

# Big Santa Update

**ITEM 4.1** 30/11/2021  
**Council**

Strategic Alignment - Dynamic City Culture

**Program Contact:**  
Christie Anthoney, Associate  
Director, City Culture 8203 7444

2021/01193  
Public

**Approving Officer:**  
Tom McCready, Acting Director  
City Shaping

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the recent expressions of interest received in regard to 'Big Santa' and to seek approval from Council to proceed with one of these options for the restoration and presentation of 'Big Santa' for the 2022 Christmas period.

Note that as of July 2021 responsibility for the 'Big Santa' structure transferred to Council as part of the revised Adelaide Central Market Authority Charter.

## RECOMMENDATION

### That Council

1. Notes the decision by the History Trust of South Australia to decline the offer to be gifted 'Big Santa' as per the resolution of Council on 11 May 2021.
2. Notes the offer by Andrew "Cosi" Costello, the expression of interest by The Rowdy Group, and the preliminary expression of interest by the City of West Torrens to acquire 'Big Santa'.
3. Approves Option 1 from Andrew "Cosi" Costello to enter into negotiations for the purposes of acquiring 'Big Santa' from the City of Adelaide for a peppercorn payment and in doing so agrees to transfer the asset and all costs associated to the entity, as per Attachment A to Item 4.1 on the Agenda for the Special meeting of the Council held on 30 November 2021.  
OR  
Approves Option 2 from The Rowdy Group to enter into further discussions and negotiations for the purposes of acquiring 'Big Santa' from the City of Adelaide for a peppercorn payment and in doing so agrees to transfer the asset and all costs associated to the entity, as per Attachment B to Item 4.1 on the Agenda for the Special meeting of the Council held on 30 November 2021.  
OR  
Approves Option 3 by the City of West Torrens to enter into further discussions and negotiations for the purposes of acquiring 'Big Santa' from the City of Adelaide for a peppercorn payment and in doing so agrees to transfer the asset and all costs associated to the entity, as per Attachment C to Item 4.1 on the Agenda for the Special meeting of the Council held on 30 November 2021.
4. Notes that it is proposed that the structure would be on display for Christmas 2022, due to the associated repair works required.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2020-2024 Strategic Plan	<b>Strategic Alignment – Dynamic City Culture</b> Connect City users to place through curated city experiences
Policy	Not as a result of this report
Consultation	Not as a result of this report
Resource	Not as a result of this report
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Not as a result of this report
Opportunities	Not as a result of this report
21/22 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Proposed 22/23 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	Not as a result of this report
21/22 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	Not as a result of this report
Other Funding Sources	Not as a result of this report

# DISCUSSION

## Background

1. After renovations to David Jones' Rundle Mall façade in 2014 the building owner determined it would no longer mount 'Big Santa' on the facade.
2. Adelaide Central Market's iconic Market Tower presented a suitable location to display one of Adelaide's favourite Christmas decorations.
3. The new CBD placement was the result of collaboration between the City of Adelaide (CoA), Adelaide Central Market Authority (ACMA), David Jones and the former Rundle Mall Management Authority (RMMA), who were all eager to find the best place to display the large-scale decoration for Christmas 2015.
4. 'Big Santa' was acquired for a peppercorn payment and subsequently mounted on Adelaide Central Market, Market Tower on Grote Street in the CBD.

## 'Big Santa' Specifications

5. The 'Big Santa' structure is substantial and requires significant engineering fixing points to secure to the Market Tower, the specifications of the structure are as follows:
  - 5.1. Dimensions: Height 16.4m, Width 5.0m, Depth 2.5m.
  - 5.2. Total Weight: 3 tonnes approximately.
  - 5.3. Structure: Made of fibreglass on a timber structural frame reinforced with a steel hollow section frame.

## Cost

6. After installation and de-installation for the 2018 Christmas period, it became evident that the 'Big Santa' structure required repair and restoration, cost breakdown includes:
  - 6.1. Cost for repair as per recent quote estimate \$38,255 plus GST.
  - 6.2. Installation costs for road closure, crane hire and rigging \$83,798 plus GST per annum.
  - 6.3. Storage costs (third party) \$10,000 per annum.
7. Due to the associated costs, the Adelaide Central Market Authority has not installed the structure as from Christmas 2018 due to its ongoing and associated costs.
8. Note that as of July 2021 responsibility for the 'Big Santa' structure transferred to Council as part of the revised Adelaide Central Market Authority Charter.

## Gifted to the History Trust of South Australia

9. At its meeting on 11 May 2021, Council resolved the following:
 

*'That Council:*

*Seeks to gift Big Santa to the History Trust of South Australia in acknowledgement of the substantial cultural significance of Big Santa to the people of South Australia, and the History Trust's role as the primary custodian of our cultural history.'*
10. The offer was considered by the Acquisition Committee of the SA History Trust, who visited the storage site to inspect the scale and condition of the structure.
11. On 11 August 2021, the City of Adelaide received correspondence from the History Trust declining the offer.

## New Opportunities

12. Following recent media interest, the City of Adelaide has received three expressions of interest from third parties wishing to acquire 'Big Santa' to ensure ongoing presentation of this iconic figure:
  - 12.1. Option 1 - Local benefactor Andrew "Cosi" Costello has written to the Lord Mayor on the 26 November 2021 offering to acquire 'Big Santa' for \$2.00, with the intent to restore the structure, and then display in the CBD during the 2022 Christmas period – see **Attachment A**.
  - 12.2. Option 2 - Notification has been received from The Rowdy Group who has expressed interest in sponsoring the structure, with the intent to restore and then display the structure in the CBD during the 2022 Christmas period – see **Attachment B**.

- 12.3. Option 3 - A letter to the Adelaide Central Market Authority from the Mayor of the City of West Torrens dated the 26 November 2021 expresses preliminary interest in exploring opportunities to acquire 'Big Santa' for ongoing annual display in the City of West Torrens – see **Attachment C**.

#### **Next Steps**

13. Option 1 or 2 would see the structure located within the CBD (a location as yet to be determined) from Christmas 2022.
14. Option 3 would see the structure located at the former West End Brewery site within the boundaries of the City of West Torrens.
15. Should Council approve one of the options presented, it is recommended that any acceptance of a proposal is contingent upon zero cost to the City of Adelaide and that an agreement is entered into which would protect the future presentation of the structure.

---

## **ATTACHMENTS**

**Attachment A** – Letter from Andrew Costello to the Lord Mayor – offer to acquire 'Big Santa'

**Attachment B** – Letter from The Rowdy Group to City of Adelaide – offer to acquire 'Big Santa'

**Attachment C** – Letter from City of West Torrens to ACMA Chair – offer to acquire 'Big Santa'

---

- END OF REPORT -



26<sup>th</sup> November 2021

The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Adelaide  
Sandy Verschoor  
City of Adelaide  
GPO Box 2252  
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Dear Lord Mayor,

My name is Andrew "Cosi" Costello and I am the owner / host of the TV show South Aussie with Cosi and co-host of the SAFM breakfast show, 6-9am weekdays.

It has come to my attention that future of the Big Santa, usually displayed in Rundle Mall is in jeopardy. Knowing the history, it has with our state and the importance that many South Australian people place on this icon at Christmas time, I am compelled to do something about it. It has been and always will be my lifelong passion to serve the South Australian people and keep traditions such as the Big Santa alive for as long as we can.

I wish to take this opportunity to formally offer The Adelaide City Council to buy the Big Santa Statue for \$2.00, with the intent to restore it to its former glory and display him in Adelaide during the Christmas period of 2022!

I understand that restorations have been quoted at approximately \$34,000 and accept these costs as a part of the sale.

I believe that using my position in the media and social media community of over 364,000 people that I can leverage assistance to overhaul the Big Santa. I have access to many SA businesses contacts as well as the passionate SA residents who are equally eager to for me to take on this responsibility. If required, South Aussie with Cosi also have the capability to host a fundraising event to cover any remaining costs.

TPG transport have offered to move and transport the Big Santa, plus I have been offered several large storage sheds to secure him and keep him safe from any harm whilst the restorations are undertaken. Once the reconditioning has been completed, we would aim to have him proudly on display for years to come for ALL South Australians to enjoy!

If you have any questions regarding the purchase of the Big Santa, please don't hesitate to contact me on 0408697669.

Kind regards

Andrew "Cosi" Costello  
Host / Owner  
South Aussie with Cosi Pty Ltd



Mr Tom McCready  
C/o City of Adelaide  
25 Pirie Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

29/11/21

Dear Tom

**RE: BIG SANTA**

Thank you for your time this afternoon.

This letter is to serve as my expression of interest on behalf of one of my clients who is the naming rights sponsor of The Christmas Pageant.

I personally negotiated and secured the rights with Events SA in 2018.

This in turn should explain the reason for my interest in the retention of "Big Santa" and my keenness to see him "take his place" in the CBD of Adelaide.

Of course, this does not come without obstacles and hindrances, which I hope we can overcome over time.

I believe there are ways to restore this giant icon and introduce efficiencies and logistical changes to ensure a long-term presence of Santa for the people of SA.

These details can be finalised over early 2022 but the installation onto the façade of a building with heritage restrictions will prove to be the tougher issue. The desired site and location I refer to is located South of Rundle Mall in the recently revamped Gawler Place.

Still very much in the heart of the city and relevant due to the Pageant collaboration I mentioned earlier.

Much further discussion is required and I should also add, that I am more than happy to join forces with any other interested party/parties that may share the same intentions as myself.

I look forward to receiving any further information or updates regarding this matter.

Kind regards

**Brenton J Bock**

The Rowdy Group

**Civic Centre**  
165 Sir Donald Bradman Drive  
Hilton, SA 5033  
**Tel:** 08 8416 6333  
**Email:** [csu@wtcc.sa.gov.au](mailto:csu@wtcc.sa.gov.au)  
**SMS:** 0429 205 943  
**Web:** [westtorrens.sa.gov.au](http://westtorrens.sa.gov.au)



26 November 2021

Mr Theo Maras AM  
Chair  
Adelaide Central Market Authority

via email: [admin@adelaidecentralmarket.com](mailto:admin@adelaidecentralmarket.com)

Dear Theo

I write in relation to recent media reports regarding 'Save Our Santa'.

As you may be aware, West Torrens Council has been working constructively with Lion (West End Brewery) for some time to secure the ownership of the Riverbank Christmas Display along the River Torrens at Thebarton from 2022. With this in mind my Council is keen to explore the viability in offering Santa a new home at Thebarton. I understand that the Adelaide Central Market Authority has ownership and control of this South Australian icon.

Preliminary contact has been made with the City of Adelaide officers by Council's Deputy CEO, regarding Santa and we have been directed to you to discuss this matter further.

If the City of Adelaide and Adelaide Central Market Authority do not wish to pursue relocating Santa within the City of Adelaide then my Council would be keen to express an interest in 'his' future. Our interest is preliminary and provided on the understanding that other options currently being considered by your Authority and the City of Adelaide do not materialise.

Accordingly, my Council would be pleased to offer a level of assistance, if required, to ensure this iconic South Australian treasure is retained for public display.

Please feel free to contact me directly on 0402 212 002 or email [mcoxon@wtcc.sa.gov.au](mailto:mcoxon@wtcc.sa.gov.au) to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

**Michael S Coxon**  
Mayor

Cc. City of Adelaide, Lord Mayor Sandy Verschoor  
[lordmayor@cityofadelaide.com.au](mailto:lordmayor@cityofadelaide.com.au)  
Chief Executive Officer, Claire Mockler  
[c.mockler@cityofadelaide.com.au](mailto:c.mockler@cityofadelaide.com.au)  
Tom McCready [t.mccready@adelaidecitycouncil.com.au](mailto:t.mccready@adelaidecitycouncil.com.au)