

Lord Mayor

# ADDRESS TO THE ADELAIDE CITY COUNCIL 25<sup>th</sup> JUNE

My Lord Mayor, Councillors and acting Chief Executive Officer

I appreciate the opportunity to address the Council having spent many hours in this Chamber in rather different previous roles.

The Adelaide Council was established in 1840, the second oldest Local Government in the Commonwealth outside of Britain itself. Only Toronto in Canada is older.

In November 1990 to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Local Government in Australia, the then Lord Mayor, Steve Condous, unveiled the plaque in the foyer to mark the eight years of restoration in four stages of the Town Hall, and the installation of a new pipe organ.

Of all the capital cities only Sydney and Brisbane have their own museums. The one in Perth is run privately by a not-for-profit organisation and the others are all part of their respective State Museums.

The City of Sydney Museum celebrates the events and people that have shaped the city, and it is built over the remains ~~over~~ the original Government House. There is a changing and diverse programme of events and exhibitions.

The City of Brisbane Museum is located within the City Hall. It explores historic and contemporary Brisbane through a programme of art and social history, workshops, exhibitions, talks and children's activities.

As the then Town Clerk I take some responsibility for recommending that the Council build the Topham Mall carpark in the early 1980s as part of a strategic approach to provide a ring of inner-city carparks to support the activities in the CBD. It included a basement to house the substantial and historic archives which were then located in 'dungeons' under the Town Hall. I recently had the opportunity to revisit the archives and appreciated the amount of historic material held in the Civic Collection, particularly associated with Colonel Light.

Some weeks ago, at this year's Colonel Light ceremony, the Lord Mayor suggested that consideration needed to be given to ways in which 2036 might be recognised as the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the city. I would respectfully propose that 4<sup>th</sup> November 2040 might be an appropriate alternative to recognise the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Adelaide Council and the start of Local Government in Australia. While that might seem a long way away, it is only four terms of an elected council and a long-term approach could be taken.

Like Sydney and Brisbane, a City Museum would provide a venue to showcase and recognise the events and people that have shaped the development of the city in Park Lands having regard to the unique design of Colonel Light's plan. It should also celebrate the story of the Kaurna people as the traditional custodians of the Adelaide Plains. As well as the technology of videos and 3-D images, photographs and material from the Civic Collection, particularly those associated with Colonel Light, could be displayed for public view and appreciation. There is only limited public access to such artefacts in the Colonel Light Room.

If the proposal for a City Museum is supported in principle, then the issue is one of an appropriate location. A possibility is Edmund Wright House in King William Street.

The Bank of South Australia was founded in 1837 by the South Australian Company to facilitate the transfer of capital from London to the new Colony and land was purchased in King William Street. However, it wasn't until 1874 that a competition was held for its design. The winning Italianate scheme was submitted by architects Edmund Wright and Lloyd Taylor. Edmund Wright was born in London and as a young man was articled to the Borough Surveyor in Bermondsey. He learned the professions of architecture, engineering and surveying and in 1849 he emigrated to South Australia where he established an architectural practice. By 1869, when he was elected Mayor of Adelaide, it was thriving.

The building was used as a bank through several mergers until 1970 when the then owners, the ANZ Bank, sold it to the Mainline Corporation for demolition and the erection of a new office building. There was a public outcry and over \$250,000 was raised through a public appeal. Although there was a valid approval for a new building on the site, the then Premier Don Dunstan, recognised "which way the wind was blowing" about

heritage and the State Government stepped in to buy the building and restore it to its former glory.

The building was renamed as Edmund Wright House and was then used by various State departments including the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages until 1995. From then until 2003 it was occupied by the History Trust of South Australia, and from that time until 2016 by the Migrant Resource Centre. It is on the State Heritage list.

The State Government sold the building in 2019 to a private developer but it has remained vacant since that time. It is currently available for lease.

Over the years the Council has taken a strategic approach to the ownership and development of assets in support of both the commercial and residential populations of the city. In my professional opinion a “City of Adelaide Museum” would reinforce the Council’s commitment to heritage conservation while providing a venue to promote tourism and economic activity in the city centre and the importance of Local Government.

I would request that:

- . This address be included in full in the Minutes of this meeting of the Council.
- . Council consider providing sufficient funds in the 2024/25 Budget to carry out a preliminary cost/benefit analysis of establishing a City of Adelaide Museum.

Thank you for your attention.

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(Former City Planner, Town Clerk/CEO, Commissioner of the City of Adelaide Planning Commission, Area Councillor. Deputy Lord Mayor)