

Transport Corridors Scenario

In 2011 a tree fell on a carriage of a commuter train. The initial reaction of State Rail management was to remove trees in the rail corridors. Zero tolerance of interference between trees and rail infrastructure either side of fences was introduced and progressively thousands of trees have been removed and/or severely lopped. Traditionally, transport corridors were tree-lined. A program of woody weed and herbicide application ensured no regrowth alongside almost all 9,400 kilometres of rail line - 6,400 km of which are operational.

The state government is in the process of reviewing used or disused brownfield areas trying to establish a way of increasing the urban canopy to the 40% target to bring down ambient temperatures and utilise growing trees as a carbon sink. The Minister for Transport, Caroline Trainer, started thinking about the disused land under her portfolio, aware of the scarcity of space in the inner city to achieve the urban canopy goals and conscious to offset some of the energy used in transport. She took a 'brownfields' offer to a cabinet meeting. However, there was no way her department would countenance an increase in costs to traveller or freight customers. Furthermore, the land was not land that the Department of Transport would sell or transfer to another department as it may be needed in the future.

The state government decided to hold a series of consultation forums with local governments along the rail corridors to come up with a strategy for greening the brownfields belonging to state rail.

You have been invited to join a "think tank" summit in your LGA aimed at reviewing the hectares of rail land in the LGA that could potentially be used as a carbon sink. With your particular expertise you are joining councillors, council officers and community leaders who have an interest in the project.

The coordinator of the think-tank group has called for members to nominate agenda items for discussion at the first gathering, together with an explanation of why these items are important to discuss, and a breakdown of any associated issues involved. What items, reasons and associated issues would you submit?