this is Australia, and the Park Lands for many thousands of years were not artificially watered, how green do our Park Lands need to be?
- This is not just a question about water, but also about the look and feel of an Australian Park Land environment, which reflects this nation's varied history and cultures. We have asked that a proposal go out for public consultation so we can seek views on this question.
- I mentioned earlier that we need to ensure that the Park Lands continue to play a central role in reaching climate change targets set by the State Government
- There were almost 10,000 trees planted in the Park Lands last year, many of which were planted under climate change agreements or funding. In addition, there may be some excellent areas of the Park Lands that can demonstrate new environmental technologies and sustainable landscapes
- There are other challenges we face. Adelaide City Council will start to pay for its water from 1 December for the first time, after the passage of the Adelaide Park Lands Act.

- The Adelaide Park Land Authority will be up and running early next year. We are currently finalising the Charter for the Authority with the State Government.
- Work on the Frome Road area being returned to Park Lands is continuing. The site was a trade school before it was a car park, and the rehabilitation of the site may need to be more extensive than we initially thought. This is a sensitive area environmentally, next to the River Torrens and the Botanic Garden.
- We are working with state government departments and authorities at the moment to ensure we have the correct plan in place to rehabilitate the site.
- Work on the rehabilitation of the Park Lands to the West of Morphett Street Bridge also continues, but don't expect to be seeing signs of tremendous action there soon. This area was the site of railway yards and there will need to be a lot of soil testing and analysis before any rehabilitation of this site commences.
- And we continue to remove structures from the Park Lands, like sheds, unused sports changerooms and some of the dilapidated structures in Victoria Park / Bakkabakkandi, and all the other work that provides the care and control of the Park Lands.
- There are always threats and challenges to be faced. I am also convinced, after many years of being involved in the care of the Park Lands, that there are always solutions that will preserve the Park Lands while they continue to provide the economic, environmental and cultural soul of the City.