

The Adelaide Parklands Symposium
A Balancing Act: Past-Present-Future

University of South Australia, Adelaide
10 November 2006

Editors: Christine Garnaut and Kerrie Round

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Copies available from
Dr Christine Garnaut
Louis Laybourne Smith School of Architecture and Design
University of South Australia
North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000
AUSTRALIA

Email: christine.garnaut@unisa.edu.au

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Cover image: Children playing in Rymill Park, c.1910s (History Trust of South Australia Glass Negative Collection GN3530)

Rear cover feature image: Plan of the City of Adelaide, n.d. (see Figure 3 Montgomery paper for further details)

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UNCOVERING HERITAGE MERIT AND SIGNIFICANCE: ASSESSING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE ADELAIDE PARK LANDS

David Jones

School of Architecture, Landscape Architecture & Urban Design
The University of Adelaide¹

This paper summarises the approach and methodology applied in the ‘Adelaide Park Lands & Squares Cultural Landscape Assessment Study’ (2006) that has been undertaken by the author for the City of Adelaide Council (ACC) as part of its Community Land Management planning process.¹

Assessing the heritage of the Adelaide Park Lands

In the theatre of heritage there is a necessity to quantify heritage merit, values and significance to enable us to better appreciate and curate our past, and extant evidence of this past. We desire to undertake this process to better comprehend the comparative merits of cultural heritage evidence at local, state, national and international levels. We are now quite familiar with the principles involved in conservation studies to assist this process, using *The Burra Charter* as a philosophical statement as to how to identify, assess and quantify cultural heritage.²

But, when we come to considering landscapes as distinct from buildings and structures, we are hampered by their intangible qualities, their dynamic nature and character, their variance of scale and complexity, and their spatial engagements with place and buildings thereon.

Accordingly, it is easier to quantify architecture and structure as it does not run away; does not die; possesses a spatial and or physical manifestation; has clearly identifiable design philosophical and human intervention principles that determine its existence; has a plethora of tangible primary evidence recording its role; and has a long tradition of being able to cross-compare exemplars. Landscapes in comparison are a different ‘animal’ and it is fair to say that several landscapes within the ACC have been ruined in the last twenty years simply due to a lack of understanding and documentation; witness the loss of an Edna Walling garden in North Adelaide in 2004, and a naïve translation of landscape merit for the Pioneer Women’s Memorial Garden that has compromised its philosophical design.³ Yet, at the same time, the ACC has recognised the visual heritage of Light’s Vision over the Adelaide Oval, and has successfully sought to conserve the aesthetic heritage of the experience of vistas from the Adelaide Oval.⁴

There is a long tradition of heritage in the City of Adelaide; both in quantifying heritage but also in seeking to engage in it within planning frameworks. This has evolved from a respect for our physical heritage, but also from the human events that transpired in these places that crafted the city, the state and the nation.

As part of this, Johnston and Elphinstone undertook a review of the heritage of the Adelaide Park Lands in 1983 that resulted in a conceptual translation of extant cultural heritage, but the study lacked primary research, historical evolution inquiry, and a comprehensive approach.⁵ In 1985–86 Donovan, Marsden, Stark and Sumerling undertook the ‘City of Adelaide Heritage Survey’ that focussed only on built heritage within the City as a whole of which only a few built-form items were examined in the Park Lands.⁶ This survey was recomposed by Marsden, Stark and Sumerling in 1990 as *The Heritage of the City of Adelaide: an illustrated guide*.⁷ During the late 1990s representatives of the Adelaide Parklands Preservation Society pushed for the notion of the Park Lands as a World Heritage place, resulting in a successful nomination to the Register of the National Estate,⁸ which has now been carried forth as a nomination for inclusion on the new National Heritage List administered by the Australian Heritage Council.⁹

As part of the Park Lands management strategy process by Hassell in 1998–99, Donovan & Associates were sub-contracted to undertake ‘The Cultural Significance of the Adelaide Park Lands: A Preliminary Assessment’ and Hemming with Harris were subcontracted to prepare ‘Tarndanyunga Kaurna Yerta: A Report on the Indigenous Cultural Significance of the Adelaide Parklands.’¹⁰ Both documents, and resulting statements, were preliminary in their nature and investigation, with the former lacking any primary research and analysis and the latter’s much deeper translation of Aboriginal and Kaurna meanings and associations resulting in a solid assessment. More recently, Draper *et al.* prepared the ‘Community Land Management Plans: Adelaide Parklands and Squares—Aboriginal Heritage’ to better quantify Aboriginal cultural heritage associations per park land block and Sumerling has prepared ‘A Social History of Adelaide’s Park Lands’ as a corollary to Morton’s *After Light: a history of the City of Adelaide and its Council, 1878–1928*.¹¹

What is cultural heritage?

Conservation is a process that entails stewardship and management to retain historic character and integrity but acknowledges that change, sympathetic development and adaptation may be desirable.

The Australia ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter)* defines conservation as: ‘the process of looking after a place to retain its cultural significance. It includes maintenance and may ... include preservation, restoration, reconstruction and adaptation.’¹²

The Assessment Study treated the Adelaide Park Lands and Squares as a cultural landscape. This is a concept recognised under the original Australian

Heritage Commission's criterion for listing on the Register of the National Estate, more recently redrafted with the criterion for the National Heritage List for Australia, and is a long-standing concept recognised by international ICOMOS in its consideration of applications for listing in their World Heritage Register. It is also a concept recognised by the state *Heritage Places Act 1993*.

A cultural landscape is a geographic area, whether urban or rural, that has been modified by human use and action. More specifically, in a non-urban setting, a cultural landscape is an area that includes cultural elements such as:

- building clusters,
- paddock boundaries,
- deliberate plantings,
- stockyards,
- circulation routes,
- and so on, and
- natural elements, and where there is a close interrelationship between the two.

Californian academic geographer Carl Sauer first devised the concept of a 'cultural landscape' in 1925. To Sauer, a 'cultural landscape ... is fashioned out of a natural landscape by a culture group.'¹³ Thus, a landscape is a representation of various factors that evolve through time resulting in the creating of various forms and manifestation on a tract of land. Accordingly, natural factors may include climate and vegetation as evidenced in topography, forests, agricultural estates, seashores, and watercourses. Culture is also deemed a factor in this landscape as it is brought to bear by a body of knowledge and ideas to create tangible human manifestations of human actions and beliefs. Thus, a cultural group is an agent of change and crafts cycles of cultural landscape development.

English cultural historian David Lowenthal has provided a more evocative definition: 'It is the landscape as a whole—that largely man-made tapestry, in which all our other activities are embedded ... which gives them their sense of place.'¹⁴

Undertaking community land management planning for the Adelaide Park Lands

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 1999*, the ACC is required to undertake and prepare Community Land Management Plans (CLMPs) for all its Community Land assets including the Adelaide Park Lands. While the Act sets out the minimum requirements for all community land and provides guidelines for the need and scope of CLMPs, the ACC determined that there was a need to go beyond these minimum requirements to ensure that high-quality plans were prepared for the Adelaide Park Lands to ensure a coherent, consistent, accountable and workable management system.¹⁵

This policy determination was made prior to state parliamentary debate on the *Adelaide Park Lands Bill 2000*.¹⁶ It also pointed to a desire by the ACC

to realise a high quality engagement with each park land block, to lay the management framework for any future management decisions for the Park Lands under the Bill, and to resolve deficiencies in information and scope that were not addressed as part of the consultancy for the 'Park Lands Management Strategy Report' by Hassell.¹⁷

Arising from the 'Park Lands Management Strategy Report', two aspects were clearly deficient.

- First, the strategy process had been undertaken in a broadscale manner and resulted in a coherent vision document that lacked rigour and substance as to microlevel management issues of assets in each park land block such as trees, watercourses, cultural heritage values, etc.
- Second, the strategy process inadequately assessed the cultural heritage of the Park Lands and undertook a cursory preliminary assessment only. Thus, the full spectrum of cultural heritage and landscape qualities were not analysed, assessed and coherently considered.

Both aspects became clearly evident to ACC's Park Lands Management Team during 2003 and a decision was made to seek technical advice as to how to redress these two major deficiencies and to integrate this new knowledge within the CLMPs planning process that the Team had to implement.

The Team was also conscious that, while the ACC had successfully advanced the argument to the Australian Heritage Commission that resulted in the listing of the Adelaide Park Lands plan, the drafting of the nomination had been based upon established knowledge and assumptions about the Park Lands.

This knowledge and assumptions correctly celebrated the role of Colonel Light in 'designing' the City of Adelaide plan, the contribution the plan had as a theoretical model in the town and regional planning discipline, and its corresponding influence upon town and regional planning internationally and within South Australia as a template for new settlements. But this knowledge did not quantify the actual physical manifestations or evidence of culture within the actual landscape, did not quantify patterns of and extant cultural heritage in the Park Lands before and after post-contact settlement, and did not consider the dynamic processes of heritage and heritage values implicit in the landscape. Thus, heritage merit was clearly evident for the symbol and contribution of the plan but the cultural fabric that had been laid on top of the plan prior to and after the 1836 settlement was not understood and quantified.

During late 2003 the Team approached the author for advice on how to proceed. At the same time the author had completed the 'Adelaide Oval Conservation Review', as author of the visual and landscape heritage assessments on behalf of Swanbury Penglase; undertaken as principal the 'Government House, Adelaide, Landscape Conservation Study'; and was about to commence as principal the 'Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study'.¹⁸ All three studies had major relevance to the Park Lands, and it was perceived by the Team that

significant synergies of thought, approach and information could result from an engagement to consider the Adelaide Park Lands.

Accordingly, the author was engaged by the ACC to undertake a cultural heritage assessment of each park land block.¹⁹ During the course of the consultancy, given the quality and resolution of information that came forth, the consultancy was extended to include all squares in the City of Adelaide including the North Terrace promenade. Further, it became very evident early that while the consultancy was framed for post-contact assessment, it was very important to review and consider all pre- and post-contact Aboriginal and Kurna associations within each park land block to adequately quantify indigenous cultural values and representations as well as European values and manifestations relevant to each block.²⁰

These assessments were undertaken progressively. Accordingly, instead of an overall large-scale park land review, a micro-level review per park land block was involved that required considerable depth of spatial and information inquiry that had not previously been undertaken for the Park Lands; it also required contextually considering information per block and in comparison to all blocks overall, and drawing out both small- and large-level translations of cultural heritage.

The assessments form an appendix to each CLMP and have provided an invaluable understanding of the historical evolution of each park land block as well as the significance of values and assets within each block.

Quantifying the cultural heritage of the Adelaide Park Lands

During early 2004 the author was contracted by the ACC to undertake a cultural landscape assessment of the Adelaide Park Lands. The scope included all park land blocks under the care of the Council, and was required to consider any features or influences of adjacent areas which may impact upon the block, blocks, the significance of an area or component, and to propose policies that might inform future development of a block or blocks in the Park Lands.

The methodological approach for this research was slightly different from the conventional conservation studies that had been undertaken in this State because these were directed towards tangible buildings and structures. Addressing cultural heritage in landscapes, living and dynamic places, required a slightly wider and alternate approach. Accordingly, the methodology drew from contemporary landscape conservation surveys at an Australian and international level, having regard to the expectations of ICOMOS as it relates to World Heritage listings, the expectations and guidelines for cultural heritage assessments as espoused by Australia ICOMOS through *The Burra Charter*, and also drew reference from contemporary landscape heritage practice in the United States and Canada.²¹

The assessment was required to consider each park individually and to

- quantify physical evidence and environment extant in each park;
- undertake a historical review of each park using primary and other documentation as relevant that might contribute to an understanding of the cultural significance of each park;
- prepare concise statements of significance of each park based upon the research, identification and assessment;
- identify places/items, renamed in the study as places and components, of potential heritage merit;
- identify places and components of cultural and aesthetic significance including buildings or other structures; plaques, statues and memorials; landscape elements including planting schemes, patterns and specimens; sites of aesthetic significance including important vista and their contributing factors; spatial patterns; trees with heritage significance; historic pathways, routes, boundaries, fencing, walling, park furniture; topographical features (natural and human-made), changes or disruptive elements that may impinge upon any heritage significance; and current and past land uses or patterns;
- prepare policies and recommendations based on the foregoing for the future management of these parks and their heritage assets for each park and the Park Lands overall.²²

Within each landscape are physiographic, ecological, and historical and cultural contexts of varying degrees and complexity. Every landscape exists within a physiographic context primarily determined by topography, water resources and predominant vegetation patterns.

Every landscape exists within an ecological context primarily determined by a range of natural features or patterns, including erosion, hydrology, soils, vegetation patterns and communities, and biotic communities. Every landscape also exists within a historical and cultural context that has been primarily shaped by knowledge, people as actors, demography, ideals and values, and social forces that include political, social, economic and anthropological events and trends. Each landscape can be defined by 'boundaries', but such boundaries depend upon the nature of the context one is examining the landscape within as they can vary immensely in scale, dimension, and spatial configuration.

To examine a cultural landscape one must approach it through the historical and cultural context rather than as a physiographic or ecological model or as a set of discrete buildings or building assemblages like a conventional conservation study.

Preceding identification of each component, a comprehensive *Historical Review* was undertaken to trace the human occupancy patterns, trends, processes, events and manifestations per park land block.

Ten component types were used to analyse the historical and cultural space overall and within the Adelaide Park Lands and Squares. The typology provided

an assessment framework and a cross-comparison tool to assist in the inventory and overall assessment of extant evidence of cultural occupancy and significance in the Park Lands and Squares, as follows:

Overall patterns of landscape spatial organisation were used to analyse large-scale or medium-scale relationships amongst the major components, including natural features and landforms. These patterns were discerned by field investigation and consideration of the larger physiographic characteristics of the landscape having regard to the Plan.

Land uses were considered to analyse major human forces and processes that had been imposed upon the landscape, particularly those that had a degree of cultural continuity in aim and character, like recreation. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review.

Response to natural features was considered to analyse major natural features and patterns in the landscape that had constrained, influenced and directed human responses, such as flooding. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review.

Circulation networks were considered to analyse the routes of human passage through the landscape, including regular routes by all means of transportation, such as foot, wheel and water. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review linked to consideration of previous conservation assessments.

Boundary demarcations were considered to analyse extant structures and 'furniture' that distinguish and define areas of control by humans, in particular fencing alignments and fencing types and forms, and including stobie pole alignments. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review linked to consideration of previous conservation assessments.

Vegetation was considered to analyse both pre-settlement and post-contact 'natural' and culturally planted examples of trees, plantings and plantations, which may also bear symbolic, horticultural, botanic and historic associations, as well as simply the execution of a 'design' or 'plan' by a human. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review linked to consideration of previous conservation assessments.

Structures were considered having regard to their siting, purpose and function, materials, construction technique, and role in the Park Lands and Squares, including grandstands, toilets, storage buildings, pavilions, etc. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review linked to consideration of previous built structure conservation assessments.

Small-scale elements were considered having regard to their siting, purpose and function, materials, construction technique, and role in the Park Lands and Squares, including outbuildings, tennis courts, memorials, statues, etc. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review linked to consideration of previous conservation assessments.

Historical views and aesthetic qualities were considered to ascertain the way in which past and contemporary inhabitants visually engage in the landscape, including places and views regularly identified and/or replicated in representation media, that signify, celebrate and survey views and vistas, including entry experiences, roadside views, Light's Vision, etc. These patterns were discerned by field investigation together with a synthesis of primary documentation as to the activities on that tract of land through the historical review linked to consideration of previous conservation assessments.

This task resulted in the following report design:

1.0 Introduction provided the preliminary information about the terms of reference of this Assessment Study together with the manner in which the Assessment Study was undertaken and informed.

2.0 Contextual development of the Adelaide Park Lands and Squares provided an appreciation of the key theories and events that informed decisions as to the development of the parklands and squares, including the relevant documents and personalities.

3.0 Historical development of the Adelaide Park Lands and Squares provided a detailed historical review of the development of each park land block and square.

4.0 Analysis, assessment of components and recommendations reviewed the extant cultural landscape evidence in each park land block and square, qualifying its cultural heritage merits and values, and drawing recommendations as to the curatorship of these places and components.

5.0 Assessment of cultural significance summarised the cultural significance of each place and component identified in 5.0, and considered the wider cultural heritage merit of the landscape.

6.0 Bibliography listed the primary and secondary documentation considered in formulating this Assessment Study in conjunction with the field work entertained.

Space does not permit an opportunity to review a park land block as a case study of this methodological approach in this paper, however an illustrated insight will be provided in the presentation.

Recommendations and conclusions

Arising from the Assessment Study, a suite of recommendations has been forthcoming per park land block and square. Some recommended aesthetic improvements and strategies, some recommended the preparation of landscape management plans and the need to urgently upgrade the vegetation cover in each park land block and square, some identified the quite worrying deterioration of the health of vegetation in each park land block and square, some identified historical issues and conservation actions that had not been raised before, and some recommended the inclusion of components and or spaces into local, state and national heritage registers.

In terms of local heritage recommendations, the reader should review the CLMPs and their appendices, together with the Assessment Study.

In terms of state heritage recommendations, the following components and or spaces, apart from the items already registered, were recommended for inclusion in the State Heritage Register under the *Heritage Places Act* 1993:

- **Adelaide Botanic Garden**, in Park 11, including Botanic Park (including various trees, structures, and spaces)—matching a recommendation contained in the ‘Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study’—as the *Adelaide Botanic Garden and Botanic Park State Heritage Area*, on the basis of Kurna/Aboriginal, aesthetic, historic, social and spiritual, and scientific values;
- **Piltawodli Precinct** (including the Colonial/Iron Store, ‘Aboriginal Sheds’, Signal Station site, school within and adjacent to the main Piltawodli site), in Park 1, as the *Piltawodli State Heritage Area* on the basis of Kurna/Aboriginal, aesthetic, historic, social and spiritual, and scientific values;
- **War Memorial Drive**, in Parks 1, 26, 12 and 10, from Park Terrace to Bundeys Road (including signage, road alignment, trees, etc.) as the *War Memorial State Heritage Area* on the basis of aesthetic, historic, and social and spiritual values;
- **King William Road Corridor and Gardens**, in Parks 26 and 12 (including Pennington Gardens West, Pennington Gardens East, Creswell Gardens, Angas Gardens, King William Road streetscape (from the junction of King William Road and Pennington Terrace to the junction of King William Road with North Terrace and including the Boer War Statue and associated pedestrian pathways and street trees), Oval Road, Adelaide Bridge, and Torrens Parade Ground (including the Pioneer Women’s Memorial Garden,

Pathway of Honour, and the larger visual corridor along King William Road to the Cathedral and the city edge, as the *King William Road Corridor and Gardens State Heritage Area*, on the basis of Kaurna/Aboriginal, aesthetic, historic, social and spiritual, and scientific values;

- *Light's Vision Vista*, in Park 26, comprising the Light's Vision podium together with the vista there from over the Adelaide Oval assemblage, as the *Light's Vision State Heritage Area*, on the basis of aesthetic, historic, and social and spiritual values;
- *Adelaide Oval Leasehold*, in Park 26 (including the space, buildings, trees, North Mound, etc.)—matching a recommendation contained in the *Adelaide Oval Conservation Review*—as the *Adelaide Oval State Heritage Place*, on the basis of Kaurna/Aboriginal, aesthetic, historic, social and spiritual, and scientific values;
- *North Adelaide Gardens*, in Parks 12, 29 and 30 (including Palmer Gardens, Brougham Gardens and Roberts Place Reserve), as the *North Adelaide Gardens State Heritage Area*, on the basis of aesthetic, historic, and social and spiritual values;
- *Bush Magic Play Park*, in Park 2, as a heritage item, on the basis of historic, and scientific values;
- *Adelaide Zoological Gardens*, in Park 11, as the *Adelaide Zoological Gardens State Heritage Area*, on the basis of aesthetic, historic, and social and spiritual values, and scientific values;
- *Park 27 Olive (Olea europaea) Groves*, in Park 27, as a heritage item, on the basis of aesthetic, historic, and social and spiritual values;
- *War Memorial Oak (Quercus robur)*, in Park 26, Creswell Gardens, as a heritage item, on the basis of historic, and social and spiritual values;
- *Arbor Day Plantation*, in Park 16, as a heritage item, on the basis of historic, and social and spiritual values, and scientific values;
- *Park 17 English Elm (Ulmus procera) Avenue*, in Park 17, as a heritage item, on the basis of historic, design and aesthetic values;
- *University of Adelaide Grandstand*, in Park 12, as a heritage item, on the basis of historic, design and aesthetic values.

There are several other sites, places, and components identified, but these are detailed in the report. These recommendations noted and proposed the continuation of existing registrations for places such as the Adelaide Gaol, various railway and river bridges, etc.

In terms of the National Heritage List, the following conclusion and recommendations were forthcoming:

- In terms of natural heritage values, there is no natural heritage extant in the Park Lands or Squares worthy of registration.
- In terms of cultural heritage values, it was concluded that the Adelaide Park Lands and Squares, as a place overall, should be recommended for inclusion on the National Heritage List, drawing upon the following criteria and rationale:

(a) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia's natural or cultural history;

Rationale: The place, as expressed in the Plan devised by Colonel William Light, served and continues to serve as the model for urban spatial division throughout South Australia and the Northern Territory, influencing international town planning theory and practice, determining the spatial character and form of the City of Adelaide and enabling the siting of various significant cultural institutions and community celebratory events within the place.

(d) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of:

(i) a class of Australia's natural or cultural places;

Rationale: the place serves as the primary model, expressive of a parkland settlement, for the spatial design of communities in South Australia possessing the expectation of what planning and design values should be included within urban environments that preceded and was appropriated by garden city and similar planning and design philosophies as an exemplar.

(e) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by a community or cultural group;

Rationale: the place is symbolic to the South Australian community as encapsulating the meaning and spirit of South Australia, within which are major aesthetic places and vistas symbolic of South Australia that collectively are viewed as a commonage offering equitable access to all to use and enjoy since its establishment.

(f) the place has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of the place's importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period;

Rationale: the place exhibits the mastery of an internationally recognised town-planning model devised by William Light, and within evidence of the visions of John Ednie Brown, William O'Brien, August Pelzer and George Francis who sought to create a landscape design and character appropriate for its standing as the paramount park for the City.

In addition, it was also concluded that the following places within the Adelaide Park Lands and Squares warrant further investigation and consideration as individual places within the Park Lands. These include:

- Adelaide Botanic Garden
- Adelaide Oval
- War Memorial venues including monuments, trees, roads, gardens, event venues and journey routes
- Arbor Day venue

- North Terrace Promenade and its adjacent cultural institutions
- The University of Adelaide

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Endnotes

- ¹ Any recommendations reported herein are the author's and do not represent the opinions of the Adelaide City Council.
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- ¹⁵ Martin Cook, pers.comm., 2003; Katherine Brooks, pers.comm., 2003.
- ¹⁶ *Adelaide Park Lands Bill* 2000; *Adelaide Park Lands Act* 2005.
- ¹⁷ Hassell Pty Ltd, 'Park Lands Management Strategy Report: Directions for Adelaide's Park Lands 2000–2037'; report prepared for Adelaide City Council, Adelaide, 1999.
- ¹⁸ D. Jones, 'Government House, Adelaide, Landscape Conservation Study', report prepared for the Government House Adelaide Grounds Committee, Adelaide, 2003. Swanbury Penglase; R. Aitken, D. Jones & C. Morris, 'Adelaide Botanic Garden Conservation Study', report prepared for the Board of the Adelaide Botanic Gardens, Adelaide, 2005.
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- ²² Letter of Engagement, p.5.