

How the south is won: Media Mike faces off against Mr Bankrupt



Theo Maras

Build a stadium now, says Maras

TORY SHEPHERD

ADELAIDE desperately needs a new multifunction stadium, one of the state's top developers says.

Theo Maras said yesterday it does not matter whether it is a Liberal or a Labor plan, whether it is in the West End or the East End, there must be a stadium to attract people to the city.

Mr Maras runs the Maras Group and has worked in construction for more than 40 years.

The *Advertiser* spoke to him about the stoush between the Labor and Liberal parties over their respective plans for a hospital and an entertainment precinct for the city.

He says someone must build a multifunction arena capable of hosting more sporting and cultural events to keep the city's vibrancy.

"What we're lacking in Adelaide is change and things to go to," he said.

"We want an exciting city that will attract young, intelligent people to live here."

He said he would like to see Adelaide host one event, even two, every week.

Mr Maras owns a "large portion" of the East End, but says he does not care where the stadium is built.

"Put politics to one side," he said.

"The city lights turn on and people come into the city. That's what I want to see."

GREG KELTON
STATE EDITOR

THE battlelines have been starkly drawn for next year's March 20 state election.

That will be a battle between "Media Mike" - Premier Mike Rann - and "Mr Bankrupt" - Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith.

Mr Rann has begun depicting his Government as one which is economically responsible and ready to keep building the state through a big infrastructure program.

He, and his chief attack dog, Treasurer Kevin Foley, have started portraying Mr Hamilton-Smith as "Mr Bankrupt" - a man who will bankrupt the state because of spending promises.

The Opposition accuses Mr Rann of inflating infrastructure spending figures and being the good news Premier who keeps re-announcing projects at the drop of a hat.

The catalyst for this outbreak of nasty name-calling and electioneering has been the issue of the new Royal Adelaide Hospital and the Opposition's plans to build a multi-purpose sports stadium on the site proposed for the \$1.7 billion hospital.

The issue has dominated Parliament this week and will continue to do so for the remainder of the year.

The Government says Mr Hamilton-Smith's plans for the stadium and to redevelop the RAH are uncoded and vague - especially the three-option plan for the hospital.

Mr Foley has told Parliament the hospital is appropriately provisioned in the Budget forward estimates and at this stage still is proposed to be a public-private partnership. Mr Foley said that under such a scheme the Gov-



ernment would not have to start making payments until 2014. He has described the stadium announcement as "the most extraordinary announcement of a party in the middle of the worst financial crisis this nation or this globe has ever seen".

"Make no mistake, between now and the next election I will hound the Leader of the

Opposition to make his costings, to tell us how he is going to pay for it and to tell us where this money is coming from because the next election is about a solid government fit to govern in a financial crisis against an Opposition Leader who is on a road to bankruptcy," Mr Foley said.

Mr Hamilton-Smith says he

will be able to pay for his promises even though much of his spending commitments will depend on what is contained in the Mid-Year Budget Review to be released in December only three months before the election.

He says, however, the Rann Government, during seven of the best years this state has seen for revenue, has run

South Australia into the ground.

"For six Budgets it has been running miniscule surpluses," he told Parliament this week. "Where did the money go? It vanished. It vanished into trams. It vanished into bungled infrastructure projects. It vanished into a bloated and inefficient public service."

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