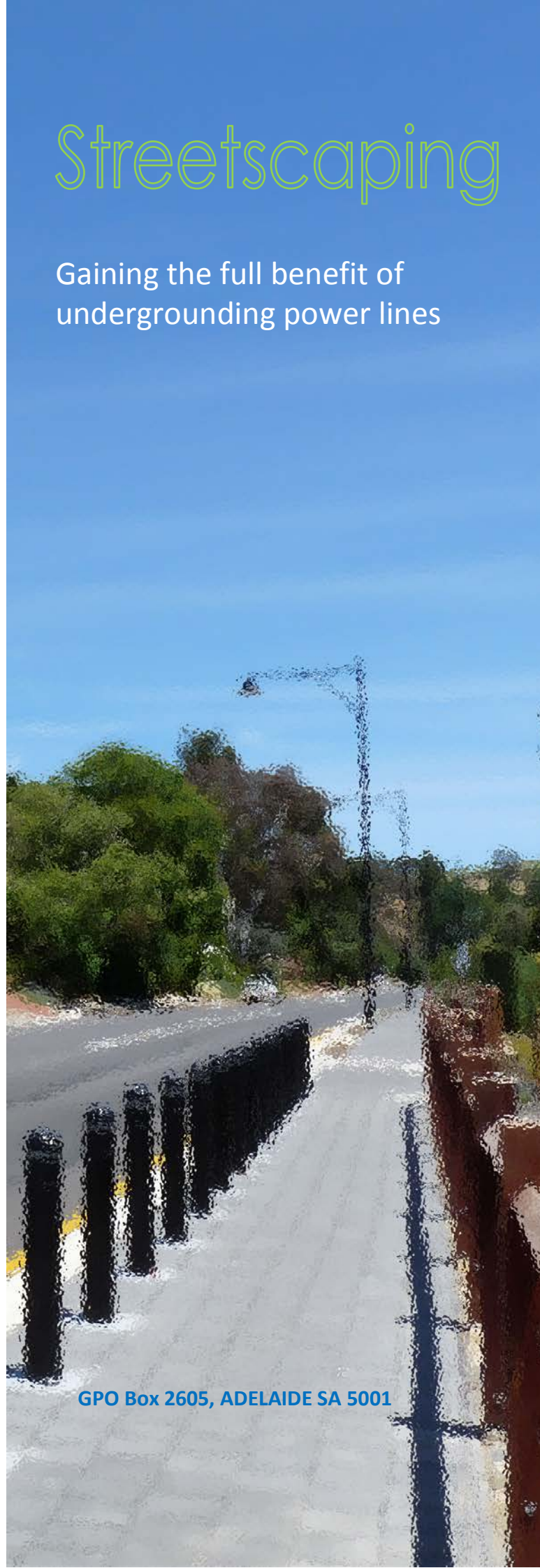


# Streetscaping

Gaining the full benefit of  
undergrounding power lines



GPO Box 2605, ADELAIDE SA 5001



## The Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC)

As our name indicates, our focus is to improve the environment of locations by undergrounding unsightly power lines by assisting local government in achieving such initiatives.

To achieve maximum benefit from the undergrounding of power lines, it is desirable to undertake improvements to other elements of the streetscape at the same time. This can include stormwater drainage, paving, trees or other plantings, road resurfacing and possibly kerb re-alignment. Harmonisation of signage, fascia upgrades of commercial properties and enhancement of heritage elements are also important contributions to the desired outcome.

This pamphlet aims to assist Councils in considering options and the wider benefits of streetscaping when submitting proposals for power line undergrounding projects to PLEC.

The Charter of PLEC defines the purpose of undergrounding as “....to improve the aesthetics of an area for the benefit of the general community.....” and PLEC will give priority to Councils who include streetscaping in their proposals. PLEC projects to date have focussed on tourist areas, historical areas, arterial roads and areas of commercial activity.



## The economic case for streetscaping

On average, the overall cost of undergrounding power lines is in the order of \$1,750 per metre of common service trench. The cost of streetscaping varies considerably and is estimated to be in the order of \$100-200 per metre. The average total cost of a PLEC projects is about \$800,000 of which the cost to councils is around \$270,000 per project. Streetscaping may add a further \$70-150,000 to this cost over and above any new kerbing, guttering and reconstruction of the road surface etc. Thus, streetscaping may add up to around 20% to the total project cost.



Jetty Road, Brighton

Businesses in streets that have had both their power lines undergrounded and streetscaping provided will benefit from the commercial and community revitalisation resulting from the amenity upgrade. Examples in urban areas of Adelaide include Hutt Street, Jetty Road, Brighton and Sir Donald Bradman Drive; while in the country, the commercial hearts of towns in popular tourist areas such as the Barossa Valley, the Copper Triangle, Eyre Peninsula and South Coast have been revitalised.

It is difficult to place an economic value on the commercial benefits gained through undergrounding and streetscaping, but businesses that have experienced such initiatives are enthusiastic about the benefits. It may be safely assumed that the on-going benefit greatly exceeds the cost of streetscaping.

## PLEC and streetscaping

PLEC considers streetscaping as an integral component in undergrounding proposals and not merely an 'add-on'. The streetscaping plan should aim to maximise the return from a Council's investment in undergrounding.

PLEC will give priority to submissions that include streetscaping plans with their undergrounding proposals. It is not assumed that these would necessarily be implemented in the same year as the undergrounding but would normally be completed within 2 to 3 years. PLEC expects Councils to provide a firm undertaking to carry out the streetscaping plan and to indicate its time line in its funding submission.



PLEC does not authorise streetscaping plans, as this is beyond its mandate and expertise. However, PLEC will want to satisfy itself that the streetscape proposals are of benefit to the area and provide a reasonable return for the undergrounding expenditure.

## What streetscaping covers

Streetscaping plans can include planting of trees and garden beds (including adding to existing plantings), upgrading of pedestrian areas through the paving of footpaths and the installation of coordinated street furniture such as seating, signage (directional and commercial), bicycle racks, rubbish bins, decorative lighting and street art.

Paving of pedestrian areas and intersections of streets provides a distinct comparison between old and new. The variety of paving blocks available allows designers to incorporate coloured patterns in the paving that, in itself, can be a major focus of the streetscape. Councils may encourage upgrading facias and coordination of signage of commercial properties especially in heritage and/or historic areas.

Most streetscape concepts are based around a theme – such as a nautical theme at a foreshore location or a heritage theme in an older location. Apart from the capital work that

a council may do, shop owners can be encouraged to renovate facades, verandas and shop fronts in a manner sympathetic to the theme.

The inclusion of additional plantings is encouraged. There may be space restrictions caused by verandas and narrow footpaths, but this can be overcome with the use of planter boxes or landscaped protuberances within parking areas.

A design can include the installation of attractive shaded seating areas or bus shelters for convenience and to encourage the community to stop and appreciate the surroundings. It is also an opportunity to introduce soft engineering practices such as reduction, cleaning and re-use of stormwater run-off.



*Hender Street, Keith*



## Streetscaping – it makes a difference

***Victor Harbor** has benefited greatly from power line undergrounding and streetscaping and is one of the most attractive tourist destinations in South Australia.*



***Semaphore Road** is a popular commercial hub that has undergone a significant upgrade involving streetscaping and road reconstruction. Its appearance has changed dramatically from a view dominated by untidy rows of power lines to an open and functional layout.*



*The removal of power lines in **Murray Street, Tanunda** permits the existing trees to flourish and provides for the planting of additional trees without encumbrance.*