

# Locals get a share of old RAH action

LIAM MANNIX | 3 OCTOBER 2013



YSALAZAM's old Royal Adelaide Hospital site design

ADELAIDE | A single-person Adelaide landscape gardening business is one of the big winners from the State Government's old Royal Adelaide Hospital design competition.

Despite the international independently-judged competition not shortlisting a single South Australian firm, each shortlisted practice is required to work with a South Australian firm to develop their submissions.

The six partner firms, to be announced today, are:

- Zuzana & Nicholas (Queensland) with Roarkus Moss
- Nice Architects (Slovakia) with Mulloway Studio
- YSALAZAM (Colombia) with Siteplan
- OCULUS (New South Wales) with Fender Katsalidis Architects + Dash
- SLASH (Victoria) with Phillips Pilkington Architects
- Bonhag & De Rosa (Germany) with Taylor Cullity Lethlean

While five of the firms are well-known and well-established brands, Siteplan stands out because it is in no way a major player.

Architecture sources told InDaily while the other names were unsurprising, Siteplan's selection was a big shock. One source said they hadn't even heard of the firm before.

The company's proprietor and single employee, Ben Ellickson, told InDaily this morning he'd been head-hunted by Colombian architects YSALAZAM after he submitted an unsuccessful idea to the competition.

"Obviously they saw what I did or liked my work," Ellickson said. "I'm a fairly well-known local designer, I've worked in Adelaide for 25 years as a landscaper and garden designer."

The Colombians' idea features a lush urban forest - not grass but thick tropical foliage - sprouting from the eastern side of the site and flowing into the adjoining parklands.

Ellickson said it was a "great idea" and one that was only possible with new eyes - "something that I couldn't come up with as a person who's lived in Adelaide and designed in Adelaide for 25 years."

"They allow a lot of open space behind the project ... they're calling it an urban forest. It's a fantastic idea, and I don't think many other firms came up with that idea. And it's something that Adelaide really lacks.

"That's what attracts me to it, because I'm an open space planner."

Ellickson is now tasked with taking the big vision and adding local understanding.

The new teams now have about a month to turn their original concept plans into detailed models. Each firm receives \$100,000 from the State Government to fund the detailed models, with some of that money going to the local firms on a per-work-done basis.

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Deputy Premier John Rau said the input of South Australian firms would be important.

“The local knowledge and context that these firms will bring to the process will be critical to developing the final submissions which are due to be released in mid-November,” Rau said.