**Patron: Hon Rev Dr Lynn Arnold AO**

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12 November 2026

Mr Alastair Campbell
Co-host, The Rest is Politics
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Dear Mr Campbell,

In December 2025, you wrote in *The New World* that British politicians should be more like South Australian Premier Peter Malinauskas. You praised his determination to use political power to achieve change.

As President of the Adelaide Park Lands Association, I would like to draw your attention to another side of his government's record — one that raises serious questions about democratic accountability, transparency, political polarisation and the exercise of executive power.

Given the theme of your forthcoming Adelaide appearance on 18 November, **"Populism, Polarisation and Post-Truth"**, I believe these matters are particularly relevant to your on-stage conversation with the Premier.

**I am concerned that the Premier's international reputation as a bold and progressive reformer conceals an increasingly troubling approach to democratic accountability here at home.**

I appreciate that you know and admire Peter Malinauskas. That makes your interview an especially valuable opportunity to test whether his actions consistently reflect the democratic principles he espouses.

I have attached a short evidence-based brief that I hope you and your research team will consider. I would welcome the opportunity to provide any further information.

As someone who has spent a career examining how politicians exercise power, you will appreciate that the crucial question is not simply whether a government gets things done, but **what democratic safeguards it is prepared to sacrifice along the way**.

I wish you well for your Adelaide appearance and hope you will take the opportunity to ask the Premier some questions that South Australians deserve to have answered.

Yours sincerely

Mat Monti
President

Encl: Briefing Paper

Adelaide Park Lands Association

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**Briefing for Alastair Campbell and research team for the Adelaide event, "Populism polarisation and post-truth" with Premier Peter Malinauskas MP**

On **18 November 2026** Mr Campbell will be interviewing our Premier on stage at the Festival Theatre, and we invite him to consider the following information prior to the event.

In December 2025, Alastair Campbell praised Peter Malinauskas in *The New World* [1]for his willingness to use political power decisively, particularly in relation to political donations and social media reform.

**However, three controversial South Australian projects reveal a less flattering picture of the Premier's leadership. They threaten an irrevocable cultural and economic loss to the city.**

These developments are underway in National Heritage Listed Park Lands. First, a skyscraper with offices is being built on public land abutting our Nationally listed Parliament House, the place in the world where women first gained full democratic rights.

Second, 600 trees have been lost in the North Adelaide Public Golf Course for a LIV Golf tournament that will never happen. And third, upwards of 400 trees are being felled and bitumen poured in Victoria Park for a once-a-year MotoGP race.

This briefing should raise questions about the weakening of democratic checks and balances in South Australia, the management of public land, financial transparency and the treatment of citizens who challenge government decisions.

Mr Malinauskas is fond of claiming he is not afraid of smashing sacred cows. Instead of seeing public assets to be respectfully leveraged for the benefit of the local economy and the community, he sees them as an impediment to his vision of progress.

**The central question for the Premier is: At what point does strong leadership become an abuse of executive power?**

[1] Campbell, A, "Our politicians should be more like Peter Malinauskas", The New World, 10 Dec 2025.

## 1. FESTIVAL PLAZA SKYSCRAPER (WALKER CORPORATION TOWER 2)

### Private development on public land: Who benefits?

The Malinauskas Government is facilitating a 38-storey commercial office tower for Walker Corporation beside South Australia's Parliament House, taking over Festival Plaza, our civic square.[2]

The project has attracted substantial controversy because of its location in Adelaide's premier civic precinct, its financial arrangements and the changes made to planning policy.[3],[4] The unusual deal with Walker Corporation had already caught the attention of the Auditor General years before when a three-story building was proposed.[5]

Festival Plaza, Adelaide's parliamentary square, could have hosted public events throughout the year. Instead, a giant commercial office tower, has been gifted to a Sydney developer on a ground lease of $1 a year for 100 years.

**This is a catastrophic outcome that will permanently alter the civic heart of Adelaide, including the setting of Parliament House and Festival Centre. (see photo pg 8)**

### A. Public land leased for a nominal dollar

An investigation in May 2026 revealed that publicly available lease documents specify rent of just $1 per year for the development land. The lease arrangements extend to 2116. [6]

The Government says the nominal rental figure does not reflect the complete financial arrangement and that other commercial considerations apply. However, key financial terms have not been publicly disclosed, with the Government citing commercial confidentiality. Public statements about the project have promoted more than $1 billion in annual economic activity. Yet the public has limited access to the assumptions behind these projections or the full commercial arrangements determining the financial return from the use of public land.

Very questionably, it has drawn the Australian Tax Office out of a new building in the CBD into the new tower as a proposed anchor tenant, so the Commonwealth Government is enmeshed in enabling this destructive project.[7]

The CBD is already facing high vacancy rates. Why didn't the Premier consider building the skyscraper within the CBD and replace old office building stock. This would have kept the vibrancy in the CBD as well as preserving an important public square.[8]

### Question 1 – handing over public land for an office tower

"What independent analysis was undertaken of alternative uses for public land, and why should the public believe this was the best possible outcome?"

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[2] Vines, E, "Adelaide at crossroad over 38-storey Tower of Regret", InDaily, 14 May 2026
[3] Gilchrist C, "Protest over second Festival Tower build", In Daily, 17 Feb 2026
[4] Plane, Terry, "How the Walker Corp got to build a 38-storey tower on Adelaide park land", Saturday Paper, 21 March 2026
[5] Harmsen, Nick, "Scrutiny of Adelaide Festival Plaza redevelopment deal shrouded in confusion", ABC News, 26 July 2017.
[6] Karakulak, H, "Gobsmacking $1 per year lease for Festival Plaza tower land revealed", InDaily, 11 Dec 2025
[7] Riley, A, "Inquiry decides on ATOs multimillion-dollar fitout in Festival Tower Two", In Daily, 3 Nov 2026
[8] Dowdell, R, "Move it Mali: Anti-Festival Tower billboard hits Adelaide streets", In Daily, 15 May 2026

## 2. NORTH ADELAIDE GOLF COURSE

**When government removes democratic safeguards to deliver a sporting spectacle**

The second assault on the Park Lands has been in relation to expanding a public golf course in North Adelaide to accommodate the now defunct Saudi-backed LIV Golf tournament.[9] (photo pg 8)

In 2025, the Government passed the *North Adelaide Public Golf Course Act 2025*,[10] an extraordinary piece of legislation overriding or modifying many of the laws that would normally govern development on public land.

Introduced at extreme short notice, the legislation took away control of a large section of the park lands from Adelaide City Council without any compensation, and while the Lord Mayor was absent in Europe on a COP31 meeting on behalf of the city and the state.

There was felling of almost 600 trees sparking a wave of public protest which are ongoing[11].

### A. The Act overrides other state laws

The legislation converted public land to land in fee simple, ie able to be traded commercially.

The legislation exempted the government from all State regulation such as planning controls, except aboriginal heritage legislation. This includes processes ordinarily designed to protect the public interest and ensure government decisions are subject to scrutiny.

Section 24 expressly provides that the *Environment Protection Act 1993* does not apply to the golf course land during declared periods for approved events.

Section 8 transfers ownership of the project site to a designated minister in an estate in fee simple, which means it can be sold.

Most significantly, section 16 gives the Minister broad powers to create, vary, extinguish or transfer interests in the land, grant leases and alter its legal status.

This raises serious questions about the long-term public ownership and protection of the site. The legislation's consequences for possible future private ownership or disposal deserve direct examination rather than assumptions.

### B. Independent researchers have condemned the removal of safeguards

In September, Adelaide University Law School academics found that the Act excludes or modifies nearly all the ordinary planning, environmental and related statutory protections that would otherwise apply. [12]

The academics expressed concern about the loss of public participation, environmental oversight and transparency. Section 18 of the Act also allows for permanent fencing, which would drastically alter the current public access arrangements.

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[9] Keane, Daniel, "LIV Golf has triggered a turf war in Adelaide's park lands", ABC News, 13 May 2026
[10] North Adelaide Public Golf Course Act 2025, Parliament of South Australia.
[11] Kelsall, T & Blandis, E, "Nearly 600 trees to be lost for North Adelaide's public course redevelopment for LIV Golf event, ABC News, 18 Dec 2025
[12] Wawryk, A., Castles, M., De Leiuen, C., Doherty, M., Leadbeter, P., Smith, M., & Soebarto, V. (2026). *North Adelaide Golf Course redevelopment: Law and policy brief.* Adelaide University.

### C. The Auditor-General exposed troubling procurement practices

In October 2026, South Australia's Auditor-General criticised a repeated consultancy procurement strategy of slicing larger consultancy projects into contracts costing $55,000 - which is just under the mandatory procurement notification threshold.[13]

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet initially awarded 14 specialist consulting contracts, **including one involving Greg Norman's golf course design firm with no public tender.** Eleven subsequent contracts with those consultants exceeded that threshold.

The initial redevelopment budget is $45 million, with additional expenditure contemplated for facilities including a new clubhouse and driving range.

### Suggested questions

#### Question 2 - Democracy

"Premier, your government passed a law that overrides normal legal safeguards, significantly weakens planning and environmental protections, and removes important public consultation rights — all to build a golf course. How do you reconcile that with your claim to be a champion of democratic reform?"

*Follow-up:* "Would you defend exactly the same legislation if a conservative government introduced it for a commercial project on protected public land?"

#### Question 3 - Public land and possible disposal

"Why did your government vest historic public Park Lands in a minister in fee simple, with broad powers to create or transfer interests in the land? What prevents a future government from using these arrangements to place parts of that land into private hands?"

*Follow-up:* "Will you give a binding guarantee that the land will remain permanently in public ownership and that no part will be sold or transferred into private ownership? Will you change the law?"

#### Question 4 — Environmental regulation

"Why does your legislation explicitly provide that the Environment Protection Act does not apply during declared periods for approved events? What is it about holding a golf tournament that justifies suspending ordinary environmental protections?"

*Follow-up:* "If the project meets normal environmental standards, why was this exemption necessary?"

#### Question 5 — The rule of law

"Isn't it dangerous for a government to establish a precedent that, whenever a project is politically important enough, Parliament can simply legislate away the safeguards designed to protect the public interest?"

*Follow-up:* "What principle determines when a government should be allowed to exempt itself from the normal rules?"

[13] Kelsall, T, "Uncomfortable questions over golf course upgrade show risks of Malinaskas's gamble", ABC News, 18 Oct 2026

## 3. MOTOGP AND THE ADELAIDE PARK LANDS

### Political spectacle, public expenditure and the treatment of dissent

The Malinauskas Government announced a $96 million redevelopment of Adelaide's motor-racing circuit to accommodate MotoGP and other motorsport events a few weeks prior to the state election in March 2026.

The circuit will be constructed through the city's eastern Park Lands, an important publicly owned landscape which are nationally heritage-listed.

The project has prompted substantial protests over the removal of 400 trees (instead of the pre-election number of 45)[14], increased permanent hard surfaces and the lack of meaningful community involvement. On 23 August over 6000 citizens attended a public rally, and protests are still ongoing. (see photo pg 8)

### A. A purpose-built alternative already exists

The Bend Motorsport Park at Tailem Bend is an established purpose-built motorsport facility. The Government has chosen instead to pursue a city park circuit, requiring substantial redevelopment of the Park Lands. Marketed as a ‘street-circuit’, 75% of it will actually be constructed in a park.

There is a legitimate question about the relative environmental, financial and logistical merits of those alternatives.

There is also widespread opposition to the move to Adelaide in the bike racing fraternity and riders, after the fast and spectacular and relatively safe Phillip Island track. Safety is a huge concern and there has not been a MotoGP on a street circuit since 1985 for that reason.[15]

### B. The consultation was about the design, not the fundamental decision

The public was not invited to determine whether the event should be held at an alternative venue. The Government consulted the public in August 2026 about the proposed circuit design, vegetation and public-space enhancements.

This occurred after the commitment to bringing MotoGP to Adelaide and the Park Lands location.

### C. Environmental impacts remain contested

The redevelopment entails the removal of almost 400 trees and additional **permanent** infrastructure within the Park Lands including hectares of bitumen. There is currently a live legal challenge in the South Australian Supreme Court brought on by the South East City Residents’ Association.[16]

The Government argues that the project will also deliver landscape improvements, new plantings and enhanced community facilities.

Critics argue that new landscaping cannot simply replace the ecological, heritage and amenity values of established vegetation and existing public open space.

[14] Dowdell, R, “New report shows park lands tree felling for MotoGP far higher”, InDaily, 10 June 2026.
[15] Oxley, Mat, “MotoGP at an F1 street circuit? Are they insane? “, Motor Sport Magazine, 18 Feb, 2026
[16] Round, J, “Residents launch court fight over $96m MotoGP track”, The Advertiser, 25 Oct 2026.

**A very dubious mandate exists** for the premier's forcing through of the event since scant details were released prior to the election, with little detail about final location of the track which will, for example, need major road realignments, tearing up and later relaying back of the road, construction of extensive 250mm deep gravel beds to be later taken back up, removal and later replacement of kerbing and signage.

**D. Opponents have been portrayed as extremists**

Premier Malinauskas has used the language of extremism in referring to opponents of Park Lands developments. At various time he has labelled protesters 'rag-tag extremists'[17], 'elites'[18],' naysayers' or 'NIMBYs'. *This is in sharp contrast to the consultative and personable persona he has presented to external observers such as Mr Campbell,*

This has been deeply offensive to community members, conservationists, residents and other peaceful campaigners who believe they are exercising legitimate democratic rights. Adelaide Airport even banned a billboard with the Stop the Chop slogan during the National Labor Party Conference.[19]

**There has been a huge popular uprising against these actions**, with the largest online petition in the state's history of 55,000 names, and the second largest paper petition of around 45,000 names presented to parliament[20]. Many ex-politicians have come out in opposition, including our patron who is an ex-Labor Premier, and there is universal opposition in the creative community.

**There have been numerous rallies[21]**, in the city and suburbs, the largest of which attracted over 6000 people[22], and these are ongoing almost weekly.

Celebrities from around Australia and the world have recently signed an open letter.[23]

**E. Inadequate financial scrutiny**

**Unsurprisingly therefore, there has been no transparency regarding costs**- capital and operating, with halving of the *apparent guesstimate* of yearly income from around $200m to around $100m, and expert informal industry estimates for the building of the extra kilometre plus of 12m wide asphalt track and 15m plus gravel beds, resurfacing and recamber of roads at upwards of $200m[24]. Alarmingly, the Government only sought an economic benefit report *after* securing the event. [25]

Contracted with the huge international corporation Liberty Media before undertaking consultation required by the South Australian Sports Motor Act. A contract for a cost benefit analysis was sought months after the contract for the event was signed.

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[17] Gilchrist, C, "Meet the granny labelled an 'extremist' by Premier Malinauskas, In Daily, 19 May 2026.
[18] Karakulak, H, "Premier takes a swing at 'cultural elitism' in park lands debate, InDaily, 20 Aug 2026.
[19] Readfearn, G, "Adelaide airport pulls ads from conservation groups but keeps gas and mining ads during ALP conference", The Guardian, 24 July 2026
[20] Dowdell, R, "Stop the Chop petition hits huge target, triggering parliament inquiry", InDaily, 14 July 2026
[21] Karakulak, H, "Thousands march to stop the chop', In Daily, 24 August 2026.
[22] Kelsall, T, "Malinauskas's pre-election coup is stuck in a familiar parklands gravel trap", ABC News, 29 Aug 2026
[23] Lungs of the City: Australia's arts, music, cultural and sporting community support the Adelaide Park Lands: https://lungsofthecity.com.au

[24] Milazzo, A, "Is the MotoGP Pain worth the gain?", 7 Sept 2026
[25] Simmons, D, "Govt seeks MotoGP economic benefit report, months after securing event', In Daily, 7 Octo 2026

**Question 6 — Polarisation and democratic dissent**

"Premier, you condemn polarisation and the politics of division. Why then have you used the language of extremism to describe people opposing your government's plans for public Park Lands?"

*Follow-up:* "Do you accept that ordinary citizens have the right to oppose your projects without being demonised by the state's most powerful political figure?"

**Question 7 — The economic case**

"Why are you committing $96 million to construct a MotoGP-capable street circuit through public Park Lands when South Australia already has a purpose-built motorsport venue at The Bend?"

*Follow-up:* "Will you publish an independently verified comparison of the costs, economic benefits and environmental impacts of the competing locations?"

**Question 8 — Consultation or public relations?**

"Your government consulted on the details of the circuit after deciding where the event would be held. Isn't that consultation about implementation rather than genuine public participation in the fundamental decision?"

*Follow-up:* "What would it have taken for the community's opposition to change the government's decision on the location?"

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**THE QUESTION THAT CONNECTS ALL THREE PROJECTS**

The golf course, Festival Plaza and MotoGP controversies share a common theme. Each involves public land, major political commitments, substantial economic claims and serious public concern about transparency or democratic accountability.

But the question for the Premier is whether the pursuit of these objectives justifies weakening scrutiny and limiting the public's influence over decisions affecting shared public assets.

**Suggested closing question**

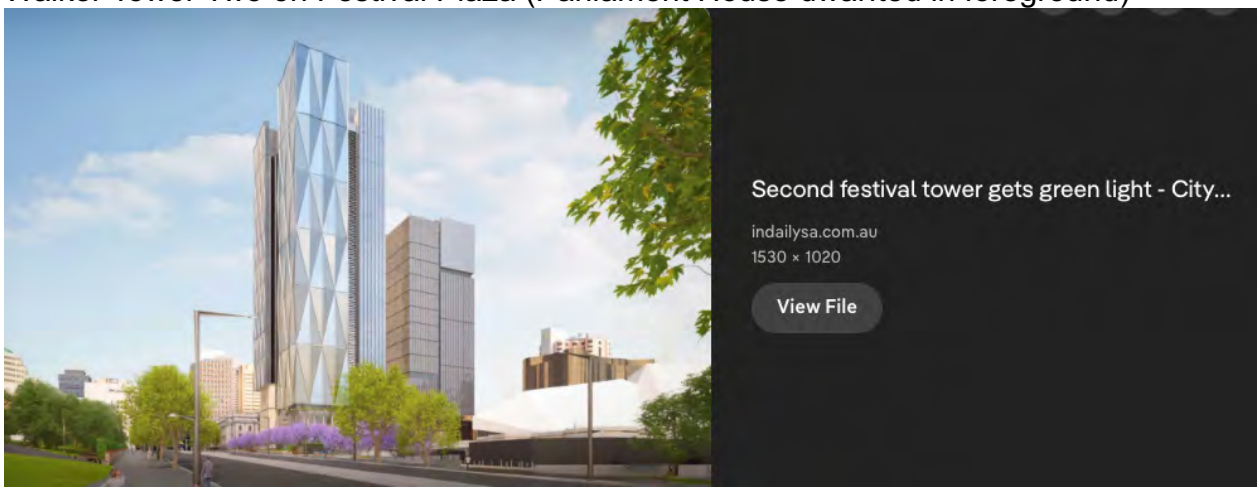
"Premier, you have built a reputation as a politician who gets things done. But democracy isn't just about winning elections and delivering projects. It is also about respecting the law, protecting public assets, accepting independent scrutiny and listening to people who disagree with you.

If getting things done involves removing legal safeguards, withholding commercially sensitive information and dismissing peaceful opponents as extremists, how is that different from the political behaviour you criticise in others?"

**In summary, there is widespread grief and despair in the community at a perceived complete lack of logic of developments in the park lands**, given that they damage, or even destroy, the environments whose attractiveness they look to exploit. Ultimately, they reduce the economic resilience of the city by permanently damaging its heritage in the midst of a climate crisis.

Adelaide is the only city in the world encircled by a park …. for now.

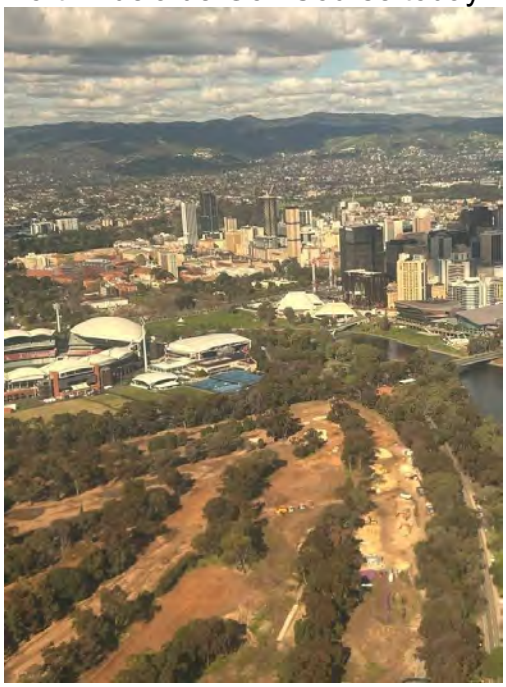
Walker Tower Two on Festival Plaza (Parliament House dwarfted in foreground)




MotoGP circuit – a park circuit, not a street circuit



North Adelaide Golf Course today – no longer Crown Land






Adelaide is the only city in the world encircled by a park



**MARCH FOR YOUR PARK LANDS** – 6000+ protesters (SA Police) – 23/8/26



4000 corflutes on fences




Mat Monti, President Adelaide Park Lands Association









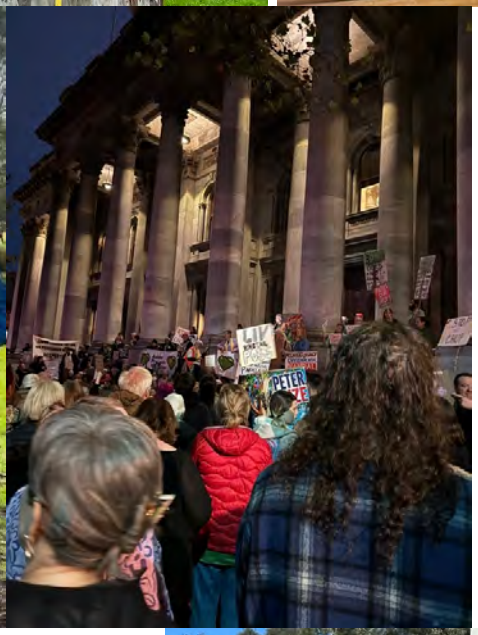

- 13,000 followers for the Adelaide Park Lands Association Facebook Page
- 15,000 in the Possum Park Platoon Facebook Group
- Video: https://www.facebook.com/reel/1141001411723785
- Ragtag Extremest Blues: https://youtu.be/xmZLj39OwJ4?si=bHxaU4E2O1Td4rT5
- Video/Garland of Adelaide: https://www.youtube.com/shorts/BEw5JAGZCkc


DON'T KILL
MY FRIENDS


IF
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WALK
THRU
HERE
HELP
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SAVE
IT




A RACE
CAN MOVE!
OLD
TREES
CANNOT
STOP
STEALING
PARKLANDS




STOP
THE CHOP


WE CANT WAIT
TO BE ALL GROWN
UP!
IN 100 YEARS
I CAN
COUNT---
THE DAYS!
WAAAAA
BUT MALL
SAID---
WE
COULD
REPLACE
NOW!
CAN
I HAVE
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ARE WE THERE
YET??


STOP
AKE ADELAIDE
COOL AGAIN


WE
MATTER


Never again
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