



How about this for the old RAH site?



DOMES AND AWAY: The Eden Project, an eco-tourism centre and concert venue in Cornwall, England.

MATT SMITH

THESE enormous greenhouses containing more than 1000 plant species help attract one million visitors a year to a small town in England – and now the State Government is being urged to consider a similar project for the old RAH site.

The biodomes, that cover more than 2ha, are part of the Eden Project, an eco-tourism attraction in Bodelva, Cornwall, that hosts events including rock concerts, weddings,

cooking classes and park runs.

They are the brainchild of Tim Smit, who also developed one of the most popular botanical gardens in the UK – the nearby Lost Gardens of Heligan.

Mr Smit is looking for sites

in the Southern Hemisphere to build his next tourism ventures and opened the door for conversations with the State Government about the old Royal Adelaide Hospital site that will

include an expansion of SA's own Botanic Garden.

Urban Development Institute of Australia SA chief executive Pat Gerace told the *Sunday Mail* that Mr Smit was exactly the sort of person who could provide the inspiration for the hook that would again put Adelaide on the global stage.

"It is about lateral thinking and the capacity that these big doers have," Mr Gerace said.

"We should be talking to all the big thinkers, the people that have the runs on the board, because they may have an idea that can percolate success."

Mr Smit spoke about his work as an environmentalist and entrepreneur at Womad in March. His company has been actively looking for sites in the southern hemisphere for new tourism projects. Three projects are earmarked for China, one in



New Zealand and another in Hobart, Tasmania.

When Ms Smit was contacted during the week, he described the SA capital as “a lovely city”.

“We are not actively looking for a site, but should a good site with solid and appropriate backers be put forward, we are always open for a discussion,” Mr Smit said.

“While Hobart remains a favoured location and one we firmly believe would be very successful, this does not preclude others should they not cannibalise our existing project.”

Infrastructure Minister Stephen Mullighan was not available yesterday to discuss an Eden Project-like structure for the 7ha site.

However, during the week he said a master plan would be revealed soon.

Investors will be able to come forward with ideas to develop the site for a mixed range of uses, including educational and research facilities.

The *Sunday Mail's* annual Your Say poll found an expansion of the Botanic Garden was deemed the best use of the site.

Given the choice of three

options, 44 per cent of respondents preferred an expansion of the Botanic Garden, followed by a cultural precinct (35.3 per cent) and a health services precinct (34.4 per cent).

Jon Lamb, *The Advertiser's* gardening writer for almost 40 years and host of ABC radio's talkback gardening segment, said a development similar to the Eden Project could be a “brilliant” attraction to complement the Botanic Garden.

“South Australia has always been very innovative where horticulture has been concerned,” he said.

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