

Ref: 25BDHS/1141



Dr Jane Lomax-Smith AM
The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Adelaide
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Dear Lord Mayor

I am writing to seek an extension of the Park Lands Licence Agreement for the use of Edwards Park for the purpose of the Safer Place to Gather (SPTG) for visitors from remote communities until 30 June 2026.

The SPTG is an initiative of the Safety and Wellbeing Taskforce (the Taskforce) and provides remote Aboriginal visitors who are rough sleeping and impacted by alcohol misuse and chronic health conditions a safe setting to seek shelter, socialise, and access culturally appropriate support services. The Edwards Park SPTG site commenced in August 2023 and the current licence with the City of Adelaide (CoA) ends on 31 August 2025.

Since the SPTG commenced, it has been well utilised. As of 31 May 2025, the cumulative number of individuals recorded at the location exceeds 21,005 (a person may be recorded more than once). This demonstrates the significant support and services provided by multiple providers each day to remote visitors congregating at Edwards Park. There have been 1,501 interactions with groups at Edwards Park by service providers.

The SPTG continues to effectively reduce rough sleeping in public parks, streets, and key business precincts across the Adelaide CBD. This has contributed to a reduction in public complaints and concerns, particularly from key stakeholders and businesses in high-traffic areas. Additionally, antisocial behaviour has decreased, due to the presence of DHS staff, which includes Aboriginal Cultural Advisors, who are able to de-escalate conflict and refer individuals to appropriate services in a timely manner. As a result, there has been an improvement in the perceptions of safety and cleanliness in surrounding areas, benefiting the broader community.

Stakeholders have all noted the value of a single, central, accessible, and safe location for outreach staff to identify and support remote visitors. It has been instrumental in maintaining consistent engagement with at-risk and vulnerable individuals.

Since its establishment, service delivery to Edwards Park has evolved to include harm minimisation supported by cultural, clinical, outreach and security staffing daily.

Considerably enhanced clinical services are now available to remote visitors including culturally appropriate testing for tuberculosis (TB) and other illnesses and a weekly mobile clinic providing diagnostic and primary health services alongside alcohol and other drugs assessment and support.

On occasion, individuals are discharged from the Royal Adelaide Hospital to the SPTG with the knowledge that there is a degree of monitoring which occurs by either outreach or security staff. SAPOL and CoA staff continue to divert people from other parts of the CBD to Edwards Park. The service model will continue to evolve through the life of the initiative and will soon include an additional night transport option for people and families.

Since the last extension, the Taskforce has substantially progressed work to develop alternative options for services to support visitors from remote Aboriginal communities; however, this work is ongoing. This has included convening a cross-border consultation with key Aboriginal and agency stakeholders, including those responsible for management of temporary accommodation facilities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and senior officials from CoA.

It is critical that Aboriginal stakeholders, including land holding, cultural authorities and those with lived and living experience, inform service models for these longer-term temporary services including accommodation. We are finalising terms of reference for the development of an options business case and will engage with senior CoA officials to finalise and progress this important work.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) seeks to progress the necessary authorisations to extend the City of Adelaide Park Lands Licence for the continuation of the SPTG at Edwards Park until 30 June 2026.

Please liaise with Ms Alex Reid, Executive Director, Community and Aboriginal Partnerships in DHS if you require any further information to consider this request. Ms Reid can be contacted on 0401 125 191 or via email at alex.reid@sa.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Sandy Pitcher
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

04 / 07 / 2025