



COUNCIL POLICY

Undergrounding (Overhead Electricity and Telecommunication Cables)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through the *Strategic Management Plan 2004 – 2007* the Council has set targets for residential and economic growth and begun a process that will change the City and its cultural ethos. A manifestation of the transition from present to future state will be a changing focus from infrastructure domination to the values of people and public life: a softening and humanising of the urban environment. That will be achieved, among other ways, through the application of sensitive and high quality urban design.

A coordinated Undergrounding policy, supported by implementation plans, can help make Adelaide one of the most attractive and progressive cities in the world. As an important element supporting the policy, a program of Undergrounding has been developed that is coordinated with other internal and external projects and provides opportunities for the community to be involved in implementing the program.

Definition:

Undergrounding comprises the removal of existing overhead electricity and telecommunication cables including overhead transformers and switching equipment, and its supporting infrastructure including stobie or other types of poles from public streets and park lands and where practical replacing this infrastructure with underground type infrastructure. Undergrounding includes replacement of overhead private consumer mains and telecommunications services connected from the public realm, with underground type infrastructure. Also, the removal of overhead ETSA street lighting requires Council to install new underground fed street lighting to current lighting standards.

Undergrounding "projects" may include all above ground infrastructure in a street or part thereof (in some cases, the staging of undergrounding may be based on targeting those components where maximum benefits, or value for money, can be obtained).

The policy establishes a cohesive framework within which the undergrounding removes existing ETSA stobie poles and overhead cables and provides non visible underground power and telephone distribution services and new public lighting. The upgrade or replacement of existing elements of the City's overhead power and telecommunications infrastructure will most effectively enhance the City's quality, consistency and efficiency in public places as well as providing visual appeal, safety and utility.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

Through the undergrounding of infrastructure the Policy seeks to enhance:

- (a) the distinctive characters of the city by removing the detracting elements

- (b) the qualities of individual buildings – particularly the stock of fine heritage buildings
- (c) the particular characters and functions of streets and footpaths within the street and footpath hierarchy
- (d) the amenity of the Park Lands
- (e) environmental sustainability through reduced tree trimming and improved energy efficiency of new lighting provided as part of the undergrounding
- (f) the unique character of the City Centre as contrasted with the metropolitan area surrounding it
- (g) the status, image and confidence of Adelaide as a progressive and attractive City with strong visitor appeal
- (h) the creation of a safe city environment.

3. POLICY STATEMENTS

- 3.1 Council will underground overhead electricity and telecommunications cables including supporting infrastructure within the whole of the City of Adelaide over time.
- 3.2 No additional overhead electrical and telecommunication cables including associated supporting stobie or other types of poles, overhead transformers, switching or other types of overhead pole mounted ETSA or telecommunications equipment will be installed in the public realm.
- 3.3 Undergrounding in the City will improve amenity and help create a high quality and safe public realm.
- 3.4 Above ground infrastructure to be undergrounded will be prioritised, based on:
 - (a) a framework informed by an assessment of the benefits in terms of visual amenity, safety and economic benefit;
 - (b) an assessment of streets to determine which components of undergrounding offer the best value for money;
 - (c) maximizing external funding contribution;
 - (d) coordination, where practical, with other major projects carried out by Council and external organizations; and
 - (e) availability of funding.
- 3.5 A range of implementation programs will be developed, including those that provide opportunity for external funding contribution from PLEC, the community, residents, business owners and developers. The Undergrounding Policy Program will include the following key funding options and schemes, which can be utilised individually or in combination:
 - **ACC only funded projects**
These projects are those for which there is no external funding applicable.
 - **ACC only funded Hot Spot Scheme**
The Hot Spot Scheme aims to provide opportunities for relatively small scale works to be implemented that will have relatively large benefits

(usually to a small number of property owners). ACC funding would be applied to bring forward such projects in advance of the timing for the whole of a street. Likely Hot Spots works include relocation of stobie poles and cables in close proximity to dwellings, balconies, significant trees, footpath crossings etc.

- **ACC and PLEC (Power Line Environment Committee) joint funded projects**

PLEC provides funding to Councils to assist with the undergrounding of infrastructure, particularly where significant community benefit derives from such undergrounding works. The development and endorsement of an Implementation Program will enable forward planning to occur between ACC and PLEC to ensure a rolling program of jointly funded projects over time.

- **Residential/Business Scheme (with approved ACC contribution)**

The Residential/Business Scheme is similar to the existing Private Undergrounding Scheme and provides opportunities for groups of residents, private owners or business owners (or a single resident/private owner/business owner) to provide private funding to assist with the undergrounding of particular streets (or segments of streets) for the benefit of the residents/property owners/business owners. This will usually result in the bringing forward of these works in the program, and will therefore still warrant Council contribution.

This Scheme will provide greater incentives, through increased Council contributions, than the existing Private Undergrounding Scheme. (e.g. up to 50% Council contribution instead of approximately 25% and a limit of \$25k per project offered under the current Scheme).

This Scheme will supersede the existing Private Undergrounding Scheme.

- **Developer Scheme (with approved ACC contribution)**

The Developer Scheme is similar to the existing Private Undergrounding Scheme and provides opportunities for developers wishing to contribute to the cost for undergrounding infrastructure adjacent to their developments. Such works will improve the presentation of their projects and may increase property values, but may also improve development potential by, for example, removing building set-back requirements caused by overhead infrastructure.

This new Scheme will provide greater incentives through increased Council contributions than the existing Private Undergrounding Scheme. (e.g. up to 50% Council contribution instead of approximately 25% and a limit of \$25k per project offered under the current Scheme).

This new Scheme will supersede the existing Private Undergrounding Scheme.

3.6 All Funding Programs and Schemes will be promoted to maximize the potential for take up.

3.7 Cost reduction initiatives will be investigated to reduce the implementation timeframe, including contestability of ETSA Works (with ETSA/Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA)/State Government).

4. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND CORPORATE POLICY CONTENT

In adopting this policy it is recognised that there are specific legislative requirements to be met as well as other corporate goals.

Relevant legislation and statutory documents include:

- Local Government Act 1999;
- Development Act 1993;
- Australian Standards;
- Adelaide (City) Development Plan;
- Electricity Act 1996;
- Telecommunications Act 1997;
- Adelaide Park Lands Act 2005.

This policy is to be implemented in conjunction with the Council's *Strategic Management Plan* and other relevant Policies and Strategies including:

- - Strategic Management Plan 2004-2007;
 - Lighting Policy and Operating Guidelines;
 - Cabling and Communications Policy;
 - Encroachments Policy and Operating Guidelines;
 - Park Lands Management Strategy;
 - Community Land Management Plans;
 - Streets, Squares and Park Lands: Adelaide's Public Realm;
 - Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Policy and Operating Guidelines.

5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

5.1 Performance measures for monitoring the effectiveness of the Undergrounding Policy are:-

- Extent of undergrounding completed
- Actual cost of completed work relative to construction cost estimates outlined in the Implementation Plan
- Percentage external funding secured

5.2 Review against these measures should be undertaken at least annually.

5.3 Review of the Policy should be undertaken every 3 - 5 years.