

OUR ADELAIDE.
BOLD.
ASPIRATIONAL.
INNOVATIVE.

Christmas in the City

Action Plan 2025–2028



CITY OF
ADELAIDE

Acknowledgement of Country

City of Adelaide tampendi, ngadlu Kurna yertangga banbabanbalyarnendi (inbarendi). Kurna meyunna yaitya mattanya Womma Tarndanyako. Parnako yailtya, parnuko tappa purruna, parnuko yerta ngadlu tampendi. Yellaka Kurna meyunna itto yailtya, tappa purruna, yerta kuma burro martendi, burro warriappendi, burro tangka martulyaiendi. Kumarta yaitya miyurna iyangka yalaka ngadlu tampinithi.

City of Adelaide acknowledges the traditional Country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plains and pays respect to Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today. And we also extend that respect to other Aboriginal Language Groups and other First Nations.

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Lord Mayor's Message

Sparkling city streets adorned with decorations, a towering tree in Victoria Square/Tarntanyangga festooned with LED lights and hearty tunes resonating along Rundle Mall. For Adelaideans, there's nothing quite like the holiday hoopla of Christmastime in the city.

These Yuletide traditions not only bring out the inner child in all of us but also attract almost 500,000 visitors to the CBD in the lead-up to Christmas Day.

The Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025–2028 gift wraps some of our perennial favourite seasonal pastimes, while also leaving a few surprises under the tree.

The revised plan isn't just a bit of re-gifting – it's an audacious new vision for the Christmas season informed by a lengthy period of community engagement where more than 300 people told us their vision for an Adelaide Christmas.

Atop the wish list is a new giant Christmas tree to be installed in 2026, replacing the 25m-tall much-loved (and well-used) model that's served the city well for more than a decade.

New lighting and decorative motifs from the city to North Adelaide are a centrepiece of the plan, including new designs for the cultural boulevard of North Terrace.

We'll also be encouraging local landmarks to get involved by lighting up their buildings and embracing the spirit of Christmas.

Free community events such as our annual tree lighting celebration and community markets ensure we have affordable experiences available to everybody.

We will continue to support our most beloved events that attract people from across South Australia including the National Pharmacies Christmas Pageant and the Carols by Candlelight in Elder Park.

This action plan isn't just about a strategy for the next three years, but a plan to keep the magic of Christmas alive in everyone, from the young to the young at heart.



Dr Jane Lomax-Smith AM
Lord Mayor

Introduction

Christmas in the City is one of Adelaide's most anticipated and treasured annual cultural celebrations. Christmas 2024 saw the highest spending on record for Rundle Mall and the average city-wide visitor count for the 12 days of Christmas (13–24 December) was 431,894 daily visitors to Adelaide. The Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025–2028 reflects Council and community pride in Adelaide's unique Christmas icons and traditions and seeks to maximise the benefits of leveraging our unique heritage for the following four years. We have a bold ambition to highlight the unique history, traditions and experiences of Christmas in Adelaide, telling our stories which set us apart from other cities. Built on community engagement conducted in September 2024, this Plan delivers on clear themes and directions identified, including keeping and celebrating Adelaide's Christmas traditions, more markets, more lights, community and shopping events.

A key feature of this Plan is a new Giant Christmas Tree. New street light motifs will be rolled out in the city and North Adelaide creating a high impact trail of lighting. Council remains committed to supporting South Australia's premier festive events such as the highly anticipated annual Christmas Pageant and continuing to work closely with the South Australian Tourism Commission.

Iconic destinations Rundle Mall, Adelaide Central Market and Victoria Square/Tarntanyangga remain a focus for investment and activity to continue to deliver record visitation to high-quality events and markets. We will continue to invest in daily activation and campaigns, immersive experiences and decorations. In addition, the Plan enables local precincts to enhance their visitor experience during the season and supports local community-led celebrations. The Plan contributes to our designation as a UNESCO City of Music and global creative city through supporting artists, makers, event producers and the community during the festive season.

The City of Adelaide will acknowledge, leverage, support and embrace the strength of our multicultural city and the depth of cultural celebration during the festive season. We will focus on building relationships with key cultural organisations such as the State Library of South Australia, to continue to promote Christmas destinations across the city. Each year there

will be a strong, cohesive and complementary marketing campaign across the City of Adelaide, Rundle Mall and the Adelaide Central Market sharing themes and highlighting daily things to see and do. The new Plan has five Focus Areas:

- Focus Area 1 – Bold, impactful and traditional Christmas
- Focus Area 2 – Major Draw-card events to promote attraction and ensure the city is the heart of Christmas in South Australia
- Focus Area 3 – Showcase Adelaide's unique Christmas heritage and cultural icons
- Focus Area 4 – A global Christmas through welcoming and supporting community-led celebrations
- Focus Area 5 – Thriving local precincts through festive business and sustainability initiatives.

This ambitious Plan builds year on year from Christmas 2025 up to and including Christmas 2028. We will not achieve everything in year one as the infrastructure projects need to be delivered across the four years. A new evaluation framework will ensure we track the community sentiment towards Christmas in the city, and address community feedback through a range of measures including annual surveying of city visitors. Funding will be sought annually to deliver on the Plan, through Council's annual Business Plan and Budget and integrated planning across the City of Adelaide and subsidiaries, for each year of the Plan.

The Christmas in the City Action Plan has a bold ambition to ensure that our community feel that the city of Adelaide is truly magical at Christmas time.



Roles of Council and the Subsidiaries

Council plays a number of roles in delivering Christmas, which reflect its responsibilities to local communities and leadership role as the Capital City Council for all South Australians, and as a globally recognised UNESCO Creative City.

Lead

As the Capital City Council of South Australia, the City of Adelaide has a responsibility to aim for a nationally recognised visitor destination during the Christmas season that has a positive reputation for driving attraction to city places, and for experiences that create social, cultural and economic benefit.

Safeguard

Protect our tangible and intangible cultural heritage through investing in and maintaining Adelaide's Christmas history including assets of significance, stories and traditions.

Engage

Empower our communities to lead and express diverse global and cultural traditions as part of the festive season supporting social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing and to enhance the vibrancy of the city offering.

Enable

Enable all people to contribute to and participate in Christmas in the City by funding and facilitating inclusive events, activities and decorations.

Facilitate

Facilitate investment in new high-quality sustainable assets, outstanding events and experiences, performances and music.

Partner

Partner with government, non-government organisations, the private sector and the community to leverage expertise, attract new resources and sustain the delivery of Christmas into the future.

Champion

Champion and showcase local businesses and precincts to ensure local economies benefit from the Christmas season.

Asset Manager

Utilise Council-owned assets to enhance Christmas in the City and renew assets to ensure they are of high quality and presentation.



Strategic Context

Strategic Links to South Australian Plans, Policies and Strategies

South Australian Arts and Culture Tourism Strategy 2025

To support the Arts and Cultural sector to create, promote and deliver authentic, sustainable and accessible visitor experiences that reflect and celebrate the State's cultural identity.

A Place to Create – A 10-year cultural policy for all South Australians

- Arts, culture and creativity for everyone
- Thriving artists and creatives
- Robust arts organisations, creative businesses and cultural institutions

South Australian Economic Statement

Smart, sustainable, inclusive

Principles

The Christmas in the City Action Plan will be developed in accordance with the principles of the City of Adelaide Strategic Plan 2024–2028, specifically:

Unique Experiences – Create interesting experiences for our residents, workers and visitors.

Community Connection – Strengthen connection, accessibility, diversity and inclusivity by putting people first.

Economic Growth – Adelaide's unique experiences and opportunities attract visitors to our city.

City of Adelaide Strategic Plan 2024–2028

Christmas in the city delivers on aspirations of the Strategic Plan through:

Our Community: Will be vibrant, connected and inclusive by supporting our communities to thrive; create fun, lively and interesting experiences and celebrate and honour community and cultures; and drive social change and strengthen communities through locally-led arts, cultural and recreational activities and elevate the city's reputation for exceptional and unique arts and cultural experiences by encouraging and providing arts, culture and events partnerships, grants and sponsorship opportunities.

Outcomes: An interesting and engaging place to live, learn and visit; and an inclusive, equitable and welcoming community where people feel a sense of belonging.

Our Economy: will be growing, innovative and responsive by continuing to grow our economy in alignment with the community and support existing businesses to be agile and responsive to change.

Outcome: Adelaide's unique experiences and opportunities attract visitors to our city.



Strategic Links to City of Adelaide Plans, Policies and Strategies

Adelaide Central Market Authority Strategic Plan 2023–2028	Deliver extraordinary customer experience Promote trader connection with event customers Work with street frontage traders and the City of Adelaide to extend offering onto the street We will make a valuable contribution to the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our precinct and community
Adelaide Economic Development Agency (AEDA) Strategic Plan FY2024/25 to 2028/29	Rundle Mall strengthens its reputation as the state's premier shopping precinct and evolving entertainment and dining destination to increase visitation and spending Adelaide's destination and liveability status are enhanced through activated laneways, arcades, precincts and neighbourhoods across the city
Cultural Policy 2025–2036 (*draft)	Amplifying our creative capital Culturally inclusive and socially connected Reconciliation and truth telling Preserving cultural heritage, embracing progress Creating space for cultural expression
Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2024–2028	Events and festivals for everyone to attend
Economic Development Strategy 2024–2028	We will promote our enviable position as a capital near our international airport and embrace our role as a gateway to South Australia Invest in well-planned neighbourhoods and key destination precincts We will enable the visitor experience by identifying new opportunities to use the Adelaide Town Hall for economic activities
Integrated Climate Strategy 2030	Procurement decisions that localise supply, prioritise reuse and drive green industries Climate change and sustainability are integrated into how we do business
UNESCO City of Music Designation (10th Anniversary in 2025)	Programming musicians in the public realm, showcasing musical talent, venues and history
Wellbeing Plan 2020–2025	Thriving communities

Action Plan Deliverables

Focus Area 1 – Bold, Impactful and Traditional Christmas Decorations

Objective: The city and North Adelaide are transformed during the festive season with high impact decorations on the entrances to the city and on main streets.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1.1 Deliver new light-based entry statements, light and projection experiences in key locations across the city and North Adelaide	Deliver new impactful decorative installations Seek new companies and providers that can provide new and unique key light-based decorations and experiences Seek potential partners including North Terrace cultural institutions Identify substantial and highly visible assets in the city and North Adelaide (including state and private assets) that can be lit and utilised as event and activity destinations	One new each fin/year	City Experience Assets and Infrastructure City Operations
1.2 Build on the 2024/2025 trial of new light motif trails in impactful streets, creating visitor experience around light decorations	Investigate capacity for light motifs on new streets Explore State Government and other partnerships for the North Terrace Cultural Boulevard and other key locations	Annual target of one to three new street locations	City Experience City Operations
1.3 Rundle Mall is a destination for immersive Christmas activations and experiences	Rundle Mall Christmas Strategy will include creative/design elements to drive visitation and create vibrant experiences in the key shopping destination Works in a complementary way with city-wide decorations and activity for the benefit of the entire city	New creative in place for Christmas 2025	AEDA/Rundle Mall
1.4 Giant Tree in Victoria Square/Tarntanyangga	Deliver a new Giant Christmas Tree in Victoria Square/Tarntanyangga	New Tree by Christmas 2026	Assets and Infrastructure with support from City Experience

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
1.5 A new shared, impactful, fun and exciting city-wide and integrated Christmas creative suite	Rundle Mall leads the development of the city-wide creative suite that recognises the distinct brand identities and strategic goals of the city and Rundle Mall, and that remains cohesive and complementary Adelaide Central Market continues its own brand with connection to the city-wide suite Update the flags and banner suite for city-wide refresh commencing 2025/26	New creative will be in place commencing 2025/2026	Rundle Mall City Experience
1.6 Continue to deliver the renewal program when decorations reach end of asset life	Monitor and assess annually the condition of decorations	Inventory conducted in January each year	City Experience with support from Assets and Infrastructure
1.7 Create city-wide destinations	Store, manage and deliver the suite of city-wide decorations to create magical destinations in precincts and main streets Engage with stakeholders to assess best placement to maximise visitor experience and impact	Decorations suite in place in November and December annually	City Experience with support from City Operations
1.8 Encourage major iconic city places and locations to utilise lighting and digital signage opportunities to 'light up the city' in November and December annually	Identify and encourage participation at iconic and highly visible sites such as the Riverbank Footbridge, Universities (digital displays), major buildings with light or digital signage at height ie RAA, North Terrace cultural boulevard and Adelaide Zoo	Ongoing	City Experience

Focus Area 2 – Major draw-card events to promote attraction and ensure the city is the heart of Christmas in South Australia

Objective: Visitors choose the city to celebrate South Australian traditional Christmas events

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
2.1 Support, promote and deliver Christmas Markets in the city	Rundle Mall is a host for markets Fund and facilitate markets city-wide including North Adelaide Meander Market 'Christmas Edition' Curate the Christmas calendar to ensure markets are spread geographically and temporally Ensure offering is high quality, local traders benefit and that free and low-cost experiences are included	November and December annually	City Experience
2.2 Deliver the Annual Tree Lighting Free Community Event	Create an annual free family-friendly event with high-quality performances to celebrate the Giant Christmas Tree and commence nightly 'light up' and experiences at the Tree	Annually, early to mid-November following the Christmas Pageant	City Experience
2.3 Support major Christmas events of State and National significance	Continue to provide funding opportunities for major Christmas events in the city Facilitate Park Lands use and road closures to support these events including Carols by Candlelight	November and December annually	AEDA and City Experience
2.4 Cohesive Christmas Attraction Marketing and Promotional Campaigns for the City of Adelaide broadly, Adelaide Central Market and Rundle Mall	A user-friendly web and digital experience is developed to ensure all members of our community can readily access information on our Christmas offerings A cohesive content plan developed between the City of Adelaide and AEDA with a focus on producing content that reflects the authentic stories of our community during the festive season Visitors and residents know what is on, where and when, and this information is easily accessible	Campaign to open in October annually until December	City of Adelaide Marketing and AEDA/Rundle Mall Marketing
2.5 Partner with key media and Adelaide personalities to showcase Christmas in the city	Develop the offer for key personalities and brands to be involved to widely promote Christmas in the city	By October each year	City Experience Customer and Marketing

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
2.6 Work with existing and new festive events to draw new activities to the city and North Adelaide	Identify potential events, markets and Christmas attractions that could operate in the city, and direct them to potential funding sources, event sites and partnership opportunities	Ongoing	City Experience AEDA



Focus Area 3 – Showcase Adelaide’s unique Christmas heritage and cultural icons

Objective: The City of Adelaide has a proud heritage of unique Christmas icons, traditions and heritage locations that can be showcased and celebrated.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
3.1 Celebrate and promote the iconic Adelaide Central Market	Support new internal decorations suite for existing Market and Market Expansion	Ongoing	Adelaide Central Market Authority
3.2 Showcase the iconic Adelaide Town Hall and support Christmas events and experiences	Christmas and Festive Concerts will include a range of festive experiences in the annual calendar of events Decorations internally and externally on the Adelaide Town Hall as part of the city-wide decorations, including façade and potential lighting and projection displays Exhibitions that showcase Christmas and festive heritage archival and unique works.	Annual	Creative City
3.3 Facilitate, showcase and support the Christmas Pageant as an iconic and unique tradition in Australia	Facilitate the Christmas Pageant including planning, street closures, and city presentation Support storytelling through exhibitions, digital engagement and content creation in partnership with the South Australian Tourism Commission	Annual, early November	City Experience City Operations AEDA Customer and Marketing
3.4 Display Giant Santa on Federal Hall at the Central Market	Continue to display Giant Santa in line with Agreement for 2025 and 2026 and explore an extension with the owner to display Giant Santa up to and including Christmas 2028	November 2025 and annually	City Experience
3.5 Highlight and showcase Rundle Mall as Adelaide’s premier retail precinct during Christmas time, the traditional home of Christmas	Celebrate Rundle Mall as an iconic Christmas destination Showcase the icons of Rundle Mall through activations and partnerships Support businesses to enhance profitability through the Christmas period Tell heritage stories	Ongoing	AEDA Marketing and Tourism Rundle Mall Marketing
3.6 Partner with State Library and North Terrace Christmas activities and decorations	Promote Christmas at the Mortlock Library Identify opportunities to expand work with North Terrace partners to showcase the cultural boulevard	From October 2025 annually	City Experience Customer and Marketing



Focus Area 4 – A global Christmas through welcoming and supporting community-led celebrations

Objective: Christmas in Adelaide is welcoming, diverse, and localised, embracing and showcasing the global and multicultural nature of Christmas celebrations and traditions

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
4.1 The City of Adelaide to explore formal philanthropic partnerships to encourage community to support charitable causes	ACMA Community Giving Partnerships Explore City of Adelaide Giving Partnerships or Charity Christmas Partners	Annually from October – December	Adelaide Central Market Authority City Experience AEDA City Lifestyle
4.2 Support community choirs and organisations to deliver celebratory events and performances	Encourage and support Christmas community events Connect with places of worship, choirs and community groups	Ongoing	City Experience Creative City
4.3 Engage community in places across the city to encourage connection	Community connections and services during the Christmas season will celebrate and engage communities in unique and relevant ways which may include Libraries Out and About and a Neighbour Day 'Christmas Edition' Provide opportunities for welcoming and inclusive opportunities for local residents and vulnerable people to engage with one another during the festive season	Annually November and December	Creative City
4.4 Support artists, musicians and makers to engage in performance, programming and events	Smaller scale events and activations across the city and North Adelaide during November and December	Annually November and December	City Experience
4.5 Expand the Music at the Christmas Tree Event	Continue to build on the visitation to the Giant Tree in the lead up to Christmas through free high-quality music and performance, with focus on the 12 days to Christmas	Annually in December	City Experience



Focus Area 5 – Thriving local precincts through festive business and sustainability initiatives

Objective: The City of Adelaide supports local business to benefit from the festive season, local places will be bustling as destinations for celebration and businesses will be encouraged to promote sustainable consumption.

Action	Deliverables	Timeline	Responsibility
5.1 Mainstreets and Precincts are enlivened with high quality decorations that generate impact and foot traffic	Activities and experiences are designed to draw people to unique areas Activate laneways and destinations Explore potential for funding schemes to enable increased deliverables and benefits including window displays	Annually in November and December	City Operations City Experience
5.2 Support local economies through activating precincts	Promotion of precinct experiences with a festive focus such as choirs in squares and streets and include hospitality and retail information Promote shopping and business experiences through the Christmas marketing campaign	Annually in November and December	AEDA Marketing and Tourism City Experience
5.3 Promote sustainable use of resources and waste recovery	Encourage the purchase of hard-wearing, reusable and quality products with longevity Actively discourage the purchase of single-use items for city-wide décor Procure low-energy and sustainable materials where possible	Ongoing	City Operations City Experience with support from Circular Economy and Procurement



Measures

The delivery of this Action Plan will contribute to the following the City of Adelaide Strategic Plan 2024–2028 Measures

Our Community	How Christmas in the City contributes
Develop a Cultural Policy by 2024 that promotes and supports the city's unique cultural identity and opportunities	Contribute to the data collection for Cultural Policy
Develop a target for increasing participation in arts, events and cultural experiences facilitated or supported by the City of Adelaide	Key stakeholder in tracking and measuring a major cultural experience annually
Amplify Adelaide's status as a UNESCO City of Music	Directly supports musicians and music performance opportunities

Our Economy	How Christmas in the City contributes
Support the delivery of key actions of ACMA Deliver marketing and promotion strategies to share Adelaide's unique attributes and emerging opportunities	Adelaide Central Market is a priority area for Christmas activity across the Plan
Increase the number of people who visit the city from 2.1 million to 2.5 million by 2028 through local, interstate and international visitation	Christmas in the city drives up visitation with a focus on Rundle Mall, Central Market and Victoria Square/ Tarntanyangga as Christmas hubs to assist in reaching this target
Increase in foot traffic in key and emerging precincts annually in line with the Council's Economic Development Strategy	Christmas Incentive Scheme will enable support for precincts with a focus on North Adelaide to engage in Christmas décor and activity
Increase spending across the city	Christmas is annually a peak time for expenditure, particularly Black Friday
Deliver marketing and promotion strategies to share Adelaide's unique attributes and emerging opportunities	Christmas campaigns across AEDA and the City of Adelaide platforms will share the uniquely Adelaide Christmas experience to local and national audiences

Christmas in the City Action Plan 2025–2028

Measures of Success

- Rundle Mall experiences economic growth and visitation
- Adelaide Central Market is recognised as an iconic Christmas shopping destination
- UPark use increases during November and December

Measure	Base Year/Activity	Method of Data Collection
Visitor Net Promoter Score (NPS)/Participant Satisfaction in activity	2025 (new measure)	Annual Surveys (TBD)
Participant Satisfaction of Events and Markets	2022 (for ongoing events)	Annual Surveys (TBD)
Public Sentiment broad 'Christmas in the City'	2025 (new measure)	Annual Surveys (TBD)
Visitor Spend and Attendance – Rundle Mall	2025	Spendmapp, Kepler and/or Pathzz and Commbank IQ
Visitor Spend and Attendance – Adelaide Central Market	2025	Spendmapp, Kepler and/or Pathzz
City-wide Visitor Spend and Attendance	2025	Spendmapp, Kepler and/or Pathzz
UPark Usage	2025	UPark Data
Visitation to city for Events/Satisfaction	2026	CUP Survey
Promotional engagement	2025	Social media reach





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