

The architect who believes big is beautiful

Paul Pruszniski is ready for a fight as he puts his stamp on the Adelaide landscape

PAUL Pruszniski has ruffled plenty of feathers in his two decades as an Adelaide architect.

Mr Pruszniski, who comes from Broken Hill, made the headlines this year after offering free designs to the state Liberal opposition for a \$700 million rebuild of Royal Adelaide Hospital and a new \$800m sports stadium near the CBD.

Because both were alternatives to state government plans, Mr Pruszniski put himself at the centre of a political storm.

He is Adelaide's most prolific designer of multi-storey buildings, and recently won the national award for high-density living from the Urban Development Institute of Australia for the \$65m Conservatory building in the CBD.

"The Conservatory was a project that really enabled us to show off what we do best, which is making iconic projects stack up," Mr Pruszniski said.

The 43-year-old is the founder and principal of Pruszniski Architects, a husband- and wife-owned practice with 16 full-time staff and two part-time.

He is an outspoken critic of Adelaide City Council's limit on building heights, which he maintains are bogging down development in the CBD and producing Plain Jane buildings.

"Building facades aren't going to be spectacular if height limits mean projects can't make lot of money," he said.

"It's time for the state government to step in when the council thinks a 14-storey building in the CBD is too tall."

Pruszniski Architects has designed about 20 high-rise buildings and currently has three applications before the Adelaide authorities for two apartment blocks and a luxury hotel.

The firm is now awaiting approval for its first project in



TRADING ROOM

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Melbourne, a six-level apartment development.

The architect's blue-chip client list includes Jack Hines, whose Melbourne-based Hines Group developed the mixed-use Conservatory building on Hindmarsh Square, and Domenic Mattioli, another Melbourne developer who has built landmark buildings across Adelaide.

Mr Pruszniski grew up expecting to work as a carpenter. But as a schoolboy on work experience in the town's only architectural practice, he got his first taste of the profession.

"I knew within two hours I

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PAUL PRUSZNSKI ARCHITECT

wanted to be an architect," he said. That was on a site visit when he saw first-hand how architects direct the building process.

"Creating something, and being in control of it, made up my mind that architecture was for me," he says.

A scholarship from a local mining company, and financial help from his parents who ran a steel fabrication business, enabled the young Pruszniski to move to Adelaide to study architecture.

But disappointment followed his graduation in the early 1990s, and his first job.

"It was the pits, which made it easy to return to Broken Hill as a construction manager on a 54-home retirement village," he said.

After 18 months on the job, he returned to Adelaide, focusing on the retirement village sector.

But with retirement villages and house extensions providing little income, business as an architect was bad. "I was hitting 30 and struggling with bad jobs and bad clients," he said.

However, that was about to change because of Mr Mattioli, who was in strife with a small CBD apartment project known as the Franklin Apartments.

Pruszniski Architects found a design solution, which gave the firm another Mattioli project, the luxury Allegra Hotel on the former Adelaide House site at 55 Waymouth Street.

It was Mr Mattioli's first hotel and — and also a first for Paul Pruszniski.

"Designing a 20-storey building was a real challenge, but the lesson for us was that architects can design profitable and workable buildings if they do the research," he said.

The practice's latest project is the refurbishment of a 30-year-old, 400sq m city fringe building, which when completed will use a solar power-generating facade to reduce energy demand by almost 40 per cent.

The plan for 164 Fullarton Road has resulted in a \$240,000 grant from the state government's Building Innovation Fund.



Paul Pruszniski, outside his Conservatory office block in Adelaide, opposes the city's height limits

KELLY BARNES