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Title:

Address on the occasion of the presentation of the 1974 Civic Trust Awards

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Address by the Premier, Don Dunstan, on the occasion of the
presentation of the 1974 Civic Trust Awards.

9.12.74

Mr. Connell, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you very much for inviting me here this morning.

I am very pleased to be able to announce this year's Civic Trust Awards - not only because one of them goes to an agency of Government, but also because the environmental areas that centrally concern the Civic Trust are also areas that deeply concern the State Government, and further, in these somewhat straitened times, it's worth saying that good civic design costs no more than bad.

In fact, if I may amplify that point, I hold that good Government should not live by capital works alone. It should also partake strongly of brain works, which is to say, in our present context, new administrative approaches to the job at hand; new laws affecting administrative areas; new methods of encouraging proper urban aesthetic standards. Many of the most fundamentally important areas of Governmental initiative do not touch the Treasury and taxpayer at all. They are areas of ideas, taste, principle and understanding.

Accordingly, before I announce the awards, I would like to touch briefly on some areas of Governmental policy that in this context are relevant.

In South Australia, we have now been living with the Report on the Metropolitan Area of Adelaide for twelve years, since 1962, and with the Planning and Development Act, as amended, for some seven years, since 1967. Over those periods massive changes in our understanding of urban planning have taken place. Our libraries are crammed with new technical knowledge: transport engineering, the ecologies of urban systems, the sociology of urban and rural groupings, new methods and ideas of physical construction, new sub-divisional patterns, and so on. The newly amassed knowledge is immense. And, if we are still making fundamental planning and environmental mistakes, it is because our planning administration has not kept up with the field, or the structure it administers is too rigid, or a combination of both situations.

Now I think it should be said that while, in general in South Australia, city and regional planning has proceeded in the last four and a half years with shape and sense of purpose, we have still an immense distance to go and a myriad of fundamental urban planning and environmental problems as yet to solve. Our achievements, have been remarkable. I believe they will be more so if we are able to be more innovative, and flexible in our policies and administration.

And in relation to this, I would like today to touch specifically on the really outstanding achievements of the City of Adelaide Development Committee.

One of the fundamental mistakes of the 1962 Metropolitan Development Plan is that it saw the whole of South Adelaide as being given over to central business functions. In other words, the whole square mile was to be disposed as a retail and office area. Even in the 'fifties, prior to the report being commenced, projections could have shown that this would not be the case and that the present boundaries of the Central Business District were sufficient for some seventy-odd years.

Such zoning was patently unworkable. Unfortunately, the Planning and Development Act was based on the assumptions of the 1962 plan, and Adelaide city could not be brought under it until a Supplementary Development Plan was formulated. Accordingly, to deal with planning while such a supplementary study was made, and because the task was of absolute importance to the total metropolitan areas, the Government and Council joined in an unique co-operative action to save the city by establishing, under the chairmanship of, first, Lord Mayor Hayes and now, Lord Mayor Clampett, the City of Adelaide Development Committee.

Very few people criticize its achievements - in fact, mostly only those whose buildings have been criticized by it. The Committee was faced with a tremendous task. The central city area was blighted by vacant allotments used only as car parks by day. Streets were treeless asphalt vistas of neon and stobie pole. Owners of both commercial and residential properties were uncertain of their future.

Now it is true that the desolation of the broad-acre car park still exists in the city, and also do treeless asphalt vistas. But property owners and residents are no longer uncertain, and as a result, in the residential sectors of Adelaide city, especially, an unprecedented programme of residential restoration and renovation is taking place. In addition, in ways too numerous to mention, the Committee has over the total face of the city changed and enhanced the total visual and physical environment.

Now to achieve this, the City of Adelaide Development Committee set down only general rules and principles. In the granting of approvals for development, it endeavoured to be generous and flexible. In doing this it established very close contacts with both residents groups and the traditional bodies representing property owners. Its success was not the result of its exercising its mandatory powers, but rather of seeking to treat with owners and developers in an effort to give a shape and cohesion to city - not only in land use, but also in areas such as street-scaping and the like. (For instance, a hospital extension, taking place in a residential area, was designed to maintain the roof line and residential character of the existing hospital building.) Much of its influence has been, in fact, subtle.

The Committee is now in the last stages of its life. In mid-1975 we can expect it to be disbanded, to be replaced by a new review structure the precise nature of which is still being investigated. What can be said is that in 1975 the Adelaide City Council will again be the principal planning authority for all day-to-day matters, and its credibility in exercising its authority will be strengthened and supported.

But in this, with general policies, the Government and the Council will undoubtedly have a continuing joint role, for the central city area must develop both as a proper urban centre for the whole metropolitan area and as the seat of Government.

In developing in this way, the City of Adelaide Plan, commissioned by the Council from Urban Systems, provides an exciting basic philosophy for development. It sees the city continuing to develop as a pleasant, urbane place in which people live, work, move about and relax. It also incorporates notions that the regulations of planning should offer clear-cut guide lines to potential developers

but at the same time should incorporate safeguards against bureaucratic unwieldiness, inflexible rules, and poor access of the public to the planning authority. It also suggests a large number of specific projects to enhance the city's life style. Each of these should rightly concern a body like the Civic Trust.

(In fact, at this stage, I would like to join with both the Lord Mayor and the Town Clerk in urging city residents, workers and property holders, to attend the Adelaide Plan Centre in Pirie Street, and to participate in the planning process by making their own contribution while the plan is now under review.)

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The Awards are made to give proper recognition to those making a high level contribution to Architectural, Civic, Landscape or other areas of environmental design.

* I am, you will understand, therefore gratified at being able to announce the Award made in Class I, which is Buildings and Structures. I make this to Mr. R.L. Roberts, Chairman of the South Australian Housing Trust for the design of their Road Safety Instruction Centre. The Assessors Report reads: 'A difficult traffic engineering problem well planned with respect for the neighbours. The landscape has been thoughtfully designed and as the trees and shrubs mature the Centre will undoubtedly become a very pleasant place. Some of the assessors were critical of the buildings, particularly the caretakers cottage which could have been better located and screened.'

* In Class II, which is for Street Furniture, the Award has been made to Mr. B. Pinch, Signmaker, of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, who designed and constructed the winning signs. The Assessors Report reads: 'Simple, cheap, timber signs, clear without being over-conspicuous. A case where visual qualities have been given more than usual priority over utilitarian considerations of fire and vandalism. Thought worthy of an award for setting new standards for park signs.'

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In addition the Assessors wish to make especial note of a hoarding erected by Beaumont-Smith, Harrop and Co. Pty. Ltd.

The report reads as follows: 'It was agreed that special mention should be made of an entry comprising a hoarding surrounding a building site, hand painted by children. Although partly demolished when inspected and since completely removed, it is the sort of thing to be encouraged. The creation of interesting events out of such utilitarian and temporary structures as building hoardings could make a very real contribution to the City's townscape and enjoyment.'

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