

Design competition to decide old RAH's future

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The current RAH: a design competition will decide the site's fate. Photo: Nat Rogers/InDaily

ADELAIDE | The State Government will run a design competition to decide the future of the current Royal Adelaide Hospital site, with the winner to be announced in December this year.

The competition returns dumped Integrated Design Commissioner Tim Horton – who **completed** some work on plans for the future of the site while Commissioner – to the Government tent as one of the competition judges.

The competition – which Government Architect Ben Hewett this morning called “world’s best practice” – will call for local and international design teams to submit plans for the new site. The hope, Hewett said, is for “blue sky thinking” from the design community – although the final proposals will need to be achievable.

The Government has issued a broad project brief: the design needs to include plenty of open space, and should consider civic and cultural opportunities.

The Government is concerned about the economic impact on the city’s East End of moving the hospital west, and entries will need to consider how to fill that economic void. A Riverbank Integration Masterplan to be released this Sunday will also be used as a guide for entrants.

The brief also calls for the site’s historic buildings to be retained and reused.

The call for entries will start next month. The best six entries will be shortlisted and then put on public exhibition, after which a panel of seven judges will select three winning designs.

There will also be a public vote for a people’s choice winner. The four designs will all be considered by the State Government who will can take elements of all of them in creating a final plan for the site.

The Government expects the development will be rolled out in stages. Planning Minister John Rau did not rule out a period of vacancy on the site before construction began and after the new Royal Adelaide Hospital opened in 2016.

Other than funding to run the competition, no money has been committed by the State Government to fund the final plan.

Premier Jay Weatherill told media it was too early in the process to know if the site would require Government investment or if it would be entirely funded by private developers, perhaps through a residential development.

Planning Minister John Rau said the government had not produced any costings on the total value of the site if it were sold to private developers.

Weatherill flagged the possibility of abandoning a previous Labor promise to return the site to parklands.

"This process is exploring all possibilities," Weatherill told ABC radio when asked whether that previous promise would be ditched.

He said the international call for entries would include a range of criteria, including civic and cultural opportunities, and connectivity to the rest of the city and the parklands.

While he said there could be an opportunity to extend the parklands, he also left open the possibility of not demolishing the existing buildings.

"We will have six shortlisted and then it will ultimately lead to a choice of first, second and third, and a people's choice," he said.

Private design work of the quality and detail required by the competition isn't cheap.

The Government expects design firms will be lured in by the promise of three prizes - \$200,000 for the winner, \$70,000 for second place and \$30,000 for third place. Rau also said there was some possibility that the winning firm might pick up Government contracts to implement their plan on the site.

"Situated in the cultural centre of the Greater Riverbank Precinct, the current RAH site presents enormous opportunities for recreation, entertainment and mixed use development," Rau said.

The competition will be conducted through the Office for Design and Architecture's [website](#).

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