

Her Majesty's Theatre Commemorative Artwork Formal Proposal

Tuesday, 9 December 2025
Council

Strategic Alignment - Our Community

Program Contact:
Jennifer Kalionis, Associate
Director City Culture

Public

Approving Officer:
Jo Podoliak, Director City
Community

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the final proposal for the commemorative artwork honouring Mr Barry Humphries AO CBE (Mr Humphries) located near Her Majesty's Theatre on Grote Street as requested by Council at its meeting on 26 November 2024. The proposal (**Attachment A**) presents the artwork concept, materials, site integration, technical considerations, budget and delivery framework for Council endorsement.

The City of Adelaide (CoA)'s role is project lead, to progress and manage the commission to ensure compliance with requirements for installation of the bronze sculpture of Mr Humphries by Robert Hannaford AM. Since December 2023 the CoA has collaborated with the Adelaide Festival Centre on the development of the formal proposal. The CoA is also leading further consultation with the Estate and family of Mr Humphries for endorsement of this proposal and has assumed responsibility for artist engagement and installation, with the Adelaide Festival Centre transitioning into a key stakeholder role.

The total cost of the project is \$313,083. The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and nominees has completed its fundraising, totalling \$107,000 and the State Government has recently contributed \$100,000 in funding to support the project. This report seeks Council's approval for a budget allocation of up to \$106,083 necessary to deliver the project and for the work be incorporated within the 2025/26 Infrastructure Delivery and Capital Works program.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT COUNCIL

1. Approves the proposal for the Her Majesty's Theatre Commemorative Artwork honouring Mr Barry Humphries AO CBE provided in Attachment A to Item 18.1 on the Agenda for the meeting of Council held on 9 December 2025.
2. Approves an allocation of up to \$106,083 from the 2025/26 Public Art Capital Works budget to support detailed design, approvals, fabrication, installation and associated project delivery costs.
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to progress all necessary documentation, agreements and procurement processes required for the delivery and installation of the commemorative artwork, in partnership with the Adelaide Festival Centre and project stakeholders.

IMPLICATIONS AND FINANCIALS

City of Adelaide 2024-2028 Strategic Plan	<p>Strategic Alignment – Our Community</p> <p>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.</p>
Policy	The proposal aligns with the Cultural Policy by celebrating Adelaide's creative identity, honouring significant cultural figures, cultural heritage and enhancing public spaces. The project also delivers a high-quality, site-specific artwork that activates the public realm, supports local artists, and contributes to Adelaide's cultural vibrancy.
Consultation	Consultation includes the Estate and family of Mr Humphries, the Adelaide Festival Centre and Trust, and key project partners.
Resource	The City has engaged a Public Art and Design specialist firm, Exhibition Studios, to develop a proposal, in collaboration with the Adelaide Festival Centre (AFC) and the artist. This specialist team continues to work alongside Administration to oversee the project delivery.
Risk / Legal / Legislative	Given the high-profile nature of the subject and the involvement of a prominent project partner, this initiative has generated significant media and community interest.
Opportunities	New artwork in the city's public realm by Robert Hannaford AM (expanding representation of his sculptural practice in Adelaide) and commemorating cultural heritage at a significant cultural venue.
25/26 Budget Allocation	\$106,083 Public Art Capital in the Infrastructure Delivery Program (2025/26) allocation proposed. The total project cost is up \$313,083 and is made up of contributions from the City of Adelaide, Adelaide Festival Centre Trust, and the State Government of SA.
Proposed 26/27 Budget Allocation	Not as a result of this report
Life of Project, Service, Initiative or (Expectancy of) Asset	A major commemorative artwork donated to the CoA with an anticipated minimum lifespan of 25 years.
25/26 Budget Reconsideration (if applicable)	Not as a result of this report
Ongoing Costs (eg maintenance cost)	The artwork will be registered as part of the CoA public art collection, with a requirement for ongoing protection, care, maintenance, and cleaning over the life of the asset as per Urban Elements Asset Management Plan and City Operations annual budgets.
Other Funding Sources	<p>The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust has raised \$107,000 to date to realise the sculpture through philanthropic fundraising and private contributions.</p> <p>The State Government of South Australia through the Department of Premier and Cabinet has contributed \$100,000 to the CoA to support the project.</p>

DISCUSSION

Background

1. The City of Adelaide (CoA) and the Adelaide Festival Centre have been working collaboratively and in good faith since December 2023 to develop a commemorative artwork honouring Mr Barry Humphries AO CBE (Mr Humphries).
2. This commission recognises his extraordinary artistic contribution and his enduring association with Her Majesty's Theatre, the Adelaide Festival Centre and the CoA.
3. This report outlines the decisions made to date, subject to approval of the next steps, as the project moves into the delivery phases including detailed design, artwork fabrication, installation as part of the 2025/26 Infrastructure Delivery Program.

Council Decisions

4. At its meeting of [12 December 2023](#), Council resolved to:
 - 4.1. *Request Council staff work with the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and Foundation to progress the manufacture and installation of an artwork to commemorate the long-standing relationship of the late Barry Humphries AO CBE with Her Majesty's Theatre, the CoA and multiple significant heritage conservation projects in Adelaide and South Australia.*
 - 4.2. *Request a report be returned to Council by the end of March 2024 outlining a project plan, final design, and potential for funding between the CoA and the Foundation.*
5. At its meeting of [12 March 2024](#), Council resolved to:
 - 5.1. *Noted that Administration is currently working with the Adelaide Festival Centre and Trust to develop a project plan and proposal for a commemorative artwork celebrating Mr Barry Humphries, AO CBE for Council's consideration.*
 - 5.2. *Acknowledge the fundraising commitment by the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust to purchase a commissioned bronze sculpture.*
 - 5.3. *Assists the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust by managing the commission to ensure compliance with requirements for installation.*
 - 5.4. *Progress investigations of site conditions to facilitate the placement of the artwork, as part of our capital works program.*
 - 5.5. *Notes that Administration will bring a further report to Council following receipt of a formal proposal from the Adelaide Festival Centre.*
6. At its meeting of [26 November 2024](#), Council resolved to:
 - 6.1. *Notes the communications from the Adelaide Festival Centre regarding the Her Majesty's Theatre commemorative artwork opportunity contained in Attachment A to Item 7.5 on the Agenda for the meeting of Infrastructure and Public Works Committee held on 19 November 2024.*
 - 6.2. *Approves the CoA to manage the commission to ensure compliance with requirements for installation of the bronze sculpture of Barry Humphries AO CBE to be located near Her Majesty's Theatre on Grote Street.*
 - 6.3. *Notes the Draft Proposal for Her Majesty's Theatre Commemorative Artwork from the Adelaide Festival Centre as contained in Attachment B to Item 7.5 on the agenda for the meeting of Infrastructure and Public Works Committee held on 19 November 2024.*
 - 6.4. *Notes that Administration will develop a formal proposal for Council's consideration in Q4 2024/25.*

Current Status

7. Since November 2024, the CoA has worked closely with the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust to progress the project from initiation to concept design and formal proposal stages.
 - 7.1. This has included technical investigations, partner negotiations, and engaging Exhibition Studios to support proposal development and ensure the artwork meets Council standards.
 - 7.2. The Estate and family of Mr Humphries have expressed support for the proposed bronze sculpture by Robert Hannaford AM (Hannaford) outside Her Majesty's Theatre, with final endorsement and Council budget approval enabling the artist to proceed with fabrication and installation.
 - 7.3. This report and the proposal (**Attachment A**) provides the artwork and streetscape concept design

(plinth, and plaque), proposed materials and fabrication, risk, and an indicative budget detailing expenditure, income and partner contributions.

- 7.4. The artist has completed all preparatory work, including the full-size clay sculpture.

Proposal

8. The proposal (**Attachment A**), submitted by Exhibition Studios, meets the requirements of the Public Art Operating Guidelines.
9. The life-sized bronze sculpture of Mr Humphries will be approximately 178 cm and mounted on a plinth, accompanied by a bronze plaque. Final plinth and plaque details, including materials and finishes, will be confirmed with the Estate, the artist, and in line with technical requirements such as public safety and pedestrian movement.
10. The artwork will be in front of the recently developed stepped glazing façade to the left-hand side of the main entrance of Her Majesty's Theatre on Grote Street, offering visibility from both inside and outside the theatre. This location is confirmed as the most viable option following assessment of major inground services and infrastructure, building proximity, pedestrian movement, risk and safety, and time and budget considerations. It has been the subject of detailed investigations due to the presence of significant services and other site constraints in the area.
11. The artist and creative team have focused closely on Mr Humphries' character, physical presence and public persona with the sculpture designed to reflect both his formal presence and his distinctive sense of theatricality expressed through Hannaford's distinctive gestural and textured sculpting style.
 - 11.1. The artwork presents Mr Humphries in a gesture of warm acknowledgement, with an open stance and a raised arm tipping his hat conveying his engaging nature and showmanship.
 - 11.2. His clothing is based on the tailored suits he often wore at public events, softened with a subtle wry expression to reflect the humour and sophistication that were central to his career.
 - 11.3. Mr Humphries is shown with one foot slightly forward to enhance approachability, with his eye line set above pedestrian level to create a natural and engaging relationship with viewers.

Artist and Creative Team

12. The artist commissioned by the Adelaide Festival Centre and Trust is renown South Australian artist and sculptor, Robert Hannaford AM (Hannaford) ([Link 1](#)) (b. 1944), a celebrated and award-winning artist who has been a finalist in the Archibald Art Prize over 25 times and painted portraits of many significant public figures. Several of Hannaford's major sculptural works are in the city's public realm.
13. To support the commission, the City of Adelaide has appointed Exhibition Studios ([Link 2](#)) to provide technical design services and collaborate with the artist through to installation. Led by Managing Director Karl Meyer, Exhibition Studios is one of Australia's leading public art and design firms, known for combining artistic, sculptural, and engineering expertise to deliver innovative and engaging works in public spaces.

Budget, Contributions and Cost Breakdown

14. As outlined in **Attachment A**, the total budget for this project is estimated at \$313,083. The total budget includes design and various contingencies, ensuring flexibility and effective risk management throughout the project lifecycle.
15. Of the total budget, \$106,083 will be allocated from the 2025/26 Public Art Capital budget, for artwork installation, including project management, site preparation, lighting, electrical and civil works, traffic management, permits, and final handover. Exhibition Studios have allocated \$33,003 within their opinion of cost to mitigate any risks such as design issues, latent site conditions, delays, inflation and scope changes, ensuring flexibility for unforeseen costs.
16. The Adelaide Festival Centre Trust has raised \$107,000 through private benefaction and philanthropy, which covers all preparatory work completed to date, including the maquettes, design and studio development, moulds and plaster cast, and the life-size clay sculpture with its internal structure.
17. In July 2025, the State Government contributed \$100,000 to the CoA to deliver this commemorative project through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
18. The total commissioning cost for the final artwork by Hannaford is \$153,000. This covers the full design and creation of the life-size bronze sculpture, including maquettes, all design and studio work, plaster casts and moulds, sculpting of the clay figure with internal structure, and the final silicone mould, bronze casting, colouring, waxing and stainless-steel mounting points. This artist commissioning cost will be met through a contribution of \$107,000 from the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and \$46,000 from the project contribution by the State Government.

19. The \$54,000 remaining from the State Government project contribution will be allocated to the artwork's delivery, installation and technical support required.

Next Steps

20. With Council approval, the project will progress to detailed design, engineering and required approvals, followed by fabrication and installation, with technical input from CoA teams including Creative City, Infrastructure Delivery, Technical Design, Public Realm and Asset Management.
21. The works will be incorporated into the CoA's Infrastructure Delivery Program for FY 2025/26, project updates and milestones will be shared with Council and key stakeholders.
22. Following installation and any defect rectification, the artwork will be formally handed over to Council and become a managed asset within the CoA's public art collection. The CoA will work with the Estate, the Adelaide Festival Centre and the creative team to plan the unveiling event.

DATA AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Link 1 - [Robert Hannaford AM Website](#)

Link 2 - [Exhibition Studios](#)

[Councillor Noon – Motion on Notice - 12 December 2023](#)

[City Community Services and Culture Committee Report - 5 March 2024](#)

[Infrastructure and Public Works Report - 19 November 2024](#)

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Formal Concept Proposal – Her Majesty's Theatre Commemorative Artwork by Exhibition Studios

- END OF REPORT -