

STATE OF OUR REGION

1 JULY 2021- 30 JUNE 2024



Lithgow
CITY COUNCIL

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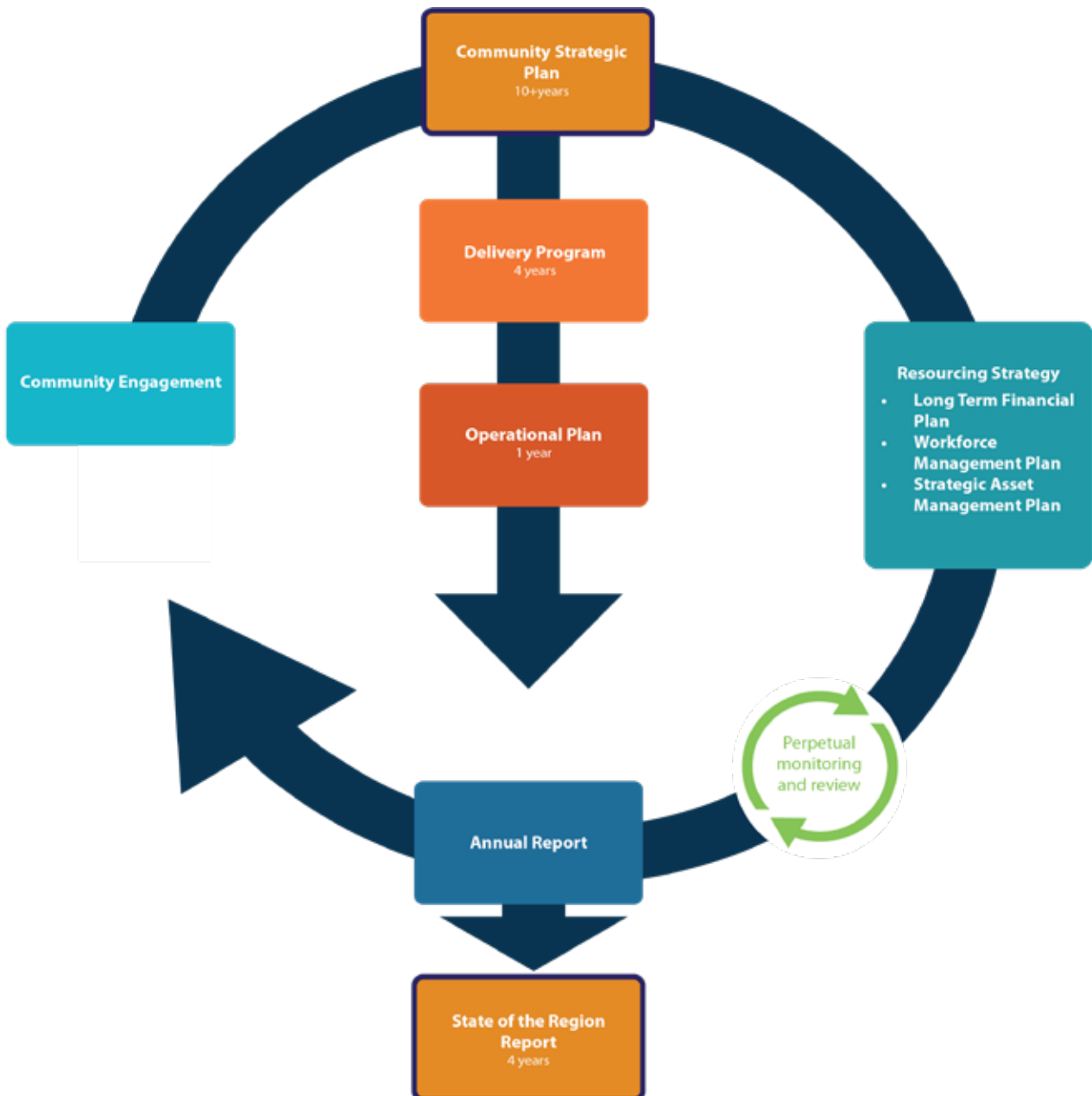
Forged by Fire event at Portland Foundations January 2023

INTEGRATED PLANNING & REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The State of Our Region Report focuses on how effective the Council has been in delivering social, environmental, economic and civic leadership objectives of the Community Strategic Plan 2035 over the 2021-2024 period.

It reports on the Council's progress with delivering the high-level strategies and priorities of the Community Strategic Plan. This report is a requirement under the NSW Local Government Act 1993 and forms part of the Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework recognises that Council's plans and policies do not exist in isolation and are all connected to the delivery of community outcomes. The IPR Framework is demonstrated in the diagram below.



This is the third report tracking the Council's progress since the Council endorsed the initial Community Strategic Plan in June 2012. The following End of Term Reports are available on the Council's website for viewing:

- [End of Term 2016-2021](#)
- [End of Term 2012-2016](#)

This report documents how the Council and other stakeholders have responded over the past four years to strategic directions identified in the Our Place Our Future Community Strategic Plan and progress made towards achieving community goals.

COMMUNITY VISION

A centre of regional excellence that:

- Encourages community growth and development
- Contributes to the efficient and effective management of the environment, community and economy for present and future generations.

COUNCILLORS

Lithgow City Council is represented by nine Councillors including a Mayor elected every two years from within.

Councillors are elected to a four-year term, with the most recent elections occurring in December 2022. That election saw 32 candidates nominated to serve the Lithgow LGA, with Councillors Maree Statham, Cassandra Coleman, Almy Bryce, Cole O'Connor, Darryl Goodwin, Deanna Goodsell, Eric Mahony, Stephen Lesslie and Stuart Mcghie elected.

The impact of COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the 2020 Local Council election being postponed to December 2021, which saw the current term of Council proceeding for a three-year term.

The three year term of the outgoing Council concluded with Local Government elections to be held in September 2024.

During the term of Office, Cr Maree Statham held the office of Mayor for both Mayoral terms, whilst Cr Cass Coleman and Cr Darryl Goodwin served as Deputy Mayors respectively.



Cr Maree Statham
MAYOR



Cr Darryl Goodwin
DEPUTY MAYOR



Cr Almuldena Bryce



Cr Col O'Connor



Cr Cassandra Coleman



Cr Eric Mahony



Cr Stephen Lesslie



Cr Stuart McGhie



Cr Deanna Goodsell



Cr Steve Ring

In May 2023 Councilor Deanna Goodsell resigned from her role as a Councilor.

The Council had previously made a decision that in the event of a vacancy occurring amongst the councilors that was filled by a count back from the results of the 2021 election, there by avoiding the need for a by-election. The count back was conducted by the NSW Electoral Commission.

In June 2023 The NSW Electoral Commission completed the count back electing Steve Ring to the Council.

HOW WE MEASURE PROGRESS

The indicators and targets in the Community Strategic Plan 2035 form the basis of monitoring progress towards its achievements.

Some measures are more ambitious than others and the success in meeting these measures and targets are not solely driven by Council.

All the partners in the community including residents, private sector, community organisations, visitors and other levels of government have a vital role in contributing to the plan's success.

The Council monitors progress using six-monthly publications that report against the Delivery Program and Operational Plan, the Annual Report presented to the November Council meeting, and the State of the Region Report published quadrennially at the end of the Council term. All of these are publicly available on the Council website.



Lithgow Readiness Rally 2022



Community Strategic Plan



COUNCIL & COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Five priority areas were identified by Council and the community during the development of the Community Strategic Plan 2035.



Economic development & tourism - attract more business and people/ job opportunities



Upgrading/ maintaining roads



Services and facilities for children/youth



The shift to energy efficiency/alternative energy



Housing/land availability

AREAS OF FOCUS

1. Housing and Land availability and affordability
2. Supporting and connecting our communities
3. Retaining our youth - providing educational and skills opportunities.
4. Arts, sports and youth precincts
5. Environmental preservation - accessible roads, trails, lighting
6. Improving communication to the community
7. Improving customer service

FOCUS AREA 1

Housing and Land
availability and
affordability



Council is investing in the future with a new Link Road at Bowenfels linking for the Three Trees Subdivision at Bowenfels.

Housing role and function

With the variety of residential and rural locations, different areas within the Lithgow City Council area have developed different roles within the housing market. The Lithgow Growth Area (Bowenfels and South Bowenfels - Littleton - South Littleton) are attractive to both young families as well as some retirees. The established Lithgow Urban Area (Lithgow - Hermitage Flat and Morts Estate - Oakey Park - Vale of Clwydd), which includes the only medium density offer in the council area, attract a larger share of mature families, young adults and downsizers.

The townships of Portland and Wallerawang attract young families, while mature families and older couples without children are more attracted to the 'rural residential' options that Rural North - Marrangaroo and Rural South - Little Hartley offer.

The variety of function and role of the small areas in the Lithgow City Council area means that population outcomes differ significantly across the LGA.

Housing supply

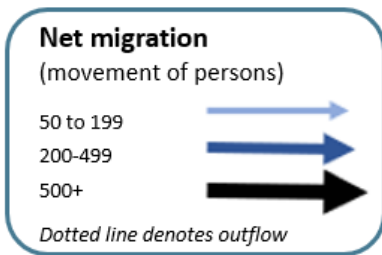
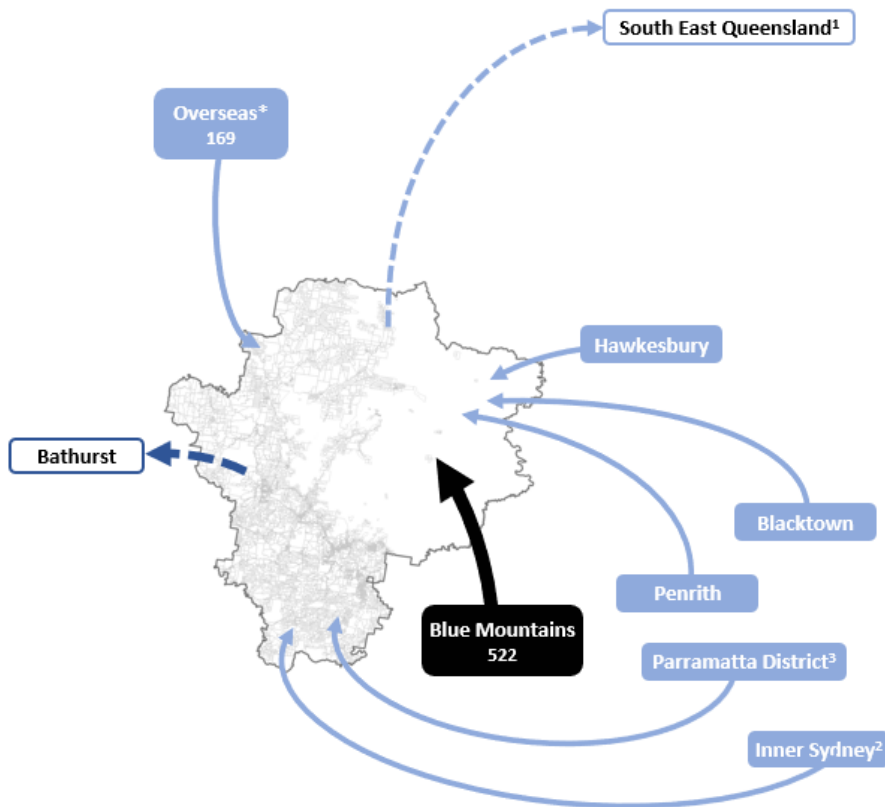
There are also significant differences in the supply of residential property within the LGA which will have a major influence in structuring different population and household futures within the Lithgow City Council area. Greenfield development has been most pronounced in the South Bowenfels - Littleton - South Littleton area in recent years, while infill has progressed at the highest rate in Rural South - Little Hartley.

In the near term, greenfield development is projected to significantly intensify in the Bowenfels small area, driving the greatest increase in dwellings in the council area. Substantive infill opportunities in the Lithgow - Hermitage Flat and District and the Portland areas are projected to amplify through the forecast period.

Morts Estate - Oakey Park - Vale of Clyydd, and Wallerawang - Lidsdale are expected to have decline in dwelling growth.

Rural North - Marrangaroo contains the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area that offers significant potential to accommodate future growth. However, the Marrangaroo URA will not be considered in this forecast until there's greater certainty around the release times.

Migration patterns



^{*} For comparison, net overseas migration for Lithgow in the 2011-2016 period was +167

¹ Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast and Brisbane council areas contributing to figure

² Sydney and Inner West council areas contributing to figure

³ Cumberland and Parramatta council areas contributing to figure

Note: The migration flows depicted above are historical and do not represent future or forecast migration flows or subsequent council boundary changes. The arrows represent migration flows to the area as a whole and do not indicate an origin or destination for any specific localities within the area. Overseas flow shows overseas arrivals based on answers to the census question “where did the person usually live 5-years ago” and .id estimates of international out-migration.

*Please note, the 2021 Census was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time where border restrictions had largely halted overseas in-migration for the 15 months prior. 2016-2021 net overseas migration levels reflect this and therefore should not necessarily be considered indicative of longer-term trends.

Source: <https://forecast.id.com.au/lithgow/drivers-of-population-change>

In-migration is highest in the **55+ demographic**

Out-migration centred on population aged between **18-24**

Retirees are moving from **Blue Mountains and western Sydney**, attracted by **Lithgow’s livability and affordability.**

Demographics interest in **Tertiary education and independence** are moving to centres with better education and employment opportunities, namely Bathurst and Newcastle.

A significant group of **working age population** in the Blue Mountains have also moved to **Lithgow for more affordable living**, while continuing employment outside of the area.

Assumptions - 2024-2046

The population for Lithgow City Council is forecast to increase by 305 persons (15.51% growth), at an average annual change of 0.82%.

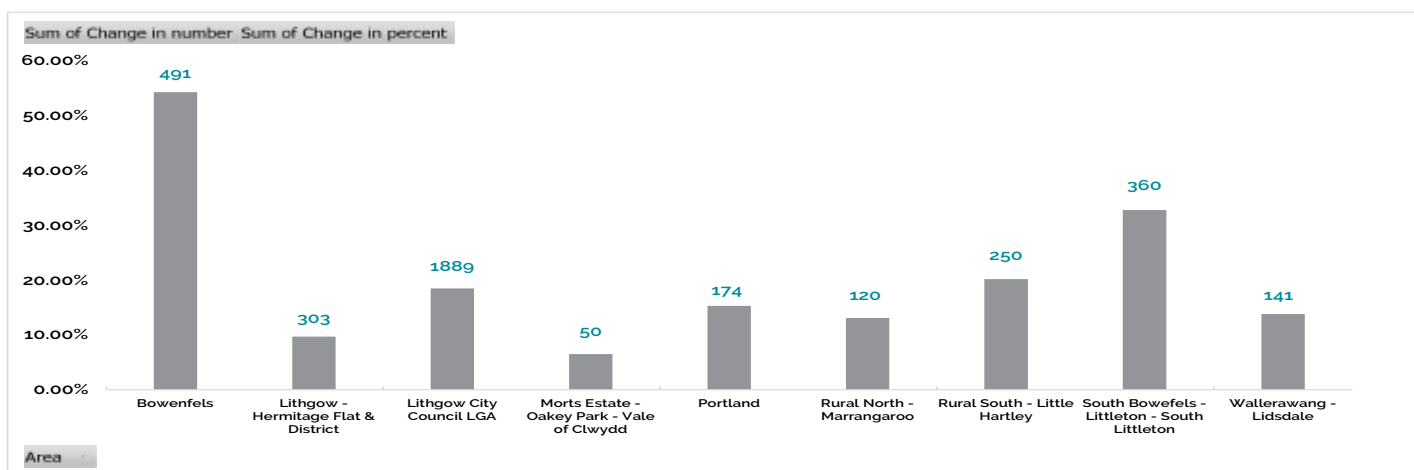
Residential development forecasts assume the number of dwellings in Lithgow City Council will increase by an average of 76 dwellings per annum to 12,088 in 2046.

The greatest increase to persons aged 0-16 in the LGA will be in Hermitage Flat.

Bowenfels is forecast to have:

- The greatest increase in development of new dwellings in Lithgow City Council.
- The greatest increase in development of new dwellings for 'group households' in the LGA.

Forecast locations for residential development 2021-2046



Source: Population and household forecasts, 2021 to 2046, prepared by .id (informed decisions), January 2023

Key findings

- In 2021, the total population of Lithgow City Council was estimated to be 20,939 people. It is expected to increase by over 1,792 people to 22,731 by 2031, at an average annual growth rate of 0.82%. This is based on an increase of over 730 households during the period.
- The greatest population change for Lithgow City Council is forecast for the period from 2027 to 2031, which is expected to have a net increase of 1,140 people.
- Between 2021 and 2031, the age structure forecasts for Lithgow City Council indicate a 9.2% increase in population under working age, a 13.4% increase in population of retirement age, and a 6.4% increase in population of working age.
- In 2021, the largest age group for persons in Lithgow City Council was between 55 to 59, which accounted for 7.5% of the total persons.
- The largest increase in persons between 2021 and 2031 is forecast to be aged between 80 to 84, which is expected to increase by 249 and account for 3.7% of the total persons.
- The largest 5 year age group in 2031 is 65 to 69 years, with a total of 1,642 persons.
- In 2021, the dominant household type in Lithgow City Council was 'Lone person households', and by 2031 the largest forecast increase is expected in 'Lone person households'.
- In 2021, the dominant household type in Lithgow City Council was Lone person households, which accounted for 33.3% of all households.
- The largest increase between 2021 and 2031 is forecast to be in Lone person households, which will increase by 232 households and account for 33.2% of all households.
- In contrast Other families is forecast to increase by 16 households, to comprise 2.0% of all households in 2031, compared to 2.0% in 2021.

Median pricing snapshot for housing

August 2023 - July 2024

Lithgow Property Market

Rentals - supply demand & performance

\$400 pw

0.0%

Median price based on 243 property listings over the August 2023- July 2024 period.

\$300 pw

-14.3%

Median price based on 4 unit listings over the August 2023 - July 2024 period.

252 renters

Number of houses in Lithgow leased on realestate.com.au August 2023- July 2024.

24 houses
& 4 Units

Available for rent in July 2024

328 renters

Number of people seriously interested in rental listings in Lithgow in July 2024.

Sales - supply demand & performance

\$512,000

+2.4%

Median price based on 151 house listings over the August 2023- July 2024 period.

69 days

The median number of days in the 2023-2024 financial year, a property have been listed on the market prior to their final sale.

45 houses

Number of houses in Lithgow for sale on realestate.com.au August 2023- July 2024.

109 sold

in the past 12 months.

966 buyers

Number of people seriously interested in buying houses in Lithgow in July 2024.

4.1% rental
yield

The annual rent earned on a property as a % of the properties market value.

Summary

In July 2024, Lithgow had 28 properties available for rent and 46 properties for sale. The median housing price for 2023-24 is \$512,000. Investment property - houses in Lithgow rent out for \$400 PW with an annual rental yield of 4.1% and units rent for \$300 PW with a rental yield of 3.8%. Lithgow has seen an annual compound growth rate of 2.4% for houses.

Source: www.realestate.com.au/nsw/lithgow-2790/



Median pricing snapshot for housing

August 2023 - July 2024

Wallerawang Property Market

Rentals - supply demand & performance

\$470 pw

-3.9%

Median price based on 151 property listings over the August 2023- July 2024 period.

\$282 pw

+6.6%

Median price based on 10 unit & apartment listings over the August 2023 - July 2024 period.

43 renters

Number of houses in Wallerawang leased on realestate.com.au August 2023- July 2024.

4 houses
& 2 Units

Available for rent in July 2024

53 renters

Number of people seriously interested in rental listings in Wallerawang in July 2024.

Sales - supply demand & performance

\$540,000

+4.1%

Median price based on 151 house listings over the August 2023- July 2024 period.

78 days

The median number of days in the 2023-2024 financial year, a property have been listed on the market prior to their final sale.

15 houses

Number of houses in Wallerawang for sale on realestate.com.au August 2023- July 2024.

31 sold

in the past 12 months

401 buyers

Number of people seriously interested in buying houses in Wallerawang in July 2024.

4.5% rental
yield

The annual rent earned on a property as a % of the properties market value.

Summary

In July 2024, Wallerawang had 6 properties available for rent and 15 properties for sale. Median sold prices over the last year is \$540,000 for houses. Investment property - houses in Wallerawang rent out for \$470 PW with an annual rental yield of 4.5% and units rent for \$282 PW with a rental yield of 3.1%. Wallerawang has seen an annual compound growth rate of 4.1% for houses.

Source: www.realestate.com.au/nsw/wallerawang-2845/



Portland Property Market

Rentals - supply demand & performance

\$395 pw

+9%

Median price based on 151 house listings over the August 2023- July 2024 period.

- pw

0.0%

Median price based on total number of unit listings over the August 2023 - July 2024 period.

10 renters

Number of houses in Portland leased on realestate.com.au August 2023- July 2024.

10 houses & 0 Units

Available for rent in July 2024

87 renters

Number of people seriously interested in rental listings in Portland in July 2024.

Sales - supply demand & performance

\$410,000

-17.8%

Median price based on 151 house listings over the August 2023- July 2024 period.

112 days

The median number of days in the 2023-2024 financial year, a property have been listed on the market prior to their final sale.

35 houses

Number of houses in Portland for sale on realestate.com.au August 2023- July 2024.

33 sold

in the past 12 months

640 buyers

Number of people seriously interested in buying houses in Portland in July 2024.

4.7% rental yield

The annual rent earned on a property as a % of the properties market value.

Summary

In July 2024, Portland had 10 properties available for rent and 35 properties for sale. Median sold prices over the last year is \$410,000 for houses. Investment property - houses in Portland rent out for \$395 PW with an annual rental yield of 4.7%. Portland has seen an annual compound growth rate of -17.8% for houses.

Source: www.realestate.com.au/nsw/portland-2847/



FOCUS AREA 2

Supporting and
connecting our
communities



Since 2016, the cumulative effects of natural disasters and COVID-19 placed enormous economic, environmental and social pressure on the Council and its community. The following highlights the cumulative effects that these ongoing disasters are having as one event rolls into the next.

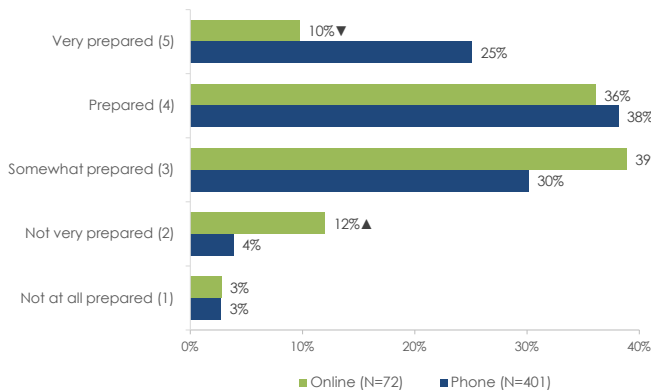
Following the Gaspers Mountain Megafire (2019), the Lithgow local government area has experienced 8 separate disaster events following significant rain events.

During 2022 average annual rainfall in the Lithgow area was over 170% relative to previously recorded levels. This culminated in 400% above average monthly rainfall in July. On top of rising water tables this caused the breakup of the road surface and potholes throughout the LGA in the second half of 2022.

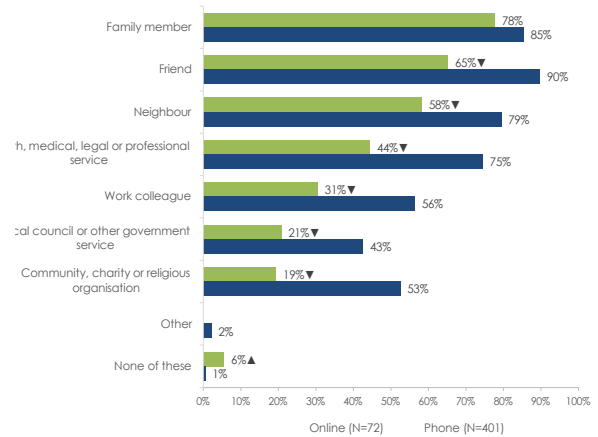
The COVID 19 pandemic continued to impact the community. During 2021 some community events & services such as Libraries continued to feel the negative ramifications of COVID-19 restrictions resulting in cancellation of annual events such as NAIDOC Celebrations and imposition of limits on the number of visitors to the libraries

Communicating and facilitating access to information and recovery resources is important. Council established the Community Resilience Network to bring together local community and support organisations who collectively work on addressing emerging needs and connect people.

How prepared do you feel you and/or your family are for shocks and stressors?



Who could you ask for support in a crisis?



The 2021 Community Survey conducted by Micromex Consulting identified that:

- Online respondents (n=72) are significantly less likely to feel prepared for significant shocks and stressors, with 85% feeling at least somewhat prepared (compared to 93% of phone respondents n= 401).
- 78% of online respondents could ask a family member for support in a crisis, and 65% could ask a friend.

Resilient communities

The Council has continued to work with the community to build resilience, and equip the community with the tools to encourage preparedness during disaster and times of crisis. These programs were delivered by the Community Resilience Officer and funded under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLERF) and Disaster Risk Reduction Fund (DRRF)

The programs targeted vulnerable communities to design, and provided specialised training programs, communication tools and activities to encourage risk reduction and resilience.

Working with Central West Media, Council delivered 'Self Care in uncertain times' as part of Women's Health Week (2021). The

event, held over due to Covid-19 lockdowns, provided 40 women the opportunity to have an honest discussion, and share real-life experiences on the impact of bushfires, social isolation, followed by advice focusing on maintaining good physical and mental health as well as practical advice to cope with such challenging times.

As part of the 2021 Seniors Festival, Lithgow City Council and Lithgow Red Cross delivered a [Get Ready Seniors talk on emergency preparedness](#) to 39 community members. The event aimed to help Seniors make informed choices about preparing and planning for emergencies.

In partnership with the Chifley / Lithgow Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), the Council coordinated a [Main Street Banner campaign](#) at the commencement of the

statutory Bush Fire Danger Period (BFDP), encouraging families, friends and neighbours to use a range of available Get Ready information to prepare and start a broader conversation about being aware of and prepared for all hazards.

Over 3,500 'Grab & Go' Emergency Evacuation Document Pouches were made available for residents to collect from the Council Administration Centre, Visitor Information Centre, Libraries and from community organisations or at resilience events.

Resilient communities

Council coordinated the development and distribution of [Mental Health Fact Sheets for the Lithgow LGA](#) in partnership with National Resource Recovery Agency, Resilience NSW and NSW Health. They were distributed via:

- A Health Hub and Recovery Services Display at the 2021 and 2022 Lithgow Shows; and
- Men's health week events at Clarence & Dargan and Running Stream.

The Council partnered with the Lithgow Information Neighbourhood Centre to deliver [Connection and Wellbeing programs](#) which included:

- Offering residents sessions on Managing Stress with Mindfulness, Art Therapy, Yoga, Story Writing and Resilience.
- A series of [Pop Up Cafes](#) at Glen Davis, Dargan, Running Stream and Tarana.
- As part of Lithgow City Council's ongoing efforts to increase community preparedness and resilience in relation to future disaster events, Council formed a working partnership with Autism Step Australia to hold an [Autism Awareness for Emergency Situations workshop](#) at the Lithgow Information and Neighbourhood Centre. Over 30 people and 14 organisations were in attendance.

Partnering with Be Ready Belong Blue Mountains, four Person-Centered Emergency Planning Workshops were delivered across the LGA. These free workshops assisted members of the community with developing a personalised Emergency Plan. The workshop helped participants identify:

- What emergencies could happen where they live.
- Where to get timely information about those emergencies.
- What specific help you will need in an emergency.
- Where to get help when you are in need.

Additionally, 18 residents from the Capertee region attended a nationally recognised first aid training course

UHF radio communications training was held for residents living in the Bell, Clarence, Dargan and Glen Davis. These events included geographical mapping and identification of strategic locations for holding radio equipment proceeded by the distribution of 16 radio handsets to residents and physical testing of the appointed communications network across the mountainous terrain.

This promoted [collaboration](#) between local communities, Council, and other stakeholders through ongoing communication and meeting with local residents to develop projects and initiatives.



Building community resilience - Pop-up Cafe at Dargan.

Resilient communities - a summary of outcomes

Reduced the severity of emergencies

- Helped residents to maintain communication across critically effected areas during times of disaster;
- Endowed community members with certified medical first aid skills;
- Distributed emergency event pouches to help preserve critically important personal, family, and household documentation.

Created **cooperative partnerships** between Council and local Non-Government Organisation service providers to run training and workshop sessions.

Reduced and mitigated vulnerabilities

- Provided written information on how to prepare for emergency events;
- Provided written information on how to plan for and respond to emergency events;
- Provided written information on who they may seek assistance from after the arrival of emergency events;

Place-based solutions

- Targeted and focused project implementation in the most vulnerable and geographically isolated areas;
- Continued efforts to engage residents of vulnerable communities and involve them in risk identification, risk mitigation, problem solving, and the conducting of initiatives.

Equipped with knowledge

- Conducted electronic communications equipment training;
- Increased the number of residents with qualifications and skills in delivering medical first aid interventions;
- Assisted in the creation of an emergency disaster related opportunities and written a gap analysis report specific for Lithgow.

Piloted new **risk reduction tools** and **technologies** including the distribution of UHF radio communications equipment across two especially vulnerable regions of the LGA; Clarence Dargan & Bell and the Capertee Valley.

Factored **disaster risk** information into **planning** and assisted in the creation of an emergency disaster related opportunities and gap analysis report specific for Lithgow. This included assisting especially vulnerable communities to factor into their disaster preparation and response plans and activities geographical mapping for emergency coordination and information dissemination in communications blackspots.

Established the Lithgow Community Resilience Network

Hosted 3 Lithgow Readiness Rallies

Became a “Get Ready Council” Helping residents & business prepare for disasters

Flood & COVID response, management & Recovery

Supported community-led activities, including community consultations, anniversary, and memorial events

Supported residents in the Coronal inquiry/ inquest into the 2019/20 bushfires

Connected communities with external agencies such as services, universities, charities and other groups.

FOCUS AREA 3

Retaining our youth - providing educational and skills opportunities



Our young people are our future - Students from Lithgow High School at the Lithgow Transformation Hub

Lithgow City Council acknowledges that transitioning our economy also requires developing opportunities to retain our youth. The Australian Governments Productivity Inquiry Report (2023) states *“the evolving nature of the modern economy also means that the workforce needs to be able to easily upskill and reskill as job roles change including because of the introduction of new technologies. Meeting this challenge requires academic and vocational education systems that can provide the workforce with both solid foundational skills — such as the ability to problem solve and to think critically — as well as equipping workers with the specialist (or vocational) knowledge required for specific roles”*¹

Although residents agree that the cost of living in Lithgow is affordable and that there is a good range of community groups and support networks, they are least likely to agree that there is a good range of opportunities for:

- Themselves and their families;
- Cultural and artistic expression; or
- Leisure and recreation.

These lifestyle choices, along with access to education and jobs are all important factors in retaining young people in our area. However, young people between the ages of 18-24 are moving to larger centres that offer education and employment opportunities and lifestyle choices.

In 2023, Lithgow City Council adopted the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP). It acknowledges the impacts changes in the Australian energy sector have on Lithgow’s economy with its strong reliance on coal mining and coal-fired power generation, noting that *“...coal mining and electricity supply, including the local businesses that service them, contribute almost 46 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) to the Lithgow economy and employ more than 16% of our workforce”*.

15-year Productivity Inquiry: Advancing Prosperity- Volume 8 (p52) From Learning to Growth <https://www.pc.gov.au/ongoing/report-on-government-services> (Report No. 100 - 7 February 2023)

In 2022, IPART granted the Council a Special Rate Variation that included a funding allocation towards transitioning the Lithgow economy. The transition will require ambition, leadership and significant effort to attract new investment for expansion of industries and businesses, and creating diverse, skilled jobs for workers and young people currently employed in coal and energy sectors.

A key focus of the plan is the provision of education opportunities and delivering Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts Mathematics, (STEAM) facilities for local primary and secondary students is part of a targeted strategy to encourage Lithgow's economic transition to new technologies.

The LEEP acknowledges that building on our strengths and ensuring "Lithgow's economy has sectoral diversity and businesses that attract and retain the workforce they need is key to ensuring that Lithgow's community is diverse, with more families and young people who are drawn to the quality of life, affordable housing and good education-to-employment pathways."²

The LEEP 5 year action plan targets jobs for the future in growth areas in the following sectors which will provide education and employment opportunities for youth:

- **Industrials: Manufacturing Industries** - defence, renewable energy components and clean technologies, circular economy integration and transport equipment.
- **Tourism: Destination of choice** - ecotourism, extreme sports, regional tourism.
- **Health care and social assistance** - Positioning Lithgow at the forefront of healthy ageing, providing local services to meet unmet demand, developing a Lithgow Health, Ageing and Innovation Precinct, providing services and products for new models of care, Retirement villages, in-community ageing and residential aged care services.
- **Public Administration and Safety Industries** - linking to the Western City metropolis and potential for a multi-modal transport hub That would mobilise and encourage the sharing of workers between the city and regional destinations.

Out-migration

centred on population

aged between **18-24**

Tertiary and recently independent age groups

are moving largely to centres with better education and employment opportunities, namely Bathurst and Newcastle.

A significant group

of **working age**

population in the Blue Mountains have also moved to

Lithgow for more affordable living,

while maintaining access to their employment outside of the area.

² Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan <https://www.leep.lithgow.com/transition-plan/>

FOCUS AREA 4

Arts, sports and
youth precincts



16% of the
community would
like see
“more recreational
areas and activities
for families and kids
to do within the
LGA”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey
n=400 - October 2024)



The Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP) identifies Tourism, which includes accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services and retail trade as a priority sector within the Transition Plan. This sector has capacity for rapid growth and is able to leverage significant capital investments for infrastructure and to create jobs as part of the emerging economy.

The Lithgow local government area (LGA) supports around 204 mostly locally owned tourism businesses and receives approximately 598,000 visitors annually.

Creative Communities

The Lithgow LGA has a vibrant arts community and the sector is growing, taking advantage of the opportunity for adaptive reuse of heritage buildings. This has seen the formation of arts clusters developing in Lithgow and Portland.

In Lithgow we see a surge of cultural venues Gang Gang Gallery, Art House at the Pottery, Lithgow Library Learning Centre, Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra Lithgow Transformation Hub and The Union Theatre along with artists shopfronts; Second Hand Book Shops and cafe's featuring entertainment.

Lithgow seeks to breathe new life into the CBD which has art at its heart; murals, laneway installations, vibrant park spaces, banners and a multilayered light installation in Cook Street Plaza.

Portland, “the town that built Sydney” is embracing its heritage and unique character; The Silos murals celebrate the people who lived and worked at the Cement works, while the ‘Murals of Yesteryear’ are a reminder of our nations past.

Developments such as The Foundations (see p26), Letterheads, Signature Framing and the Annual Portland Art Show market Portland as the festival location to visit.

Value added by industry sector Arts & Recreation Services	2022/23			2017/18			Change
	\$m	%	NSW	\$m	%	NSW	
Arts and Recreation Services	2.8	0.2	0.8	3.4	0.2	0.9	-0.6
• Heritage Activities	0.7	0.1	0.1	1.2	0.1	0.1	-0.5
• Creative & Performing Arts Activities	0.8	0.1	0.4	1.5	0.1	0.2	-0.7
• Sports and Recreation Activities	1.2	0.1	0.4	0.7	0.0	0.3	+0.5
• Gambling Activities	0	0	0.1	0	0	0.2	-

Value added by industry is an indicator of business productivity in Lithgow City Council. It shows how productive each industry sector is at increasing the value of its inputs. It is a more refined measure of the productivity of an industry sector than output (total gross revenue), as some industries have high levels of output but require large amounts of input expenditure to achieve that.

By comparing the value added of each industry sector to a regional benchmark, you can clearly see the structure of Lithgow City Council's economy. This can be done by directly comparing the percentage contribution of each industry to the total output, relative to the benchmark, or by using a location quotient, where a number greater than one indicates a high concentration of that industry and less than one indicates a lower concentration.

Productivity per worker by industry sector Arts & Recreation Services	2022/23		2017/18		Change
	\$m	NSW	\$m	NSW	
Arts and Recreation Services	23,492	71,842	39,334	69,545	-15,391
• Heritage Activities	25,397	54,367	52,418	62,926	-27,021
• Creative & Performing Arts Activities	36,941	69,768	49,517	70,105	-12,576
• Sports and Recreation Activities	18,723	65,269	20,646	48,963	-1,923
• Gambling Activities	0	150,533	0	177,281	-

Worker productivity by industry is calculated by dividing the industry value add by the number of persons employed in the industry. It shows which industries generate the most value add per employee.

Source: <https://economy.id.com.au/lithgow?lndkey=23018>

Generating **\$2.8m** in 2022/23

99 people were employed in **Art & Recreation Services** at the time of the 2021 Census, compared to **89** in 2016.

64 residents employed in **Art & Recreation Services** lived in the LGA at the time of the 2021 Census data, compared to **55** in 2016.

2021 Key Statistics

Males = 56

Females = 58

15-24 years = 18

25-54 years = 60

55-64 years = 21

65 years + = 12

Professionals = 31

Community and

Personal Service Workers = 21

Technicians and Trades workers = 14

Full time employment = 39

Part time employment = 63

Bachelor or higher degree = 24

Advanced diploma or diploma = 10

Certificate level = 32

No qualifications = 32

Less than \$500 = 23

\$500 - \$1,999 = 62

\$2,000 or more = 7

Born overseas = 3

Creative communities

The Foundations is a burgeoning arts, recreation and housing precinct in the heart of Portland featuring the silo murals by artist Guido Van Helten and sculptures by artist-in-residence, Harrie Fasher. The site is home to the Glen Museum, The Annexe; a co-work space, makers space, gallery and pop-up cafe that hosts regular markets and events and recreational trout fishing in the Mill Pond.

In April 2024, 6 fully restored heritage listed cottages (duplexes) were made available as residential rental properties.

86 hectare master planned community project in Portland NSW

Located on the State Heritage listed **Portland Cement Works Site**

6 Significant heritage buildings for cultural and business use

3 large lakes and multiple greenspace areas adjoining the town centre

300 residential lot subdivision
with rollout completed by **2029**

90,000m²
B4 zoned land suitable for **accommodation, wellness, tourism, hospitality, aged care** etc.

\$10 Billion in government funded projects committed

Over **\$3billion** in private funded projects committed

Source: <https://thefoundations.com.au/>

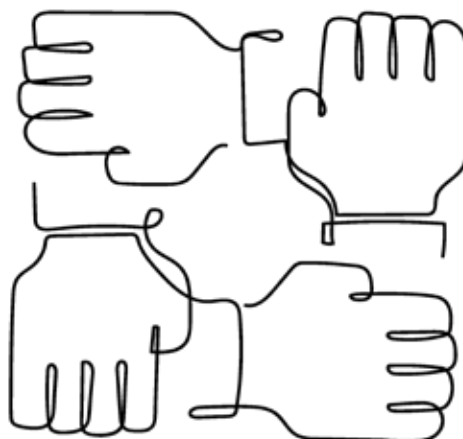




Community Mural Projects

5 Murals have been created in key locations across the Lithgow CBD; Queen Elizabeth Park (toilet block), Lithgow Library Learning Centre (back wall), the PCYC, the Lithgow Workmen’s Club and Cook Street Plaza (Post Office Wall - scheduled for painting in September 2024). The program is funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Agency. The five murals represent people, place and planet. They are part of a larger project to create a public arts trail in Lithgow. The project was coordinated by Sharon Howard from the Gang Gang Gallery, Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra Lithgow Transformation Hub and employed a number of artists from across the region.

The Regent Honeyeater soundscape and mural was installed in the toilet facility at the Capertee Rest Area. The project was supported by Birdlife Australia, Central Tablelands Local Land Services and the National Landcare program and uses imagery and a motion-triggered sound system to play the Regent Honeyeater’s call as you walk past raising awareness of this critically endangered songbird.



Health statistics

47 is the median age for Lithgow LGA

32.2% of residents are 60 years or older

32% of residents live in single person households

7.6% of residents require assistance due to disability

14% of residents are daily or irregular smokers

38.9% of the population reported one or more health conditions, a higher rate than in Regional NSW (37.0%).

The most prevalent diagnosis for residents are:

hypertension (22.7%)
hyperlipidaemia (7.3%)
osteoarthritis (12.4%)
depression (9.5%)
anxiety (9.0%)

The top 3 self reported health conditions Central NSW are:

Condition	Lithgow LGA %	Central NSW %
Arthritis	13.9%	11.5%
Asthma	9.8%	10.1%
Mental Health Condition	10.7%	9.7%

72% of residents are overweight or obese

The impact of obesity on health care is significant. In 2018, the Department of Health and Aged Care reported that obesity costs the Australian community \$11.8 billion annually. If nothing is done, it may balloon to \$87.7 billion annually by 2032.

Treatments for people living with obesity typically cost between 20–40 per cent more per hospital interaction than those in the healthy weight range, regardless of the reason for the treatment.

Sports precincts

11 sports fields

1 pump track

3 skate parks

Lithgow
Wallerawang
Portland

Marrangaroo Golf Course and Portland Golf Course

JM Robson Aquatic Centre and Portland Olympic Pool

Lithgow Indoor Sports Centre

Wallerawang Indoor Sports & Recreation Centre

The **Tony Luchetti Sporting Precinct** comprised of a number of disconnected sporting facilities that lack cohesion and identity. The precinct, in the centre of Lithgow city encompasses 44.94ha (111 acres) of open space active and passive recreational space and associated indoor facilities including:

- Tony Luchetti Sportsground
- Jim Monaghan Athletics Track
- Lithgow Indoor Sports Centre

- Skatepark
- Conran Oval
- Watsford Oval
- Glanmire Oval
- Lithgow Tennis Courts
- lithgow Croquet Pitch
- Marjorie Jackson Oval

In first half of 2024, the Council commissioned D. B. Consulting to develop a Masterplan for the Tony Luchetti Sporting Precinct.

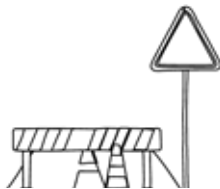
The Masterplan sets out a vision and recommendations which will enable Council to attract grant funding to develop the facility into a premier sporting facility for the Lithgow LGA.

The Masterplan will be presented to the newly elected Council.



FOCUS AREA 5

Environmental preservation/
mitigation and
accessible roads,
trails, lighting



Washout on Peachtree Road, Megalong following the March 2022 storm event.

In recent years following the Gospers Mountain Megafire (2019) and significant rain events, the Lithgow local government area has experienced 8 separate disaster events.

Importantly, one should not consider the impacts of these events in isolation.

If an LGA experiences a natural disaster, assets are weakened and damaged as a result. If, before there is an opportunity to repair that asset, a second natural disaster impacts strikes before there's an opportunity to make reparations, the damage caused is compounded.

During **2022** average annual rainfall in the Lithgow area was over **170%** of historic levels. The Lithgow LGA suffered **seven disasters** over a very short period.

This level of rainfall on top of rising water tables caused the breakup of the road surface and potholes on many of the roads throughout the LGA in the second half of 2022.

This is an unprecedented situation that Lithgow's assets were not built to withstand. The impacts of climate change can no longer be ignored. Lithgow's future is likely to be characterised by similar future events.

8 natural disaster
declarations for the
Lithgow Local Government Area
(LGA) between
2019 - 2024

The total cost of these
disasters to the Lithgow LGA
is approximately

\$326 MILLION

Wolgan Valley

PLUS

\$26 MILLION

24 roads across the LGA

Advocating for a better model of funding for Disaster Recovery Works

Natural Disaster declarations are issued by the NSW Government. Communities with a natural disaster declaration can access a range of special assistance measures. Since 2019, the Lithgow LGA has been issued eight natural disaster declarations resulting in 26 roads across the LGA including Wolgan Gap, Brown's Gap Road and Megalong Road being declared natural disasters.

Despite having spent more than \$13 million on disaster recovery works, the lengthy and retrospective process of then seeking reimbursement caused financial hardship for Council, resulting in numerous projects across the LGA being delayed (including ongoing natural disaster works) until these funds were recouped.

Regional and rural councils do not have the financial capacity to carry large outflows of funds for disaster recovery works, without offsets from the government. As a result, road repairs and other works must be phased, meaning the community's recovery from the effects of disasters is delayed longer causing ongoing community angst and frustration.

Lithgow City Council (in conjunction with other Councils) has successfully advocated for changes to the government guidelines which required the Council to undertake and fund the works and then claim those funds back.

Lithgow Council's advocacy for improved processes for funding disaster recovery works resulted in an upfront payment of \$33 million from the NSW State Government to fund current road and infrastructure damage claims submitted under the Disaster Recovery Program.

Although the funding has been received, the individual claims for each road must still be processed and approved by the NSW Government before works are able to commence. The Council has pre-approved local contractors to undertake the works as each claim is approved, however the ongoing approvals process continues to be protracted.

In total 26 roads were listed for Disaster Recovery Funding across the LGA including Wolgan Gap, Browns Gap and Megalong Valley. In 2024, an upfront amount of **\$33 million funding** was received for claims submitted by the Council for the following roads.

- Glen Alice Road – Glen Alice to Mt Marsden (completed)
- Pipers Flat Road – Rydal Road to John Mackey Drive
- Portland/Sunny Corner Road, Portland – Sloggetts Lane to Sunny Corner Road
- Hartley Vale Road, Hartley Valley – Browns Gap Road to LGA Boundary
- Mid Hartley Road, Hartley Valley – Browns Gap Road to Great Western Highway
- Fields Road Hartley Vale – Browns Gap Road to Hartley Vale Road (completed)
- Blackheath Creek Road, Hartley Valley – Cox's River Road to Mill Creek Road.
- Lowther Siding Road, Lowther – Jenolan Caves Road to Ganbenang.
- Wolgan Road Lidsdale – Maddocks Lane to Council Waste Transfer Station.
- Magpie Hollow Road, South Bowenfels – Great Western Highway to Rydal-Hampton Road.
- Sodwalls Road, Sodwalls – Tarana to Rydal-Hampton Road.
- Marsden Swamp Road – Landslip
- Range Road – Pipers Flat Road to Great Western Highway
- Wolgan Road, Wolgan Valley – Donkey Steps to Barton Creek Bridge
- Dark Corner Road, (sealed section) – Cupitts Lane to Wattle Creek Road

Wolgan Valley Reconstruction Project

\$326M

Project

grant funding application
submitted

June 2024

71 residents

11 dwellings

(private residences, farms &
tourist destinations)

1 luxury resort; Emirates
One & Only

(closed for operation)



Wolgan Valley is formed by the Wolgan River in mountainous country. the river flows generally east, joining the Capertee River, and then becomes the Colo River.

The locality of Newnes (located in the Valley) area grew out of the Commonwealth Oil Shale Company operations at Newnes Junction. The ruins of the shale oil mine processing are a popular attraction to this day.

Wolgan Road was closed to traffic in November 2022 by Council due to the high risk of harm resulting from continued slope instability caused by landslide and rockfall onto the road in several sections.

Council engaged Public Works to construct an interim alternate access road along the eastern side of the Wolgan Gap based closely on the route of an existing historic track known as the Donkey Steps.

This access has provided some relief by allowing restricted access for residents but is not suitable as a permanent all vehicle access solution in replacement of the original (now closed) road on the western side of the valley.

The structural failure of the Wolgan Road has been deemed a disaster and it therefore eligible for funding under the Disaster Recovery Funding arrangement, funded by the Australian Government's National Emergency Management Agency.

In April 2024, Council representatives met with Sir Tim Clark, President of Emirates who affirmed his commitment to re-opening its Wolgan Valley Resort as soon as possible and to supporting "...council in its application to the government for funds to construct a brand-new road into the valley." (media release 10 April 2024 www.council.lithgow.com)

Since 2022, the Council has worked with the community, state and federal governments to compile the necessary information required to submit with the grant application. In 2024, Council appointed Wassabi Group to manage the project.

The impacts of the ongoing road closure on businesses and the mental health and wellbeing of residents in the Wolgan Valley

At first, I thought I could handle it, but now as the solution appears to move further away, we are going downhill mentally...quite quickly. It is getting to the point where I just breakdown.

Hasn't helped (uncertainty and unknowns: ability to attend school and work, and other sporting/social activities (including swim lessons); loss of job earnings; our future residency in valley; loss of property value; insurance implications, duration of access predicament.

My freedom is at stake, I can't afford a new car or even fathom driving a 4wd goat track in to work every day. You are putting my sanity in jeopardy and my children's freedom or liberties to live. These school holidays they are isolated and not allowed to go anywhere.

After the fires, COVID and now unable to reliably or regularly access our home, or gain business income, my mental health has suffered significantly. I am stressed, anxious and emotional, feeling lost and not able to perform my day job to my usual standard. I have sought medical assistance and take medication to treat anxiety and depression.

Source: Extracts Wolgan Valley Community Survey - June 2024 Community Update <https://council.lithgow.com/projects/wolgan-gap/>



One&Only

RESORT CLOSURE

Following the indefinite closure of Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley in June 2023 in response to resort's ongoing challenges with road access, a decision has been taken to cease One&Only Resorts' management contract with the property. The decision is mutual, agreed by Emirates, the resort's owner, and One&Only Resorts, the management operator of the property. Both Emirates and One&Only Resorts expressed their pride in the resort's achievements, especially in the area of sustainable luxury travel, and also deep regret for those whose businesses and livelihoods have been affected by the closure.

FOCUS AREA 6

Improving
communication to
the community

59% of residents disagree/strongly disagree that 'information about Council and its decisions is clear and accessible'.

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



The 2021 Community Satisfaction Survey conducted by Micromex Research noted that 26% of the community agree/strongly agreed that 'information about Council and its decisions is clear and accessible'. This is lower than the regional benchmark of 35%.

In January 2024, the Council employed a Communications Officer and has commenced making changes to the way it communicates with the community. This has included:

- Continuation of the weekly subscriber eNewsletter - Council Connections.
- Fortnightly publication of a full-page Council Column in the Lithgow Mercury and the Village Voice.
- Developing a strategic approach to media releases and utilisation of press conferences for major announcements.
- Utilisation of radio advertising to promote Council events, activities, services and facilities.
- [Radio 'Hot-Minute' Interviews](#) with the Mayor and key Council staff on projects and programs which are published on the Council website and promoted through media channels.
- Continued use of social media; Facebook and Instagram including using Facebook Events to promote activities.
- Updates to the website
 - [Key Projects](#) section to keep the community informed of capital and major projects.
 - Have Your Say Tab - On Exhibition and community engagement programs.
 - Utilisation of the Council events calendar to promote Council activities and events.



FOCUS AREA 7

Improving customer service

“Customer service is the support you offer your customers — both before and after they buy and use your products or services — that helps them have an easy, enjoyable experience with your brand. But customer service is more than solving a customer’s problems and closing tickets. Today, customer service means delivering proactive and immediate support to customers anytime on the channel of their choice — phone, email, text, chat, and more.”

Source: <https://www.salesforce.com/service/what-is-customer-service/>

As can be seen above, poor customer service can have significant impacts on Council’s brand and reputation. Customer Service is more than just the services offered by a “front desk or help desk”, it involves the whole of Council. Customer Service revolves around good communication channels and includes both internal and external customers. It involves being proactive not reactive.

In 2021 Lithgow City Council undertook a review of its Customer Service across the whole of the organisation and developed a [Customer Service Framework and Service Standards](#) which are available on the [Council’s website](#).

The Council has also implemented [online Development Applications](#) however, we acknowledge that due to difficulty in recruiting Planning and Development staff, processing time frames have been delayed.

A new customer request management and telephone system will be introduced in late 2024 to improve the customer experience.

Investigations are also underway to develop a new website tailored to Local Government needs by utilising a customer-orientated framework with more interactive and intuitive user experience.

Customer Service Mission

To provide excellent service levels to our community that contribute towards the achievement of Council’s vision.

We expect that all staff are committed to pursuing excellence in their role and to be responsible and accountable representatives of the Council.

Caring for our community



A most loved aspect of the Lithgow
area is considered to be that
*'People come together when
something bad happens'.*

Our 10 year goal

To retain, respect and strengthen both our overall sense of community, and the unique linked communities of groups, rural areas, villages and towns that make up the Lithgow LGA.

CC1

To plan and provide quality community and recreational facilities and services for a, healthy, vibrant and harmonious community that embraces challenges and has the resilience to adapt to change.



Supported Foodbank coming to Lithgow to provide fresh produce to those struggling due to the 'cost of living' crisis.

OUR Strategies

- We will provide a range of needs-based, flexible and accessible services, buildings and facilities.
- We will work together with government departments, NGOs, and community to ensure the communities of the Lithgow region have access to services and feel supported, connected and united.
- We will ensure that our rural and urban villages retain and celebrate their unique character and heritage from iconic buildings to village streetscapes.
- We will manage and provide public places that promote physical activity and sport & recreational facilities that are accessible to achieve safe and healthy lifestyles.
- We will work together to ensure that all citizens of the Lithgow LGA feel safe, valued, skilled and connected.

Supporting our Communities

The council provided financial assistance and/or support by:

- Installing **Community Noticeboards** at Dargan and Clarence
- Constructing the **ABCD Community Hall** at Clarence which was funded from Resources for Regions.

Crime Prevention and Safety Programs

Three following Crime Prevention and Safety Strategies were undertaken.

- All reported graffiti were removed from public areas within 5 working days.
- The **CCTV System** was managed to ensure the monitoring of the CBD and public spaces.
- Requests from the Police for CCTV footage were processed.
- **Abandoned articles** were impounded.
- **Parking patrols** were conducted in the CBD and School Zones.

- Meetings of the **Crime Prevention Committee** were convened.
- All meetings of the **Bushfire Management Committee** and the **Local Emergency Management Committee** were attended. Tangible outcomes as a result of Council's attendance include the delivery of pop-up COVID testing and vaccination hubs in Lithgow and the implementation of a roadside bushfire hazard reduction program through Lithgow's rural areas. Council's advocacy in this space has also included targeted action to obtain funding and make feasible a holistic review of roadside bushfire hazards to better inform Council's hazard reduction program
- **Traffic Authority Local Committee Meetings** were conducted in accordance with the adopted terms of reference.

The community development officer collaborated with Lithgow Cares Partnership to increase awareness and understanding of **domestic violence issues**. During this reporting term, the Lithgow Care Partnership organized events, including Ochre Ribbon Week, two Family Fun Days annually, Families Week, and Child Protection Week. Under its umbrella, the partnership has initiated a new project called Paint the Town REaD, aimed at improving children's literacy rates. Currently, a new event is being planned for November 28th, building on the success of last year's "She Is Not Your Rehab" event. This initiative promotes education on eradicating domestic violence by supporting perpetrators in their journey to heal, thereby creating violence-free communities.



14 cemeteries

- Capertee
- Cullen Bullen
- Dark Corner
- Glen Alice
- Hartley
- Lithgow
- Lowther
- Meadow Flat
- Palmers Oaky
- Portland
- Rydal
- Pipers Flat
(Wallerawang)
- South Bowenfels - GWH
(Closed)
- South Bowenfels - Old
Bathurst Road (Private)



Cemetery Services

Council's cemeteries team provided the following services:

- Coordinated the management, maintenance and development of the LGA's cemeteries including contractor and project management.
- Liaised with funeral directors, monumental masons and gravediggers in the delivery of services within the cemeteries.
- Ensured that contractors and members of the public adhere to related policies and procedures.
- Maintained accurate cemetery records and mapping.
- Assisted members of the public in plot reservations.
- Assisted members of the public with design and purchase of memorial plaques.
- Assisted members of the public with finding plots of family members.
- Processed and approved applications for burials and permits to erect monuments.
- Administered all cemetery related activities.

Over the last couple of years, the Council saw an increase in the number of maintenance requests, grave subsidence and deterioration in facilities such as fencing due to extended wet weather.

Lithgow Animal Shelter

Lithgow City Council Rangers ensure the responsible care of animals and maintenance of the animal shelter. In recent years many improvements have been made at the shelter to ensure the comfort and care of the dogs and cats housed within.

In 2023, the Council appointed a full-time Animal Shelter attendant and commenced investigations to identify the best options to upgrade/renew the Lithgow Animal Shelter ensuring that legislative and compliance requirements are being met.

A shelter concept design has been completed with the final costings and Quantity Surveyors report to be provided to Council from the consultant.

Responsible Companion Animal Ownership

Rangers ensure all animals are microchipped and registered prior to departing the Lithgow Animal Shelter, in compliance with the Companion Animals Act 1998, and the regulation of 2018.

Rangers conducted regular patrols of sporting fields and recreational facilities including Lake Wallace. They provide education to the community focussed on promoting legal off-leash areas around the LGA and raising awareness regarding pet owners' contribution to maintaining clean streets by collecting their pets' droppings.

During the reporting period the Rangers have conducted free microchipping days and attended several events to promote responsible care of companion animals.



25m

indoor pool

50m

outdoor pool

Children's Hydroplay

1 sauna



JM Robson Aquatic Centre

JM Robson Aquatic Centre serves Lithgow and surrounding community . The facility is open seven days a week year round. The facility features

- A heated 25-metre swimming pool with space for lap swimming and recreational swimming, with our pool depth ranging from 0.7m to 1.5m
- A 50-metre lap swimming pool and a hydroplay pool with a shaded grandstand and grassed area with picnic tables. This pool is open from October until April each summer season.
- Children's party hire space.

The facility provides:

- swimming lessons and drowning prevention education, which are crucial skills for personal safety. The classes range from infant aquatics through to stroke development and even adult lessons.
- Aqua Aerobics Classes encouraging people to be physically active, contributing to the reduction of chronic diseases in the community such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Solar Panel System

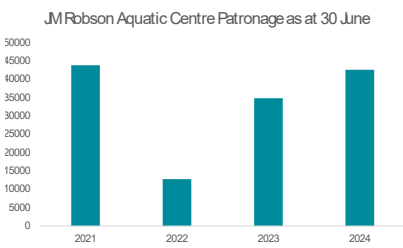
Through the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund, Council received grant funding to install a ground-mounted solar panel system at the JM Robson Aquatic Centre. They system returns 71.6Kw to the centre offsetting power consumption.

Sauna

October 2023 saw the opening of JM Robson Aquatic Centre Sauna which was co-funded by NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Fund.

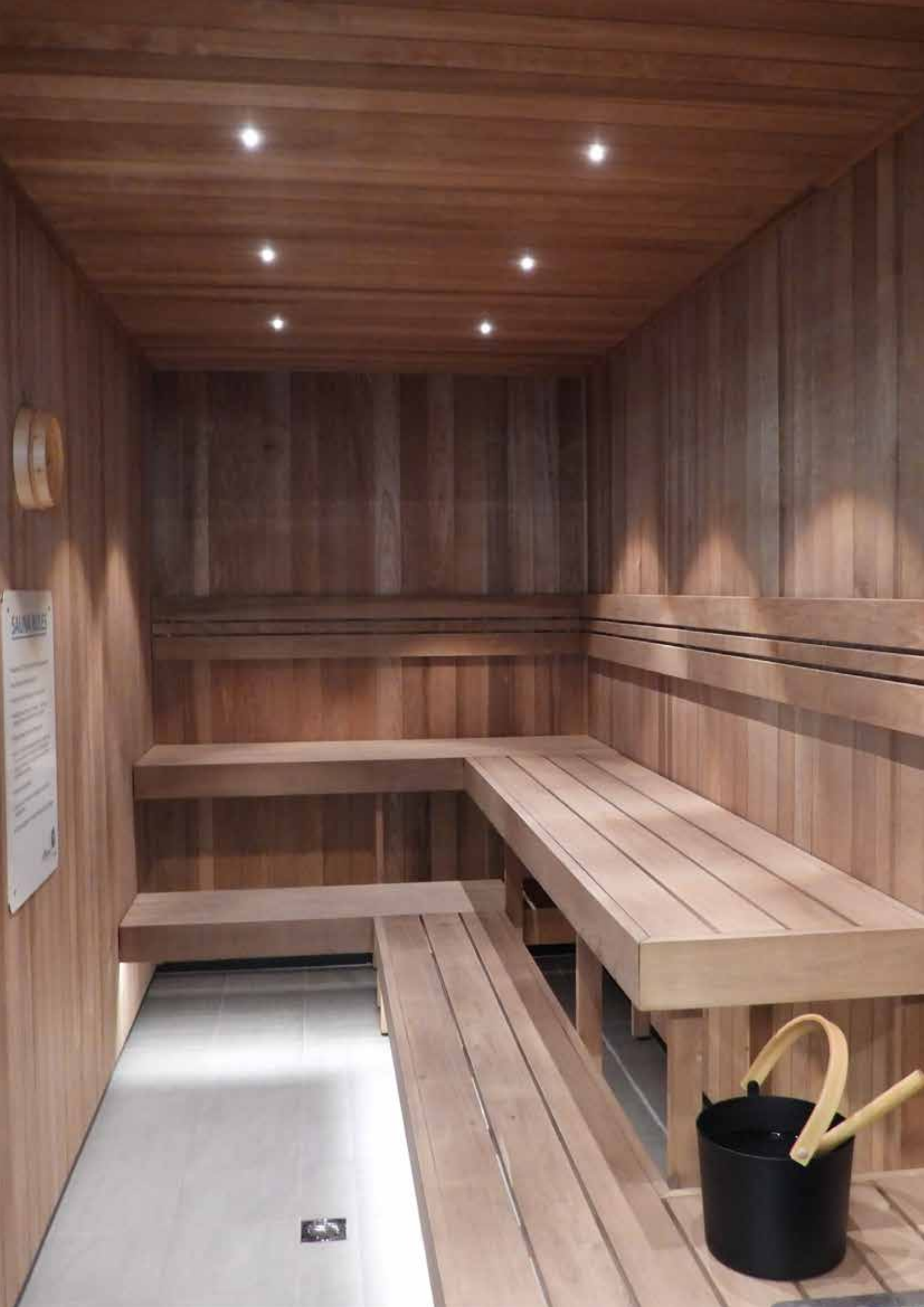
Client Portal

In 2024, the Centre introduced an online Client Portal. The Portal utilises pay-as-you-go technology and enables parents to monitor their child's swim school progress.



Patronage is improving post COVID with FY2024 patronage (42,706) being slightly less than FY2021 (49,948).





CC2

To work together to support, celebrate and expand the social and cultural diversity of our community whilst promoting healthy, active lifestyles in a safe environment.



OUR Strategies

- We will improve access, participation and inclusion for everyone.
- We will build resilient and inclusive communities.
- We will facilitate social inclusion and neighbourhood programs to strengthen community connections.
- We will maintain a focus on lifelong learning and collaborate to deliver a range of innovative programs and services.
- We will work to ensure that health, education and community services will meet our identified needs.

Resilient and inclusive communities

Lithgow City Council provided support and financial assistance for the following community activities:

- Lithgow Community projects to provide enhanced Covid related cleaning services at the Women and Children's Crisis Centre.
- Lithgow Cares, and Lithgow Information & Neighbourhood Centre to deliver Free Family day activities Fatima Hall in Bowenfels and Portland. Around 30 services attend the event, Including Lithgow City Council Library and Lithgow Youth Council. Members of the Youth Council delivered acknowledgment of country and hosted a very popular Youth, music and play space.
- Attendance at Interagency meetings; a collaboration between services and agencies in the local area. The building of these relationships increases Council's understanding of community issues and assisted in identifying Council's corresponding role and responsibilities.

ATSI Community

The Community Development Officer engaged regularly with multiple Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups to support and assist in the development of cultural programs. The officer attended the Police Aboriginal Consultative Committee (PACC), supported the Mingingan Corporation in planning and delivering NAIDOC Week, and provided information and technical support to the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG).

During the reporting period the Council encourage representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on Council Committees.

The [Lithgow Community Cultural Protocol](#) was endorsed by Council. The document is available on councils website.

Multicultural Community

Lithgow faces challenges due to the absence of specialised multicultural services, relying heavily on outreach efforts by the Community Development Officer, particularly with TAFE groups. However, without dedicated multicultural workers or specific services, direct engagement remains difficult. To address this, Council's Community Development Officer has proposed establishing a working group through LINC's interagency network. This initiative aims to enhance engagement and coordinate service delivery more effectively, with ongoing discussions planned throughout the year. Additionally, LINC will re-launch its Multicultural Funday, providing a platform for multicultural communities to come together. The Community Development Officer will actively support and utilise this event to enhance engagement efforts.



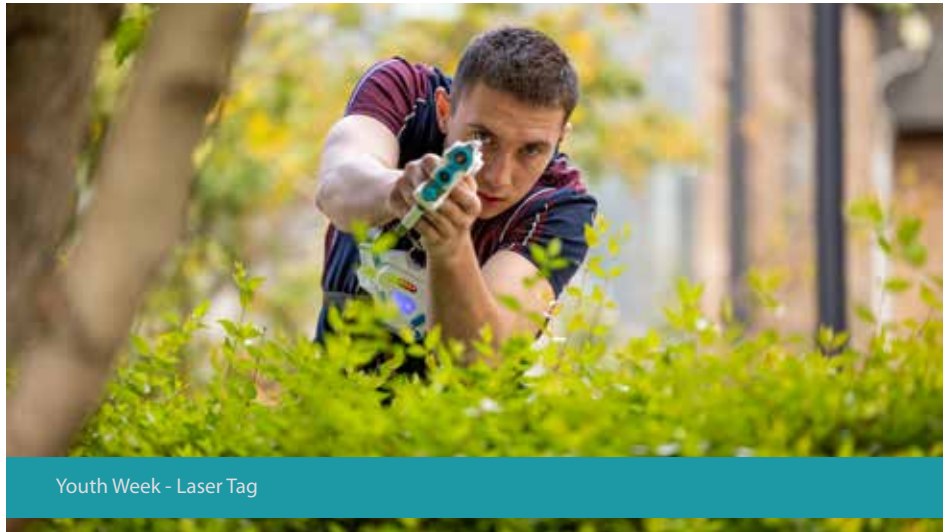
Diwali is celebrated annually at the Lithgow Library Learning Centre.

3,113
youth
(aged 12-24)

371
Aboriginal & Torres
Strait Islander
youth
(aged 12-24)

Between 2016 and 2021, the LGA with the **highest net migration** for people **aged 12 to 17** years to Lithgow City Council **(+40)** was from Blue Mountains, whilst the **highest net loss (-25)** was to the Bathurst Region.

Between 2016 and 2021, the LGA with the **highest net migration** for people aged **18 to 24** years to Lithgow City Council **(+22)** was from Blue Mountains, whilst the **highest net loss (-69)** was to the Bathurst Region.



Youth programs

Planet Youth - Lithgow (formerly the Local Drug Action Team), a consortium of organisations with the aim of strengthening protective factors, mitigating risk factors, and building a healthy community environment, for positive youth development.

Through leadership of the Planet Youth Consortium, Lithgow City Council has forged strategic alliances with community and youth-focused services collaborating with peak bodies to shape its future youth strategy.

A significant milestone was achieved with the successful delivery of the first Lithgow Youth Summit in March 2024, generously funded by the Office for Regional Youth. The Lithgow Youth Summit 2024 served as a pivotal platform for various youth stakeholders, leaders, and advocates in Lithgow to collaboratively address youth-related issues. It facilitated a comprehensive mapping of organisations involved in youth interventions, bolstered community engagement, and catalysed the establishment of the Youth Interagency Network.

A collaborative community engagement plan is being developed which will support the implementation and refinement of Council's youth strategy, ensuring it aligns with community needs and priorities.

Under the Young Changemakers Program, Youth Council members demonstrated exemplary commitment to community service through active volunteerism. Their dedication was formally recognised during both the Youth Week event and the Youth Summit 2024, affirming their role as leaders in fostering positive change.

The Youth council met regularly to coordinate annual youth week events and programs including the Create Lithgow Youth Opportunities program funded by the NSW Government. The program provided an opportunity for young people aged 12 to 25 to explore various creative industries.

16% of the community would like see “more things for kids to do e.g. bowling alleys, movie theatres”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



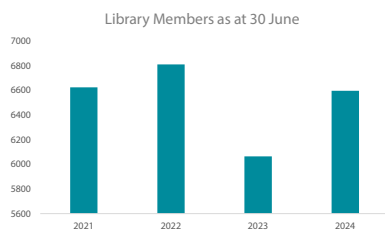
Youth Week - Parkour with PCYC



3 Libraries

Lithgow
Wallerawang
Portland

31% of the population are members of the Libraries as at 30 June 2024



During COVID many registrations lapsed. In 2023 a cull of inactive or expired members was undertaken.



Author Talks are popular events at the Library

Library Services

Modern library services promote literacy and a love of reading, provide support for education, collect and preserve materials that hold a record of our place in the world. All this is made accessible via the library's vibrant community programs.

In 2019 structural issues were identified with the original 1940s façade and awning at the Lithgow Library that required removal. Council received grant funding from the NSW Government's Resources for Regions Program for the replacement.

The design of the new façade is a nod to Lithgow's former iron and steel industry, incorporates genuine Lithgow bricks from Lithgow's brickworks and the use of Corten steel - a finish that is designed to show surface rust.

While Corten steel has been widely used elsewhere for a number of years, this is the first time that Corten has been used in a commercial building in Lithgow. The re-purposed Lithgow bricks give an edgy contemporary look to the façade. The works also included new veranda posts and a pressed metal awning lining as

seen in other Main Street facades. The work was undertaken by local builder Dean Horten.

Inside the library, new desks, cabinets and seating were installed. In front of the Library the bus shelter was re-instated.

During the 2023/24 year, the leaking roof and guttering was replaced and a major internal upgrade and fit-out was completed with Public Library Infrastructure grant funding modernising the Library. This included:

- Installing Bureau Booths/pods for quiet study and ready spaces.
- Upgrading the Local History Archive Room compactus to improve storage of archive boxes and the bound Lithgow Mercury Collection, thereby increasing space in the Local Studies area on the Mezzanine level of the library.

- Installation of rolling shelving which enables the Library to accommodate larger community events and gatherings such as popular author talks.
- An upgrade of furniture in the Wallerawang Library Community Room which included the installation of flip tables and stacking chairs to make it more flexible and accessible for the various users of the room.

Children’s Programs

The Children’s Library Officer coordinates:

- Weekly Children’s Storytime
- Weekly Baby Bounce & Rhyme
- School Holiday Craft activities
- Participation in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program which provides a book a month to children registered with the program from birth to age 5.

The library provided early literacy resources to Blinky Bill, First Grammar and Pied Piper pre-school children through library reachOUT program. The program is accessing an average of 40 children per month

Seniors Programs

The Mayor’s Christmas Appeal presents gifts to residents in our local nursing homes. This is an opportunity to celebrate and give back to those who have given a lifetime to family and their community.

The library celebrated our senior residents by conducting the annual **Seniors Week Program** and hosting **Grandparent’s Day**.

Home Library Service

Council provides a weekly home library service for members of the community who are housebound or in aged care facilities. During COVID-19, Lithgow’s Home Library Service provided an invaluable source of connection to those isolated by the pandemic.



Tovertafel - Magic Table

The aim of the Tovertafel is to promote engagement through physical movement, thereby stimulating the brain and increasing social interaction for people of all ages and abilities. The Tovertafel assists people with cognitive disabilities and dementia. With Tovertafel there is no cultural or language barriers, there is only a connection to others. Kids young and old love it!

Strengthening our economy

A nighttime photograph of a street in Lithgow, Australia. The scene is illuminated by various lights, including a prominent blue and purple geometric light structure in the upper left. In the foreground, there are pink cherry blossoms and a tree with green lights on its trunk. The ground is lit with yellow and orange wavy patterns. In the background, a statue of a person is visible, along with a white car parked on the street and a building with a sign that says 'High B...'. The overall atmosphere is vibrant and modern.

A most loved aspect of the
Lithgow area is considered to be
the
*‘proximity to essential services and
to Sydney’.*

Our 10 year goal

To provide for sustainable and planned growth through the diversification of the economic base, the development of diverse job opportunities and the provision of a broad range of formal and non-formal educational services.

SE1

To provide sustainable and planned growth that supports a range of lifestyle choices and employment options.



OUR Strategies

- We will attract new business and investment
- We will encourage economic growth and diversity
- We will facilitate and provide infrastructure and land to support residential, rural and economic growth.
- We will develop into a smart city that embraces technology, innovation and entrepreneurship to support business success and improve live-ability.
- We will plan and work in partnership with residents of new and emerging suburbs and towns to connect and evolve their own distinct neighbourhood spirit and character.
- We will ensure new and emerging suburbs have high walk-ability, cycling infrastructure and green spaces.
- We will plan new and emerging suburbs which are environmentally sustainable.

The primary challenge affecting Lithgow’s economic forecast is the anticipated transition from coal, and coal-related industries. Of the total 8,690 jobs in the Lithgow LGA, approximately 968 of these are in mining and 444 in the electricity sector, representing a total 16% of the local workforce. With government introducing policies targeted at reducing emissions and increasing the viability and adoption of alternative, green energy generation, we have already witnessed several mine and power station closures around the state, notably in Wallerawang.

Lithgow must identify its competitive and comparative advantages, enablers and constraints to economic growth, to promote industries most likely to successfully diversify our economy and reduce our sensitivity to shocks. Early findings have identified that Lithgow must address gaps in education pathways to introduce complete programs in targeted disciplines such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), but also increase the adaptive capacity of our workforce.

Additionally, if we are to stimulate local economic growth, there must be sufficient housing available to ensure that value added from these new industries is captured locally. Notably, this requires the construction of key enabling infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer networks. Lastly, it is essential that Lithgow undertakes an analysis of planning constraints, including supply and demand, to ensure that our limited availability of land is efficiently used.

Strategic Land Use Planning

The Strategic Land Use Planning Team has:

- Responded to inquiries regarding the status of the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area
- Continued to keep under review the Lithgow Local Environmental Plan 2024 and Development Control Plan 2021
- Collaborated with key stakeholders to provide areas for temporary worker housing.
- Facilitated the implementation and commencement of the Agritourism and Employment Zones reforms led by the NSW State Government within the local planning framework.
- Council received business enquiries that were referred by the Department of Regional NSW. With limited resources, the Council is currently constrained regarding the amount of assistance it can provide. As of June 2024, Council has been able to recruit an outstanding candidate to the position of Manager – Enterprise and Economy. Moving forward, Council will have far greater capacity to manage similar enquiries in-house.
- A project scoping of sundry amendments to the Lithgow Local Environmental Plan has commenced.
- Preparation of a professional services brief to appoint an external consultancy to undertake the Growth Management Strategy. The council has continued to build a strategic evidence base to inform this body of work.
- The Employment Lands/Centres Review component of the Growth Management Strategy will be undertaken as a separate project, being an action of the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP). The Council conducted a community/business survey for the Employment Lands Strategy between 17 April and 12 May 2024 and an online Industry Roundtable on 8 May. The Draft Employment Lands Survey will be provided to the Council in the 2nd quarter 2024/25.

22% of the community would like to see

“Long term planning in terms of town design and infrastructure”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP)

In 2020/21 Council entered into a partnership with the NSW State Government (Department of Regional NSW) to engage an expert consultancy with support from a local reference group to formulate an action plan to transition Lithgow's economy away from relying on coal and electricity generation.

The LEEP builds on previous work such as the Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy and consultants expert in economic transition to provide a roadmap for Lithgow's future economy.

Coal mining in the Lithgow area has a finite life of less than 20 years and the Mount Piper Power Station closure has been brought forward to 2040.

LEEP shapes the vision through which we will reinvent and invigorate Lithgow's economy. It provides a clear pathway for attracting investment, new businesses and diverse, skilled labour opportunities that will appeal the current coal and energy workforce and future generations.

LEEP leverages our unique competitive advantages. These include endowments that support new forms of energy production, infrastructure such as rail and highways, human capital, knowhow and a pivotal location in Australia's energy and transport system.

Lithgow is the link between the fast growing Western Sydney to our east, and the broad Orana and Central West. We are well positioned to take advantage of regional economic opportunities such as the new airport in Western Sydney, inland rail and a renewable energy zone.

LEEP was developed in consultation with: the NSW Government, local business and community leaders (Lithgow District Chamber of Commerce, Lithgow Community Power Projectm, Energy Australia, Centennial Coal, and Thales). Key sites such as Greenspot's Wallerawang redevelopment, Mt Piper power station, Foundations Portland, and Lake Lyell were also investigated.

LEEP will:

- Leverage Lithgow's reputation as an energy provider for NSW with a switch to scaled-up renewable energy, taking advantage of existing infrastructure, transmission lines and water resources.
- Seek out opportunities to become a hub for the circular economy and develop precincts specialising in advanced manufacturing, transport and logistics, health and aged care.

- Leverage the potential of agribusiness and tourism.
- Seek solutions for issues such as the need for affordable housing, high quality schools and higher education in the region to attract skilled workers and grow the community in conjunction with initiatives to make Lithgow a great place to live and work.

Go to www.leep.lithgow.com to view the full action plan

Progress to date

A Senior Manager of Enterprise and Economy has been appointed to facilitate the actions outlined in the LEEP. Two additional roles; Emerging Economy Manager and an Engagement Officer will be appointed in early 2024/25. These new roles will be crucial for the delivery of the LEEP outcomes. The appointment of these new roles is a massive step forward for Lithgow's economic transition. The roles will begin implementing the actions outlined in the LEEP plan starting with a comprehensive engagement with the community, industry partners and both state and federal Government.

Lithgow Jobs and Investment Committee

The committee is tasked with implementing the LEEP and is progressing the Council's economic transition plan at an increasing pace.

The committee is comprised from local, state and federal government representatives, Energy Australia, Centennial Coal, Western Sydney University, and union representatives from the workforce who are most likely to feel the impacts of the transition away from coal.

Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics

Through the completion of the Lithgow Evolving Economy Plan, a pathway for economic diversification has highlighted the need to equip local youth with skills of the future and thereby work to strengthen their future adaptive capacity. This led to developing a focus on STEAM skills; science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. Work has continued to occur with Western Sydney University to build a business case for a program known as the 'Adaptive Skills Hub' which aims to introduce local students to opportunities in this space. Secondly, Council has engaged with local schools and the ACER (Australian Centre for Educational Research) to workshop opportunities for closer partnerships between schools and the community to achieve improved educational outcomes.

Capacity Building for business

Lithgow Council is working with Investment NSW and Regional Development Australia Central West to offer an Export Capability Workshop that explores potential opportunities for business expansion and product exportation.

Additionally, Council has worked with Transport for NSW as part of the Great Western Highway upgrade to offer opportunities for local businesses to improve their tendering skills in competitive markets.

Clean Energy Projects

The Council met with three developers in the past twelve months. Work on a Developer Contributions Strategy with the aim of coordinating the most effective approach to benefit sharing across the LGA has commenced with the expectation that a draft will be presented to Council post the 2024 election.

Advocacy

Several advocacy trips to Sydney's Parliament House were undertaken, with the intent of securing the NSW and Australian Government's support of LEEP, alongside their necessary financial contribution to the transition effort. Both government agencies are committed to the transition effort, pledging to form governance vehicles of their own in the form of the Future Jobs and Investment Authority (NSW Govt.) and the Net Zero Economy Taskforce (Aust. Govt.).

Funding

Council has allocated \$1.07 million of the recently approved Special Rate Variation for this purpose and is seeking approximately \$4 million per annum of government assistance to supplement this allocation.



Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy

The Department of Regional NSW completed an update of the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) in 2023. Regional Economic Development Strategies are strategic documents that identify priority areas for investment to drive growth and jobs in communities across regional NSW. In 2018, the Government facilitated the development of REDS for regional economies across NSW.

The Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy - 2023 Update sets out a long-term economic vision and associated strategy for the Lithgow local government area.

It includes a vision for the region, strategies, and early stage actions required to achieve it. The six Strategy elements identified in the REDS for the Lithgow region link directly to the opportunities presented by the region's endowments and specialisations aiming to address some key regional risks and barriers to growth.

Lithgow REDS - 2023 Update:

1. **Highlights progress:** reflects on significant initiatives and investments that have supported progress against the key strategies and actions in the 2018 REDS.

2. **Captures major changes:** Identifies and assesses the impacts of major changes to regional economies since 2018, including the effect of recent shocks such as bushfires, droughts, floods, mouse plagues and the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. **Identifies strategic opportunities:** Identifies key strategic opportunities and vulnerabilities for engine and emerging industries, as well as any changes to local endowments.
4. **Sets the foundation for the future:** Reviews, affirms and/or adjusts the 2018 strategies, including consideration of new strategies to meet emerging priorities, to ensure they remain relevant.
5. **Identifies key enablers to guide future action:** Develops a list of priority actions that will support the 2023 REDS Update strategies.

34% of the community would like
"Job opportunities for the younger
generation coming through"

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)

Changes in Lithgow Region since 2018

The Lithgow region has seen significant investment delivered since 2018, with additional projects in the planning or delivery stages

More than \$50 million invested in ecotourism initiatives in the region including the Gardens of Stone.	\$6.5 million invested in the Thales Lithgow Arms facility and advanced manufacturing hub.
Development of The Foundations Portland.	Development of the Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra Lithgow Transformation Hub.

Since 2018, the region has recorded decreasing unemployment, record levels of job vacancies and significant increases in house prices

-2.2% population growth since 2018.	Housing vacancy rates sit below 1%, with median house prices having risen by 30% since 2018.
The proportion of the population over 55 years old has increased by 1.2 percentage points since 2018.	Unemployment has decreased by more than 4% since 2018, with job vacancies in the broader region reaching an all-time high of 2,523 in 2022.

Lithgow's engine and emerging industries continue to support growth and increased diversification of the local economy

Tourism		
+2.4% Year-on-Year (YoY) growth from 2011-2020	\$72 million visitor spend in 2021	1,536 jobs supported in 2021
Energy supply (including renewables)		
- 2.4% YoY growth from 2011-2020	\$143 million Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2020	274 jobs supported in 2021
Mining		
+0.1% YoY growth from 2011-2020	\$885 million GVA in 2020	662 jobs supported in 2021
Manufacturing		
- 4.1% YoY growth from 2011-2020	\$55 million GVA in 2020	410 jobs supported in 2021



Greenspot Development Proposal

The Greenspot development proposes to re-purpose the former Wallerawang Power Station and surrounding lands to honour the legacy of the area and to play a part in building a sustainable future for the community. Their initial concept plan for the 620 hectare site includes:

- An employment enterprise zone
- Wallerawang 9 Battery - a 500MW/1,000MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) which will connect to the adjacent 330kV TransGrid Wallerawang Substation. Obtaining development approval for the estimated \$400M project is considered an important step forward in NSW's energy future. The 'Wallerawang 9' name acknowledges the legacy of the power station and in particular generation units 7 and 8, the last operational coal-fired units at the Wallerawang Power Station.
- Green corridor
- Mixed use (tourism, recreational, residential, retail, public open space)
- Transgrid Wallerawang Substation

Key enabling features of the site include:

- The site's proximity to high voltage transmission infrastructure;
- Infrastructure with the potential to enable long-term water supply and security;
- Adjacent arterial transport networks connecting Sydney and major centres in Regional NSW, together with private rail access off the Main Western Line; and
- High-integrity data connection points to promote digital connectivity throughout the precinct.

Council received and assessed a scoping proposal for the rezoning of the former Wallerawang Power Station Site and associated lands from Greenspot. The Team continued to work closely with Greenspot to progress the development of a final Planning Proposal to be submitted to Department of Regional NSW in September 2024.



34% of the community would like
“new industries to come into the area”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



SE2

To explore and discover the richness in our society through the pursuit of educational, creative and cultural opportunities that diversify our economy, skills and employment opportunities.



Lithgow District Chamber of Commerce Greater Lithgow Investor Summit 2023

OUR Strategies

- We will celebrate the cultural diversity and rich heritage of the Lithgow LGA.
- We will work with business and tourism partners to develop a strong tourism industry that maximizes benefits from visitors to the Lithgow LGA.
- We will embrace new technologies, creativity and innovation to grow a network of vibrant, mixed use centres & services.
- Local job opportunities will be enhanced through employer and service provider partnerships focused on the development of a local workforce with the skills required by local industry.

22% of the community would like Council to
“be more progressive”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



Economic recovery post Gospers Mountain Megafire

In Partnership with the Strengthening Business Service, the council delivered a series of workshops to support local business recovery from the bush fires. These included: Getting Your bushfire-affected business back on track; online digital drop-ins (5 sessions delivered 16 August – 11 October 2021); networking and planning sessions, and; rebuild, renew, recharge masterclasses.

Additionally, the Integrated Capacity Building Framework provided a series of workshops that provided key information on grants and grant application process; Top Tips to Writing Good Grants, Getting Strategic, Getting Your Project Shovel Ready and Managing and Acquiring Grants.

Council has developed and continues to implement a local recovery and Business Recovery Program including:

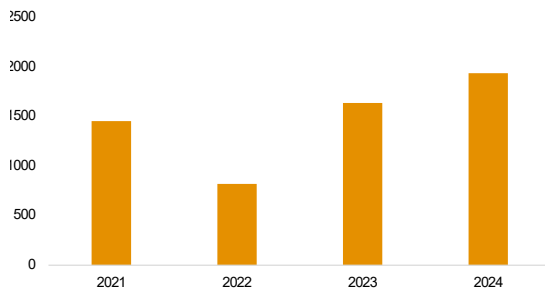
- Partnering with Western Sydney University offering FREE co-working facilities at the Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra Lithgow Transformation Hub.
- Tradies Breakfast
- A range of other business support initiatives including pop up support/information services.

Adaptive Skills Hub

The Council submitted a tender to develop a local Adaptive Skills Hub in Lithgow. The objective of this proposal is to increase the adaptive capacity of the workforce consistent with established metrics developed by the University of Newcastle, Australian National University and the Australian Productivity Commission. The components of this project include direct science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) teaching support to primary and secondary schools, workforce planning, and Factory of the Future and provision of micro-credentials.

The council has also been successful in attracting three new incumbents to economic development and transition roles that provided key information on grants and grant application process.

Visitors to Eskbank House Museum as at 30 June



Visitation to the Museum has increased on pre-COVID visitor numbers with FY2024 visitation (1,936) being significantly higher than FY2021 (1,454).

1 Museum
Coordinator

12
volunteers
as at 30 June 2024



Eskbank House Museum

Eskbank House Museum Lithgow's regional museum. Set within a historic estate, the museum collects, preserves and interprets the histories associated with the early settlement and development of the region. Initially opened to the public on 21 November 1966 as a house museum, one of the earliest house museums in Australia, the collection quickly expanded to support the research interests of the Lithgow District Historical Society. The collection developed to include objects of state and national significance, including the important Iron Black Roses, Sutton Family Crazy Patchwork Quilt, Sir Joseph Cook Collection, and the Lithgow Valley Colliery Company Collection (Lithgow Pottery).

Exhibitions and Public Programs

Eskbank House Museum works to create engaging and accessible visitor experiences by developing and delivering internally curated exhibitions and hosting guest speaker events that promote and celebrate our local heritage and history.

By linking into state and national annual celebrations such as National Trust Australian Heritage Festival and the History Council's History Week events, the museum extends reach and attracts visitors to Lithgow LGA.

The museum has also participated in LGA wide multi-venue weekend events, What's in your backyard - Locals Day Locals free day and Edible Garden Trail (Transformation Hub event).

School groups have visited and participated in hands-on visitor experience sessions.

Notably, a number of exhibitions and public programs were held during the reporting period:

- Waste to Art Exhibition.
- International Women's Day event.
- Citizenship ceremonies
- Themed displays - War, Childhood, Industry, Faith, Royals.
- Make Home Bushfire Safe workshop delivered by Steven Houghton.
- The Museum collaborated with the Lithgow Library Learning Centre which hosted Heritage author talks

- School visits and School holiday programs include Nature Journaling workshops focusing on the gardens surrounding the museum.
- Delivered a History Week guest speaker event featuring Peter Baker titled 'Healing Hands Crying Hearts: Life journeys of James and Leo Bamber. The museum has a dentist chair in the collection that came from Dr Leo Bamber's surgery. Research for this talk generated a significant local history record.
- Hosted the Blue Mountains Association of Heritage Organisation Meeting in September 2022.
- Held the National Trust Heritage Festival Exhibition 2023, "Titled *Shared Stories – Textiles of Lithgow: Handmade to Factory Industries*".

Collection Care and Site Conservation Management

In consultation with the Museum Advisor, Tegan Anthes, volunteers are trained best practice care of the collection. Cataloguing is ongoing with an emphasis on discovering the provenance of items. Engagement strategies include development of permanent themed displays related to the history and heritage of the Lithgow greater region.

Development and production of interpretive corflute display boards describing the individuals connected to the Eskbank Estate, Iron and Steel, and to Eskbank House was undertaken. These are located in the breakfast room and form a powerful introduction to the history of the museum.

Networking and partnerships

Eskbank House works collaboratively with other local and regional museums and cultural heritage partners including the Small Arms Factory Museum and Lithgow District Family History Society, National Trust (Lithgow Branch) and Blue Mountains Cultural Heritage Organisations (BMCHO). Some joint programs undertaken include:

- Two volunteers from Eskbank House participated in a paper conservation workshop at Lithgow and District Family History Society.
- The Hartley Historic Village workers & guides (NSW Parks and Wildlife) visited Eskbank to familiarise themselves with the museum and its facilities. An invitation was extended to EHM volunteers to reciprocate with a visit. This is planned for 2023- 2024.
- Council's Cultural Development Officer has been researching and having preliminary discussions with local creative and cultural organisations to look at how we can work together to create new opportunities and strategic partnerships with other event organisers and venues like The State Mine Museum, Gang Gang Gallery, Western Sydney Transformation Hub, Portland Foundations, and the Seven Valleys Tourism and Events.



Mary's Kitchen Garden is one of the exciting Volunteer Programs at Eskbank House Museum. This Heritage Garden Project has been developed in honour of Mary Brown, original owner of Eskbank House and funded by a Bushfire Recovery Grant. In June 2022, the Volunteer Team visited Vaucluse House for a guided tour of the gardens delivered by Sydney Living History horticulturists followed by a house tour.

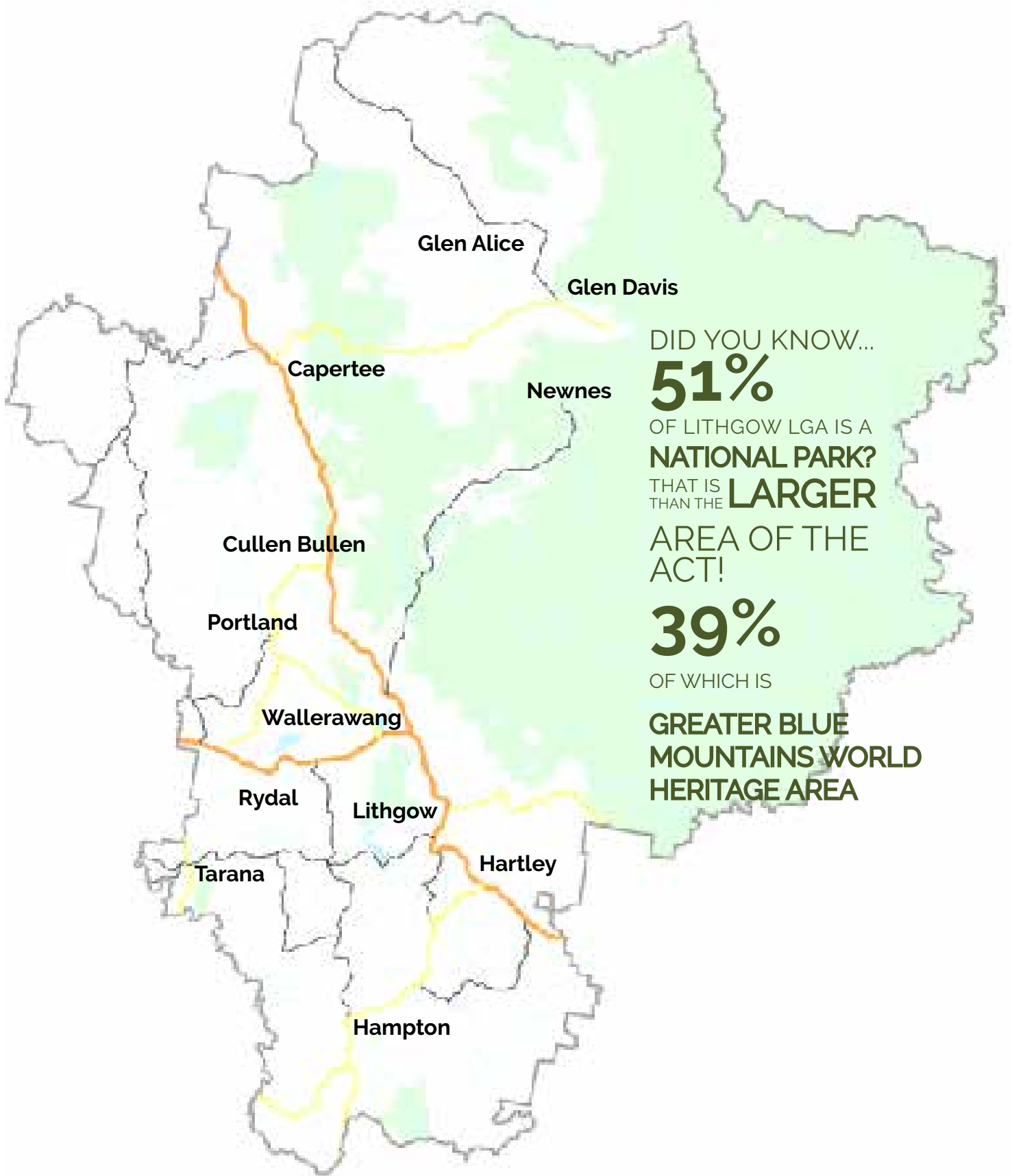
SE3

The Lithgow region is seen as a desirable place to work, live, visit and invest.



OUR Strategies

- We will work in partnership to actively market the Lithgow region and our capabilities to existing and potential residents, businesses, visitors and investors.
- We will grow our visitor economy through developing partnerships and opportunities that enhance and strengthen iconic events, distinct local attractions and the use of major venues.
- We will host events, festivals, sporting and cultural activities that allow our communities to connect and celebrate.
- We will seek to host major sporting events and new activities in both new and existing local facilities.



DID YOU KNOW...

51%
 OF LITHGOW LGA IS A
NATIONAL PARK?
 THAT IS **LARGER**
 THAN THE
**AREA OF THE
 ACT!**

39%
 OF WHICH IS
**GREATER BLUE
 MOUNTAINS WORLD
 HERITAGE AREA**

28,322ha

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

The government will invest \$50m to create an eco-tourism and adventure destination

The new reserves are expected to attract an additional 200,000 visitors a year

Protecting
16 threatened
ecological
communities,
rare plants and
animals
more than 80 rare and
threatened species



New state conservation area and eco-tourism and adventure destination

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area covers an area of 28322ha and is located on the doorstep of Lithgow, linking the Wollemi, Blue Mountains and Gardens of Stone national parks in the Central West.

The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area was formally gazetted in May 2022 as part of a \$49.5 million NSW Government investment to establish Lithgow as a world-class ecotourism destination, conserving the exceptional natural and cultural heritage values of the region.

The investment marks one of the most significant visitor infrastructure packages in New South Wales, which will strengthen the Lithgow visitor economy while delivering important conservation outcomes for the park.

Comprised of 3 former state forests, including Newnes State Forest and parts of Ben Bullen and Wolgan state forests, the establishment of the state conservation area coincides with new additions to the Gardens of Stone National Park (308 hectares) and Wollemi National Park (2,257 hectares).

These additions to the national parks estate have been a long standing priority. They will protect more than 30,000 hectares of rich eucalypt forests, important cultural heritage, and an array of threatened species and ecological communities.

Source:
<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/gardens-of-stone-state-conservation-area>
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/community-engagement/walking-tracks-and-trails-in-national-parks/gardens-of-stone-state-conservation-area>

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area protects ancient sandstone pagodas, rich eucalypt forests, important cultural heritage, and an array of threatened species and ecological communities.

A rugged landscape of globally significant geological heritage, the reserve contains the highest-elevation sandstone plateau, Newnes, in the Blue Mountains. It's a place of stunning natural beauty featuring sandstone pagodas and cliffs, slot canyons, steep gullies and grassy woodlands.

This area is of great importance to the Wiradjuri People. It's a significant cultural landscape home to many significant sites and artefacts. Art engravings and pigmentations, carved and scarred trees, stone arrangements and grinding grooves have been recorded here.

Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area is also important for the conservation of native plants and animals. The reserve protects at least 16 threatened ecological communities, rare groupings of plants and animals, including elevated swamps, box gum woodlands, Wolgan snow gum and tablelands grassy forest. More than 80 rare and threatened species make their homes here, including koalas, spotted-tail quolls, regent honeyeaters and Blue Mountains water skinks.

Iconic Visitor Experiences

The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area will feature a number of iconic visitor experiences, including:

- The Wollemi Great Walk - a multi-day walk showcasing the area's extraordinary natural and cultural values and linking the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area to Wollemi National Park and beyond with camping and eco-style accommodation.
- Diverse recreational opportunities, including new walking tracks and lookouts, world-class mountain biking trails, new camping areas and facilities, and an all-weather 4WD and motorcycle touring circuit.

Progress to date

- Installed new park signs to promote appropriate use and improve visitor safety
- Removed asbestos from the park
- Installed traffic counters and security cameras to record visitor entry data and monitor visitation
- Removed over 3 tonnes of rubbish from the park in 2 clean-up days
- Patrolling the park every weekend and during peak holiday times
- Maintaining and upgrading roads including Glow Worm Tunnel Road, the Western Boundary Fire Trail, and the Maiyngu Marragu Trail (Blackfellows Hand Trail)
- Planning for improved visitor experiences
- Managing threatened species and controlling weeds and feral animals
- Engaging with stakeholders and the community.



Most loved aspect of the Lithgow area is
“the countryside, open spaces
and natural environment”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



Seven Valleys Visitors Centre was ranked in the top 3 'most favoured' Centres on the Accredited Visitors Centre App.

Seven Valleys Tourism

Lithgow Council engaged with the local tourism industry in a series of workshops to shape a new Destination Action Plan (the Plan). The Plan will set the agenda and priorities to sustainably grow the visitor economy of the region over the next five years. The Plan will support regional promotion, visitation and prosperity and look to address barriers and challenges. The Plan is the first step in putting in place a framework of actionable goals that council and the local tourism industry can collaborate to achieve, in a deliverable and measurable way.

During the 2021 - 2024 period:

- Lithgow Halloween was held annually in the CBD with the exception of Halloween 2021, which was held online with a Best Dressed Costume Photographic Competition and the annual SF3 Lithgow Halloween Smartphone Film Competition due to COVID.
- The community celebrated LithGlow at the Blast furnace with crowds of over 1,000 people in attendance. The 2024 event was deferred due to extreme weather.
- The Ridgy Didge Running Event has been held annually at Hassans Walls Reserve since August 2022.
- Ironfest recommenced in 2024 at The Foundations in a new format.
- New events included Beatlesfest and the 'Goodness Gravel' gravel bike riding event.

Lithgow Live & Local

Lithgow City Council hosted the Live and Local program, a capacity building program for local musicians and venues fully funded by the Australian Government that delivered professional development workshops, micro music-festivals and a local industry forum.

As part of the program, Council established a Social media presence to promote local musicians and venues. The project:

- Developed paid performance opportunities for local musicians
- Activated more performances spaces
- Created a network of local businesses to continue programming live music on a regular basis.
- Creates a database of musicians and businesses
- Established a working group of local representatives to support growth of the local music scene.

Australian Caravan Club Muster

After 2 years in the planning, the Australian Caravan Club (ACC) held their 'Seven Valleys' muster at Tony Luchetti showground in Lithgow in October 2022. Over 120 caravans have joined the muster from all over Australia. Over \$200,000 was injected into the economy of the local government area during their stay. The ACC members enjoyed the shop local day in Main Street Lithgow on Saturday 22 October, supported by street performances of local musicians participating in the Lithgow Live and Local program.

The Organising committee coordinator Neil Cochran said "The members who have come from all over Australia are so happy with their Lithgow experience thus far and have been made to feel very welcome. The team at Seven Valleys Tourism and Events and Lithgow City Council have performed admirably in ensuring the event has been able to go ahead". Mr Cochran continued "The ACC members have been busy exploring all aspects of Lithgow's Seven Valleys. As a club we see the value of marketing the region holistically. Many of our members will be planning follow-up trips to visit the places they were unable to get to in one week. All will go home to their friends and families and spread the word about the Seven Valleys."

The Union Theatre

Since it first opened in August 1891, the Lithgow Union Theatre has been the heart of art and culture.

By 2015 it was in decline and in serious need of refurbishment. There were no internal changing rooms, poor audio visual and lighting systems and poor facilities for audiences that led to touring performing arts groups avoiding Lithgow. In 2015 Council engaged a heritage architect to develop plans for back of stage facilities to make it accessible, contemporary and fit for purpose.

These works were completed in 2020, introducing new performer change rooms, storage and workshop spaces with state of the art lighting and sound systems. Front of stage upgrades for audiences have included a complete repainting of

the auditorium and other public spaces, resurfacing the timber floor and creation of a gallery exhibition space facing Bridge Street.

The latest stage of works involved replacing old seating with retractable seats and carpet in the mezzanine. The new theatre seating and carpet were installed at a cost of \$239,508 made possible by a NSW Government Stronger Country Communities program and co- contribution by Lithgow City Council.

An upgrade to the kitchen including creation of a servery to provide refreshments for audiences is also scheduled for completion in 2024/25.

These works further enhance the theatre's facilities and aim to diversify opportunities for local creative practitioners to develop and promote their work, and to enhance the region's ability to attract quality productions.

Since the upgrades of the Theatre have been completed the number of events held at the Union Theatre have increased. These included performances and events such as:

- The Netwaste local and regional Waste to Art Regional Exhibitions .
- Two performances by the Lithgow Musical Society per annum.

However, the Theatre is now experiencing bookings from external promoters with bookings in advance being obtained as part of national tours including:

- The Inaugural Opera Gala event at the Union Theatre held in 2022 was sold out. However, the 2023 event was not well supported and suffered a loss.
- A partnership is being developed with Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre to host quality theatre and musical performances.
- Ahn Do - Happiest Refugee Tour is booked for 2025.

16% of the community would like "more to do - entertainment"

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)

SE4

Lithgow, Wallerawang and Portland CBD's are the vibrant, unique spaces which create a strong sense of pride within the community.



OUR Strategies

- We will work with our businesses to develop activation and promotional initiatives to create vibrant town centres Lithgow, Wallerawang and Portland.
- We will continue to enhance the built form of our streetscapes in our town centres.
- A diverse mix of residential, retail, cultural and other services will be found in our town centres.
- Our town centres will be vibrant, safe and easy to get around, whether visiting by day or at night.

CBD Revitalisation Program

Main Street Restoration Project - Stage 2

The Main Street Footpath Refurbishment Stage 2 aims to improve the street appeal and functionality of Lithgow's central business district, from Bridge Street to Cook Street. The proposed works build on Stage 1 works that included upgrades to Cook Street Plaza, and the intersection of Eskbank Street and Main Street completed in 2020.

Proposed works include:

- A revamped streetscape, including replacement of old and dated pavers (which become hazardous during wet weather periods) with modern concrete - enhanced with slate borders and brick banding symbolic of Lithgow's great industrial heritage;
- replacing drainage systems to ensure asset protection;
- improved safety balustrade, street furniture, a parking zone review (including disability access / loading zones and bus zones); and
- new green-scaping.

Local businesses have suffered greatly due to Black Summer Bushfires, floods, and the global COVID-19 pandemic. The Administration is acutely aware that works within the Central Business District will once again impact trading of these businesses, and as such, have conducted thorough and extensive community consultation processes to ensure that all best practice protective measures are incorporated into the construction phase to minimise the impact on local businesses.

The project will garner improved pedestrian connectivity, enhancement to shop fronts and public spaces such as Pioneer Park to compliment business activity.

To date, Council has completed the following works as part of this project:

Pioneer Park Works; replaced existing amenities with Execloo public amenities and fencing. The existing bus shelter was replaced with a new shelter, landscaping of the park area and installation of public art.

Survey and Design Work; Traffic Study for entire stage 2 works, Infrastructure Survey (including service locations), Preliminary Design and component options (lighting, street furniture, construction materials, landscaping), and Liaison with infrastructure service providers (Endeavour Energy, Jemena Gas, Telstra and NBN Co).

\$4.3m total project cost

\$1.94m

Building Better Regions Fund -
Infrastructure Projects

Stream Round 5

Commonwealth Government

NOTE: As of [Council meeting 28 August 2024](#) - this funding has been withdrawn. Council will continue to seek funding opportunities to undertake this component of the project. (See page 118)

\$870k

Lithgow City Council
Contribution

\$1.5m

Resources for Regions
Round 8
NSW Government



Main Street Restoration Project - Stage 2

Consultation with elected representatives, businesses directly impacted by proposed works and open community consultation ([project specific](#)) and seeking feedback from public exhibition of Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting Process (Operation and Delivery Plans) has been undertaken.

In May 2024, Council received notice that the Building Better Regions Fund Grant Agreement was due to expire on 8 June 2024. The Council promptly commenced discussions with the State Government Department. An extension for the grant was approved, but on the condition it be fully expended by 30 December 2024. Additionally, the Council was advised that the funding was contingent upon the project being 100% complete by 30 December 2024, an unfeasible deadline, resulting in funding withdrawal..

In response, Lithgow City Council has:

- Resolved to advocate to the Federal Government for reinstatement of the funding.
- Put in place new project management measures
- A project review will be undertaken by the Audit Risk Improvement Committee (ARIC).
- Will continue to implement the Main Street Restoration Project - Stage 2 with available funding; and
- Will investigate other funding streams to enable the full project to be completed.

Lithgow Electric Vehicle Strategy

Lithgow Electric Vehicle Strategy was funded by the NSW Government and developed by the Lithgow Community Power Project in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). With a predicted increase in demand for electrical vehicles and charging ports an array of 4 chargers by NRMA within the Eskbank Street car park. The charging stations have been strategically located to encourage visitor spending in the CBD. Investigation has also commenced on the feasibility of several other sites across the LGA.

34% of the community would like Council to
“stimulate economic activity in the main street of Lithgow”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)

'Made in Lithgow' Cook Plaza Lighting Installation

The 'Made in Lithgow' Lighting installation in Lithgow received \$440,035 and is proudly 100% funded by the NSW Government's Streets as Shared Spaces Program.

The concept and design of 'Made in Lithgow' was developed in consultation with the local traditional landowners, Lithgow Environment Group, local businesses, and Lithgow District Chamber of Commerce.

It recognises ancient connection of the traditional custodians to the area, the story of Lithgow's long history of industrial and engineering prowess, provides a snapshot of Lithgow's future and recognises the natural beauty and unique flora and fauna of the region.

Local electrical, fabrication, services suppliers, and engineering businesses were engaged during the construction and installation process.

Lighting design and programming for the project was developed by Mark Hammer one of Australia's leading lighting artists. The lighting features a playback system that is WIFI controlled with colour changing settings, which enabled relevant coloured lighting for events like 'Do it for Dolly' Campaign (blue) and red to celebrate the 110 year anniversary of the Red Cross.

The project, was designed to add to the appeal of the Plaza as a venue for Pop Up Markets, Events, Live Music, re-energising the street and breathing life into Lithgow's night-time economy.



Developing our built environment

An aerial photograph of a rural landscape. A paved road curves through a field of dry, yellowish-brown grass. There are two small, irregularly shaped ponds with brownish water. The road is lined with young trees. In the background, there are blue mountains under a cloudy sky.

A most valued aspect of the
Lithgow area is considered to
be the

'The picturesque countryside'.

Our 10 year goal

To provide a choice of effective public and private transport options, suitable entertainment and recreational facilities, and lifestyle choices while enhancing the existing rural areas, villages and towns that make up the Lithgow LGA.

BE 1

To plan for suitable infrastructure to promote sustainable and planned growth, while enhancing the existing identity of the towns, villages and rural areas of the local government area.



OUR Strategies

- We will work to ensure new residential development areas have all necessary infrastructure in place.
- We will encourage and implement progressive urban design, sensitive to environmental and heritage issues and maintaining local character.
- We will continue to revitalise our iconic and heritage sites to maximise the potential benefits to the community.



A draft Conservation Management Plan has been developed for the State Heritage Listed Bowenfels Gun Emplacement Site and is under review by the Administration.



Blast Furnace Projection Lighting Installation

In 2023 Council commissioned FireFly Point of View lighting designers to prepare a lighting concept plan, that involves installation of an automated light projection system that will illuminate and create light shows of the blast furnace ruins for local people and visitors.

In 2024, the Council recently awarded a tender to Frontier Assembly Pty Ltd for \$429,006 to install a projection lighting system at Lithgow Blast Furnace. The works have been funded through Round 5 of the NSW Government Stronger Country Communities Fund.

Over recent years the Council has undertaken major upgrades of the Lithgow Blast Furnace heritage site – the location of the first modern iron smelting works in Australia. These works have included viewing platforms, elevated walkways, landscaping and carpark upgrades.

Blast Furnace has since become a very popular location for local residents and visitors alike, and the location for the annual LithGlow event.

The history of the area is one of the most love aspects of living in the
Lithgow LGA.

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



Lake Pillans Wetlands upgrade

Lake Pillans Wetlands is a popular destination that is enjoyed by many members of the community for its walking, cycling, fishing and picnicking. Sitting adjacent to the Blast Furnace industrial heritage ruins, Lake Pillans forms part of the Farmers Creek recreational precinct shared path network that extends west from Lake Pillans for approximately 6 kilometres.

Many visitors to Lithgow spend time at Lake Pillans, Blast Furnace and nearby Farmers Creek.

In 2024, the Council the tender in 2024 to Better View Landscapes Pty Ltd for \$632,255 to undertake carparking, pathway and landscape works at Lake Pillans Wetlands to improve public amenity and safety and to protect the reserve's natural values.

The scope of works includes;

- Constructing an asphalt pavement carpark with parking space for 11 vehicles including 2 accessible carparking spaces.
- Vehicle bollards to prevent vehicle access to the reserve.
- Widening of pathways to pedestrian/cycle path standard will connect the Farmers Creek shared pathway network to Blast Furnace via Lake Pillans.
- Construction of accessible pathways from the new car park aim to make it safer and more accessible for older people and people with disabilities to enjoy the wetlands.
- Pathway gradient improvements for accessibility from the Blast Furnace.
- Landscaping works.

The works have been funded through Round 5 of the NSW Government Stronger Country Communities Fund

21% of the community's most love aspect of living in the Lithgow LGA is the **"slow-paced country life that's not the fast-pace of the city"**

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)

BE2

To ensure sustainable and planned growth through the provision of effective public and private transport options, and suitable entertainment and to enhance the lifestyle choices of the community.



OUR Strategies

- All levels of government will work in partnership to plan and deliver roads and public transport infrastructure at the right time and at the capacity needed to support our growth.
- Our roads and other associated infrastructure will ensure connected and efficient movement throughout the Lithgow region.
- We will advocate for faster transport linkages to Lithgow from Sydney and country NSW.
- We will plan and build shared pathways and link activity centres and facilities.
- We will plan and delivery water, sewer and waste infrastructure that supports growth and sustainability.
- We will develop quality and affordable multi-purpose sporting and recreational facilities which encourage active, healthy lifestyles.
- Our parks and public spaces will be inviting, accessible, creative spaces for the enjoyment of families and visitors to our area.

Transport Program

Lithgow City Council faced perhaps its most challenging year in 2021/22. Not only did our local government area experience the highest yearly rainfall in recorded history, the effects of COVID continue to plague our operation. We faced the following challenges:

Flooding

The Lithgow LGA suffered through over 1,500mm of rainfall in 12 months. With water tables entirely saturated, the integrity of road pavements deteriorated and defects presented in road surfaces. Over the 2021-2024 period, the Lithgow LGA has experienced 8 Natural Disaster Declarations in total.

These challenges presented throughout most of NSW with 30 local government areas being declared Natural Disaster areas.

This commonality resulted in region-wide shortages of infrastructure contractors and material shortages in all quarries and asphalt production plants. In addition it was compounded by the delay in claims approval for repair/renewal of roads under Natural Disaster Declaration.

Geography

One of our greatest endowments is Lithgow's magnificent landscapes. However, given the mountainous terrain, some transport assets are built into embankments and in

other precarious locations. The significant rainfall has contributed to geotechnical instability in some areas; access to Wolgan Valley (see pp32-33), Browns Gap Road and Megalong Valley Road. Unfortunately, the design process for restoring these assets has been a protracted process as a result of the complicated nature of each location. Council continues to work with geotechnical experts to prevent further erosion and instability as the design progresses.

Staff shortage

With significant federal and state infrastructure investment, there is a distinct shortage of professional, skilled and unskilled labour across the country. Council regularly advertises for positions without success, requiring readvertisement of positions and long-term vacancies within the organisation. This increased the organisation's reliance on contract labour, creating further pressure in conjunction with additional expenses from adverse natural disaster events.

The Council's response to the issues and challenges presented in response to the 8 Natural Disaster Declarations is available on pages 30-33 of this report.

975km
roads

279km
kerb & gutter

130km
paths

48
bridges



32% of the community would like to see the Council undertake "Road improvements to attract people to the area and support businesses"

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



Arrival of the Bathurst Bullet Train - new service stopping in Tarana - 2021

Advocacy

Marrangaroo Urban Release Area (MURA)

The Lithgow Strategic Traffic Model has been finalised by Transport for NSW. The Model identifies that the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area will need to include a grade separated intersection (a road which uses an underpass or overpass) with the Great Western Highway to be funded by Council or future developers. Most existing intersections in the vicinity are already operating at a Level of Service E, thereby have no capacity to accommodate further development without causing excessive delays and queuing. Council continues to advocate for alternative intersection treatments in this area to improve safety to current motorists, but also to create capacity for future growth in the precinct.

Council held a landowner information session to inform of the status of the project in November 2023.

The project is currently on hold due to the significant and insurmountable costs of building a grade separated interchange (a road which uses an underpass or overpass) to service the development. Council continues to advocate on behalf of the community for a solution to bring online one of the most significant residential and industrial expansion opportunities available in the Lithgow local government area.

Traffic Lights - Col Drewe Drive

Council has made representation to resolve the issue of traffic infrastructure to service the remaining undeveloped areas of South Bowenfels including installation of traffic lights at Col Drewe Drive.

Transport for NSW remains committed to the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of Col Drewe Drive once further development occurs and traffic volumes warrant the installation of this infrastructure

Improved rail services

Council continues to make representations for Lithgow to be recognise as a hub for improved rail services including faster and more frequent passenger rail services between Western Sydney and regional centres in the Central West.

Lithgow Council continues to advocate on behalf of the community for a balanced focus on efficiency improvements related to local transport networks, most particularly road and rail. The LEEP suggests that Lithgow is strategically placed to support a hydrogen or green power conversion facility for the state's rolling stock. Such a project would naturally increase the flow of workers and thereby the reliance on rail networks. Such demand's will inform the state's future rail planning.

A working party has been formed to address this matter, representative of local experts including Greenspot, University of Technology, Transport for NSW and University of Western Sydney.

Browns Gap Road

Browns Gap Road has been closed to all traffic since July 2022, due to immediate concerns of geotechnical instability (rockslide and embankment failure) from the extended period of rainfall experienced over the course of 2021-2022. These intense storms also resulted in mine subsidence both underneath and adjacent to Browns Gap Road.

The Council commenced advocating for the urgent repair of mine subsidence next to Browns Gap Road in mid 2022. Repair of this mine subsidence was necessary prior to the investigation of geotechnical instability adjacent to the road, both upslope and downslope. Subsidence NSW completed the works in late 2023.

The subsidence caused distortion in the road surface indicating the road was at risk of collapse. There was also the risk of rocks above the road being released and hitting vehicles. Detailed inspections, geotechnical assessment and site analysis revealed that works were required to safely reopen Brown's Gap Road. Two claims for funding were prepared and submitted by Council under the NSW Governments Disaster Recovery Fund.

- \$1 million for further geotechnical investigation and monitoring, scaling of the rockface and repainting of the road for one way was approved. Works were undertaken to reopen the road to a single lane of traffic.
- A claim for \$5 million which seeks approval for a more comprehensive package of work that will reinstate Browns Gap Road to its pre-disaster function.

Challenges/Risks

1. The application process is challenging, requiring that every dollar requested from Government is substantiated by evidence of disaster impact and a detailed project scope.
2. Ensuring the road is safe for the heavy equipment required to enable the removal of sections of rock from up-slope.
3. Managing the ongoing frustration of motorists who use Browns Gap Road.
4. Ongoing slope stability - The Council is continuing to monitor slope stability and has implemented a Trigger Action Response Plan (TARP) measure to ensure risks to public road users do not exceed tolerable safety limits.





Cullenbenbong Causeway - reconstruction has provided the opportunity to improve the resilience of local assets in the wake of these disasters.

Causeway Replacement Program

Cullenbenbong Causeway - Kanimbla

Through the opportunities offered by the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements, a joint funding initiative of the Commonwealth and State Governments, Lithgow City Council delivered the construction of a new causeway at Cullenbenbong in the Kanimbla Valley.

The Cullenbenbong Road causeway failed in March 2021 due to significant rainfall. What was previously a low-lying causeway supported by an array of small pipes has been reconstructed to a much higher standard at a cost of \$300,000.

The Lithgow local government area had three active natural disaster declarations, all of which required significant asset reconstruction and restoration. This impacted the delivery of Council's normal works program, with planned projects being delayed for the completion of these unplanned, urgent projects. However, the reconstruction has provided the opportunity to improve the resilience of local assets in the wake of these disasters.

Glen Davis Causeway - Capertee Valley

During times of intense rainfall the causeway into the Glen Davis village becomes flooded causing the village to be cut-off as there is only one access road. The Council, investigated construction of a detour through private property for use by residents when the causeway is flooded. However the high cost to construct has made the project unfeasible. The Council has applied for \$2,122,836 under Disaster Ready Fund Round 2 and is awaiting advise on the outcome of this application to replace the Causeway.

Geordie Street Causeway - Lithgow

In April 2024 a draft Feasibility and Options Study was commissioned to replace the Geordie Street Causeway with a single span bridge.

Timber Bridge Replacement Program

The Council has been systematically replacing timber bridges across the local government area with funding from the NSW Governments Fixing Country Bridges Program. These bridges have reached the end of their useful life and are being replaced with reinforced concrete structures. The replacement of these bridges:

- Improves safety and reliability.
- Reduces maintenance costs, with new structures designed for 100-year life
- Increases fire resistance, providing ongoing access in the event of bushfire.

During 2022-2023, the Council replaced three timber bridges constructed in the early 1940's on the Glen Davis Road; Coco Creek Bridge, Airly Bridge and Crown Creek Bridge.

The Capertee Valley is an internationally acclaimed Bird Watching site and the new bridges were constructed to include footpaths giving the many birdwatchers that visit the valley a safe place to observe the region's unique bird life. In addition it was discovered that a bat colony resided under the Coco Creek Bridge so, new habitats were created under the bridge for the bats.

Planning works have commenced on the replacement of the Charles Street Bridge, Rydal and the Red Hill Road Bridge, Upper Turon with works scheduled to commence in 2024/25.



Airly Bridge, Glen Davis Road, Capertee Valley complete with pedestrian access for bird watching.

304
community
buildings and
structures



22% of the community would like to see the Council “to spend more wisely on infrastructure across the LGA and not just in Lithgow”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey)



Community buildings and facilities

Council Administration Centre

The Council Administration Centre first opened in the 1970s, and no longer meets the needs of a modern office and service centre. The Council has engaged a contractor to provide a seating plan and improved layout taking into consideration the Hartley Building, Administration Centre and vacant Centrelink Building.

Staff Facilities & Amenity

Renovated and extended the staff meal room at the Wallerawang Parks and Gardens Shed.

Council Depot Automatic rear gates

This project is part of the Depot Store re-build, the entire project is progressing however delays were experienced due to flood planning and finalising development application approvals.

Toilet Facilities

- During 2021/22 the Rydal Toilet was fabricated. The project is awaiting final completion.

- An exeloo was installed at Watsford/Conran Ovals.

Kremer Park Grandstand

The of the renewal of the Kremer Park Grandstand was completed in 2024.

Civic Ballroom Upgrade

The Civic Ballroom was upgraded to as an evacuation centre during times of crisis with funding from the NSW Government’s Bushfire Community Recovery & Resilience Fund.

The scope of works included:

- Replace Iron roof on the Civic Ballroom for longevity of the asset.
- Turret stabilisation
- Sand and renew the floors including the foyer, main hall and the dining room.



Lithgow Pump Track

The Lithgow Pump Track was officially opened by State Member for Bathurst, Paul Toole MP and Lithgow Council General Manager, Craig Butler. The opening included entertainment by Local DJ Jum Wubble and Rider demonstrations. A display of bicycles by Renshaw's Bikes Lithgow and a sausage sizzle was provided by Lithgow Headspace.

Like the adjoining Adventure Playground, this competition-level facility will be a major drawcard for Lithgow tourism. Lithgow Pump Track is designed and constructed by Common Ground Trails, one of Australia's foremost pump track designers and construction companies

- The Lithgow pump track responds to the needs identified in Lithgow Youth Strategy 2016-2020.
- The track is constructed of precision earthworks with an asphalt overlay to build a progressive riding track.
- The flow and form ensures absolute best riding experience for all ages and all abilities – all year round.
- The track is moulded into the natural Endeavour Park slope near the newly constructed Adventure Playground.
- The design consists of 700 sqm of riding surface that is graded for beginner, intermediate and advanced riders.
- The relatively steep topography of the site allows for an exciting and challenging track that will please and challenge riders of all skill levels.
- Council received \$522,000 from the NSW Government's Stronger Country Communities Program Round 3 and \$50,000 was contributed by Council.

55 Parks and Reserves including

Blast Furnace Park

Bowenfels Gun Emplacements

Lake Pillans Wetlands

Lake Wallace Recreation Area

Lake Lyell Recreation Area

Queen Elizabeth Park

The Adventure Playground & Pump Track

Hassans Walls Reserve

7km Walking/Cycling Path along Farmers Creek

\$572k
project

700sqm
pump track
suitable for
beginner
intermediate
advanced
riders

BE3

Diverse and affordable housing options are available for our residents throughout all life stages.



South Bowenfels Link Road - April 2024

OUR Strategies

- We will realise more new, affordable homes in Lithgow and other established urban centres.
- Planning and development of new suburbs will provide for a mix of housing types.
- The diverse housing needs of our community will be met through active partnerships with development.
- Planning and development of new suburbs will incorporate active transport connections.

Sustainable Development

Portland Foundations

- Adopted the Foundations Development Control Plan.
- Installed and Connected the Portland Foundation Trunk Main enabling future development and continuation of works on the Portland Foundations site.

Planning

- Engaged and collaborated with NSW Government to inform the Lithgow Draft Housing Delivery Plan.
- Continued to engage with key agency stakeholders to resolve infrastructure and planning barriers holding back progress on Marrangaroo Urban Release Area.

South Bowenfels housing initiative

A new two stage housing project will be delivered in Lithgow to support 222 new homes. The \$3.3m project is co-funded with a contribution of \$1.4m in funding from the NSW Government and \$1.9 million funded by Council. The project is required to meet the recommendations given by the Regional Housing Taskforce:

- Delivery of Local Housing Strategy to improve housing supply planning.
- Residential land subdivision to meet market demand for diverse, smaller, compact housing typologies. (including land acquisition to facilitate development).
- Comprehensive review of Council’s development contributions framework and policies, to ensure clarity and support developer confidence in creating new housing.

The South Bowenfels Housing Initiative project incorporates two initiatives that Council has identified to address the future housing needs of the growing Lithgow region.

The South Bowenfels Link Road Construction’ is a 300-metre road extension of Col Drewe Drive in the South Bowenfels Release Area, linking two major subdivisions to the north of the road and servicing 222 approved residential lots; Council’s proposed Three Tree Subdivision and the Hillcrest Subdivision.

The second initiative, known as the ‘Hillcrest No 2 Sewer Pump Station’ will see the construction of a new Sewer Pump Station (Hillcrest No 2) that will service 386 Equivalent Tenements (ET) by 2025 and 682 ET by 2030 in accordance with the South Bowenfels Sewerage Planning Report 2018.

This new Sewer Pump Station is critical infrastructure that will enable an estimated 300 approved housing lots to be serviced appropriately and unlock the further 125 housing lots directly linked to the South Bowenfels Link Road Construction. This new sewer pump station will be located on Ikara Street, Bowenfels, Lithgow.

The project has been granted a development approval and the business case for Stage 1 of the development was being finalised in June 2024.

\$3.3m total project cost

\$1.4m

Regional Housing
Fund

NSW Government

\$1.9m

Lithgow City Council
Contribution

1

new pumping station
servicing **386**

Equivalent Tenements
(ET) by 2025 and **682** ET
by 2030

222

new homes

Enhancing our natural environment



The most valued aspect
of the Lithgow area is
considered to be the
*‘the countryside, open spaces
and natural environment’.*

Our 10 year goal

To balance, protect and enhance our diverse environmental elements, both natural and built, for the enjoyment and support of both current and future generations.

NE1

To conserve and preserve the natural environment whilst balancing the impact of development to ensure a sustainable and healthy community.



29% of the community say that their most loved aspects of living in the Lithgow LGA are:

- “the bushland and natural environment;
- the clean air; and
- being in the mountains.”

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey)



OUR Strategies

- We will minimise the environmental footprint of the Lithgow region, live more sustainably and use resources more wisely.
- We will increase our resilience to natural hazards and climate change.
- We will encourage and implement ecotourism and adventure tourism, sensitive to environmental and heritage issues and maintaining local character.
- We will ensure planning and development activities provide a balance between the built and natural environments.
- We will be innovative and embrace new technologies in the management of our community’s waste.
- We will protect and preserve the regions biodiversity.
- We will protect the Lithgow region’s water supply.
- Improved air quality by reducing fossil fuel combustion.



A Healing Ceremony was conducted at Maiyingu Marragu with Mingaan Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation for a Healing Ceremony for the commencement of the Bushfire Generated Tree Waste Clean-up program in February 2022.

Regeneration post Gaspers Mountain Megafire

There was a re-focus on tree removal works post Gaspers Mountain Megafire to address remaining dangerous trees in fire affected areas. Lithgow was one of 50 Councils eligible to receive financial assistance from the designated \$33m funding pool and was successful in its application for \$2.161 million.

The project aims was to:

- Satisfy environmental and economic outcomes through repair and restoration of fire affected areas
- Reuse processed green waste products in our region while creating regional employment opportunities in our community.
- Addresses social outcomes of bushfire recovery and community resilience.

The Council, in partnership with Central Tablelands Local Land Services, Winmalee Neighbourhood Centre and the Bay Tree Nursery, delivered a Bushfire Recovery Weeds Workshop aimed at helping community members in fire affected areas to identify, monitor, and control weeds. Residents gained access to expert knowledge, resources and apps to effectively and safely manage weeds.

Pop-Up cafes in fire affected regions provided free native plants for community members, made possible with the coordinated effort from Landcare, the Lithgow Community Nursery, Lithgow Information Neighbourhood Centre and Lithgow Council.

\$2.161M

funding received for the submitted EPA Bushfire generated Tree Waste Program

87tonnes

of fire affected dangerous trees & residual

green-waste generated by the 2019-20 bushfires

80

individual landowners, businesses, public land and roadside reserves benefited

4
sewerage
treatment
plants

39
sewer pump
stations

148km
gravity fed
sewer mains

14km
sewer trunk
mains

14km
sewer trunk
mains



Portland Sewerage Treatment Plant

During 2021/22 the extreme rainfall events had adverse effects on the Council sewerage system overloading on the aging infrastructure. Both groundwater infiltration and illegal connections to Council’s sewer reticulation overloaded the system with excessive storm flow influx. In such cases, Council has difficulty controlling the flows and treating the wastewater due to flows exceeding system capability. Council infrastructure was also damaged by the natural environment. Many sewerage assets are located in the lowest position within the catchment so that the sewer can drains to this point without pumping, therefore this can be near waterways and creeks. in 2021/22 we experienced significant erosion due to the rainfall and our assets becoming exposed and in danger from further damage causing inability to service.

In response, the Council has commenced a program of Smoke Testing and Sewer Mains Relining. Smoke testing is carried out to locate defects in the public sewage network and in house service lines. These defects can result in stormwater runoff entering the sewer system, resulting in additional load to the system.

Following completion of the testing, property owners will receive written correspondence from Council containing the results and the steps needed to rectify any problems within that property which may be the responsibility of Council and/or the residents in this work.

Wallerawang No.1 Sewerage Pumping Station renewal

Wallerawang’s sewerage infrastructure was renewed to manage additional flows from new development in Wallerawang. The upgrade will deliver more efficient equipment which will reduce the running costs of the plant and provide greater storage volumes in the case of emergencies and shutdowns. This is better for the environment, as well as being more cost-effective

A new, larger well, was constructed and installed with increased emergency storage with a new valve configuration to improve operations and ensure the plant is operating to modern standards.



Launch of the Cullen Bullen Sewerage Scheme in 2024.

Cullen Bullen Sewerage Scheme

Council has been concerned for some time that a high proportion of existing on-site wastewater systems in Cullen Bullen are failing to meet the required operational and performance objectives.

Evidence of failure includes:

- Sewage from septic systems running onto neighbouring properties.
- Ponding of Sewage on flat resulting in complaints of smell, mosquitoes and a public health and safety risk.
- The overflow from septic tank absorption trenches discharging into stormwater drainage systems leadn to contamination of watercourses.
- Discharge of grey water into stormwater drainage systems resulting in contamination of watercourses.

To address these issues, Council constructed a low pressure sewerage transportation system to overcome issues with the terrain. The low pressure system is a common method of sewerage transportation where the community has previously relied upon on-site systems such as septic tanks. This project ws co-funded by the NSW government's Resources for Regions project through Infrastructure NSW (\$4,800,000) and Lithgow City Council.

73% of onsite wastewater management systems inspected were failing

Provided connection to over **90** residential properties

39% of residents strongly agree that "sewer infrastructure is reliable and meets the needs of the community".

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)

8,236
consumers
connected to
potable water

2 prescribed
dams

372km
water mains

14
reservoirs

1 water
treatment
plant

1 water
pump stations



Water security

Many of the issues faced across the the LGA were due to the extreme rainfall event in 2021/22 with large volumes of nutrients and debris being washed into our drinking water storages.

In 2021/22 the Council water supply from Farmer's Creek Dam No.2 was severely impacted from a large volume of nutrients and debris washed into the water supply causing the make up of the water to change to a point where Council could no longer treat it to drinking water standards. This then left Council in a position where a boil water alert was issued until treated water quality was returned to drinking water standards.

This issue was compounded by the WaterNSW supply failing between the Oberon Dam and Duckmaloi Treatment Plant and halting water supply from Council's supplementary source.

Groundwater from aquifers and underground storages in the natural environment created an additional problem. As full natural storage eventually have to find relief causing discharges. On a number of occasions, where a water main was thought to be leaking it was found to be groundwater exiting the aquifer into properties.

Residents are most supportive of Council providing access to **clean, safe water**.

34% of residents strongly agreeing that **"water infrastructure is reliable and meets the needs of the community"**.

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)

Water loss management program

In order to reduce water loss it is important to know where and when excess water is being consumed within the network and whether that is on the customer side of the meter or the Council reticulation. Council has been working to review and monitor the water usage in the Lithgow LGA through various projects like the introduction of smart meters and leak detection.

The Lithgow area is divided into zones for reporting and recording water usage and allows Council to determine high water usage or potential waste in the system on both the customer and Council sides of the reticulation system. Collection of real-time data has been invaluable for minimising water wastage.

Smart Meter

In 2018/19 Council commenced preparation for the replacement of water meters with Smart Meters as proposed in the Water Loss Management Plan. This reduces the amount of non-revenue water, which is currently between 30-36% of the amount of water Council purchases and treats. Council's target is to reduce reliance on purchased water down to 15% over the coming years. Across the network, approximately 8500 smart meters assist Council with real-time monitoring of water flow.

The smart meters and the associated Aqualus system, (previously known as MiWater) is a subscriber based system that allows Council and residents to track their usage over time and enables leak notification. This has contributed to leak reduction across the LGA and reduced excess water usage or water waste on the customer end.

Initiatives

Lithgow City Council has been working with the Department of Planning and Environment to complete a comprehensive leak detection survey across the Lithgow City Council water reticulation. The works were undertaken in the 2022 calendar year took note of several small leaks across the system all of which have been rectified upon finding the issue areas. The works were completed via non-invasive ground surveying, utilising electronic listening technology to locate and log leaks. The leak detection program is phase 2 of the Regional Network Leakage Detection Project, as part of the NSW Government's \$12.5 million Regional Leakage Reduction Program. Leakage across the network in the LGA is reviewed as an ongoing and ensures that Council mains and reticulation is working efficiently and water wastage is minimised. This project is funded by DPIE Water and has provided Council with valuable information to assist with prioritising asset maintenance works.

8,500
Smart meters installed

6 metered
standpipes

Clarence to Wallerawang Water Pipeline Project

Council is working with Centennial Coal and key government departments on a pipeline project to secure water for new industries and assist in the development of the former Wallerawang Power Station site. One of the objectives of the project is to enable Lithgow LGA to transition from a coal-based economy towards a more diverse and resilient one by providing a dependable water source to new industries which will not impact on the security and sustainability of water supply for drinking/town water.

This project is reliant on government funding, corporate contributions and completion of works by Centennial Coal. Key studies include the Review of Environmental Factors, Discharge Impact Assessment and a Drinking Water Impact Assessment and the Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy are being undertaken.

Water security enables businesses to plan and maximise their investment, providing the region with confidence to both encourage and facilitate population growth, including the potential development of 2,900 new homes in the Lithgow LGA.

The pipeline will create regional water security, ultimately underpinning water security for the Lithgow LGA and reducing the reliance on external water supplies such as the WaterNSW owned Fish River Water Scheme. Council continues to work with other local water utilities, government and private enterprise to ensure water security to Lithgow and the region is prioritised.

The project will also benefit conservation efforts of the Wollangambe River by redirecting groundwater from Clarence and returning the river to its natural flow patterns, with the characteristics of a "Wild River".

With Farmers Creek Dam No. 2 being over 110 years old and reaching the end of its operational life, the risk of structural failure would have significant consequences for the township of Lithgow. Therefore, the Pipeline project essential for safe decommissioning of the dam by eliminating the risk of dam failure.

The Project will include:

- Potential underbore works near the existing Oakey Park Water Treatment Plant where the existing ground terrain is likely too steep for normal trench construction.
- Working near, around, and through existing major and minor infrastructure and services, including gas and water mains, telecommunications services, and the like railway lines, tunnels, and national highways.
- Undertake additional geotechnical investigations along the pipeline alignment to inform the design development.
- Construction of a pump station, balance tank, pressure reducing stations and ancillary pipeline thrust prevention structures, valves and other elements of the pipeline.
- It is proposed that the pipeline will transport 25 ML daily, to a maximum of and able to accommodate up to 30ML daily with a minimum pressure rating of PN35 in the case of future extreme events

The project will be staged as follows:

- Stage 1A: The construction of a proposed 600mm diameter pipeline from Clarence Colliery to Oakey Park Water Treatment Plant.
- Stage 1B: Construction of a proposed 500mm diameter pipeline from Oakey Park, through Lithgow City business, residential and brownfields environs, then into greenfields environ out to near the Greenspot development site.



“With Farmers Creek Dam No. 2 being over 110 years old and reaching the end of its operational life, the risk of structural failure would have significant consequences for the township of Lithgow. Therefore, the Pipeline project is important to enabling the decommissioning of the dam and eliminating the risk of dam failure”.

Waste Strategy
adopted
January 2023

1 solid waste
facility

2 garbage
depots

6 waste
transfer
stations

4 greenwaste
collections per
annum

2 Bulky waste
collections per
annum

1 Household
chemical waste
cleanout per
annum



Waste management

As the local waste management provider, Council owns and operates the local landfills which require waste to be stored, covered and moved. The excessive rainfall has presented the additional challenge for managing pollution levels of the excess surface and natural groundwater. The issue became so severe that a temporary site closure had to be implemented as one of our rural sites to ensure compliance with water quality guidelines.

Lithgow Resource Recovery Centre

The new Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) at the Lithgow Solid Waste Facility was officially opened in September 2023. The RRC is a sealed, all-weather facility for waste recycling and disposal. The facility aims to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and assist residents to safely and easily dispose of problem wastes that cannot go into landfill.

The Resource Recovery Centre allows easy sorting of many items for recycling and an undercover area for unloading.

In addition to scrap metal, paper/cardboard, mattresses, tyres and e-waste, the new facility now offers recycling for textiles and polystyrene along with a Reuse Shed. Items in the Reuse Shed (Tip Shop) are available to members of the public to take home for reuse, rather than these items being disposed in landfill. The Lithgow Tip Shop has become a valuable asset to the community during the "cost of living crisis" with household items, clothing, books and other goods being removed from landfill and re-loved.

The Resource Recovery Centre also includes a Community Recycling Centre for common household problem wastes that cannot be put in the kerbside bins, such as paint, batteries, oils, fluorescent tubes, gas bottles, fire extinguishers and smoke detectors. The Community Recycling Centre was supported by the Environmental Trust as part of the NSW Environment Protection Authority's Waste Less, Recycle More initiative and funded from the waste levy.

Food Organics Garden Organics

The new green 'FOGO' kerbside bin collection service was rolled out to the community on 4 March 2024 ahead of the requirement for all NSWs Councils to provide a food and plant collection service by 2030. The Council launched an extensive community education campaign prior to the introduction of the 'FOGO' (food organics and garden organics) service.

9,033 green bins along with a small kitchen caddy and information kit were distributed to households receiving the kerbside bin collection service. The food and plants collected in the green bin is processed into compost and soil conditioners so that, instead of being wasted in landfill, the nutrients and energy is reused in agriculture, horticulture, gardens and parks.

All food scraps, including raw and cooked food, dairy food, meat, seafood and bones can go in the green bin along with all types of garden plant waste including leaves, grass clippings, weeds, twigs and small branches.

In the Lithgow Local Government Area, it is estimated that by providing all households with a comprehensive composting service, the green bin will help halve the amount of waste going into the red bin and being sent to landfill. For the households that already compost food and plants, the green bin will complement their home composting system by taking any items that can't go into the home compost, such as bones or weeds.

The new service is supported by Go FOGO grant funding from the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA). Using a green bin to recycle food and plants is an easy way to reduce our waste and make a positive difference to the local environment and economy.

3
FOGO Trucks

9,033
Green Bins and
Kitchen Caddy's
rolled out

575t
of plant & food waste
collected between
4 March & 30 June
2024



2000t of debris and material removed from the concrete stormwater causeway to assist with high water flow of Farmers Creek.



Floodplain Risk Management Plan

Geotechnical investigations are underway to commence the upgrade of stormwater infrastructure in the vicinity of Main Street and Cupro Street, Lithgow. This will include the triplication of the subsurface drainage from the Main Street/Cupro Street intersection, including the installation of new box culverts and inlets.

Works will occur throughout 2024/25 on the design and construction of the solution to flooding at the intersection of Main Street and Cupro Street.

Surveys of the intersection of Enfield Avenue and Main Street, Lithgow were completed to inform the design of significant infrastructure upgrades.

Work commenced on installing a stormwater retention basin within the Lithgow Urban Works Compound (Council Depot) to reduce downstream flooding.

This is a multi-year project, with 2023/24 being just the first year of works outlined in the Floodplain Risk Management Plan.

279km
kerb & gutter

60km
stormwater
pipes

1,669
drainage pits

NE2

To work together to enhance, manage and maintain the Lithgow region's distinct and exceptional natural environment for the enjoyment of current and future generations.



OUR Strategies

- We will respect and protect the region's Aboriginal heritage assets.
- We will work to implement weed management strategies across our local government area.
- We will protect and improve our natural areas and ecosystems, including Hassans Walls Reserve, Farmers Creek and other waterways.
- We will deliver sustainability and environmental education programs to local communities, groups and schools.

Hassans Walls Reserve

Hassans Walls Reserve is a 780 hectare area of both Crown Land reserved for Public Recreation and Community Land managed by Lithgow City Council. It is located immediately south of the Lithgow CBD and south & east of much of the town’s residential areas. The Reserve is a significant environmental and recreation asset, contains infrastructure to support essential services and is a sizeable area under Council’s management.

A Draft Mountain Bike Trails Strategy for Hassans Wall Reserve was developed in 2021 that detailed the infrastructure trails requirements, and the cost to develop 3 purpose built mountain biking trails at Hassans Walls Reserve.

During 2023/24, the Council commissioned the following studies to be undertaken to inform Council’s decision-making in respect to the Mountains Bike Trail Development Concept Plan:

- A Flora and Fauna Assessment,
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment; and
- Recreational track Audit

Undertaking these three studies does not guarantee Council will adopt the Mountains Bike Trail Development Concept Plan, nor approve any mountain bike development proposal should it come before Council in the future.

More broadly, these studies will assist with future management of the reserve as a whole and are consistent with Council’s aims and obligations to protect its environmental, recreational and cultural values.

Hence, in its current state, the project seeks to assess and inform council’s decisions pertaining to economic development, environment and cultural heritage.



780h
Reserve

200m
above Lithgow

Hassans Walls
Lookout

1,100m
above sea level

Sir Joseph
Cook
Boardwalk

Bracey Lookout

1,021m
above sea level at
the Trig Station

Sheedy’s Gully

& Lithgow
Pony Club



Responsible governance & civic leadership

22% of the community would
like to see *'our council be
more progressive'*

Our 10 year goal

To develop community confidence in the organisation by the way it is directed, controlled and managed.

GL1

To be a proactive Council that sets the long term direction for the local government area and Council to ensure a sustainable future for the Lithgow local government area.



22% of residents would like to see “Long-term planning in terms of town design & infrastructure & council spending money more wisely on infrastructure across the LGA and not just in Lithgow”.

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



OUR Strategies

- Our plans and strategies focus on financial, economic, social and environmental sustainability which inform council decision making.
- We manage our money and our assets to be sustainable now and into the future.
- We will continuously review our service provision to ensure the best possible value and outcomes for the community.
- Our workforce , systems and processes will support high performance and optimal service delivery for our community.
- We implement opportunities for organisational improvement.
- We work with our partners and neighbouring councils to share skills, knowledge and resources and find ways to deliver services more efficiently.

Planning for a brighter future

- A tender was developed for the review of Chapter 12 of Lithgow's Land Use Strategy as it applies to employment lands with tenders to be called in 2024/25. There is a distinct focus on what is required to unlock lands for commercial, industrial and tourism opportunities throughout the region. Scoping has already commenced on the sundry amendments to the Lithgow Local Environmental Plan.
- The Council developed a brief to appoint an external consultancy to oversee the Growth Management Strategy (which encompasses the Local Housing Strategy, Rural Lands and Rural Residential Study).
- In April/May 2024, a survey and online round-table with key industry representatives was undertaken for the Employment Lands Strategy (an action of the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan). The consultation results will be reported to the Council in second quarter 2024/25.
- Council is working collaboratively with Transport for NSW and Department of Planning and Environment to resolve the traffic impacts and access arrangements onto the Great Western Highway as part of the Traffic Study for the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area and commence a planning proposal to implement the Marrangaroo Masterplan.
- An Evacuation Plan was developed for the Wolgan Valley. An application for funding was submitted to the State Government to progress a new access to the valley. This was supported by extensive plans and studies.
- The Water Security Options Assessment to identify the works required and concept designs for the Lithgow LGA including the Clarence to Wallerawang Pipeline was undertaken.
- The Water & Sewer Asset Renewal Program was developed following revaluation of the above ground assets to update water and sewage costings in the capital and renewal plan.
- Funding was secured and investigation commenced into opportunities to upgrade / develop / relocate the Animal Shelter to improve services to the community and to ensure animal control is maintained in accordance with legislation and policy.
- 8 staff members were provided with commercial drone training as part of the implementation of the Smart Regional Spaces project.
- The Council has worked collaboratively with the Central NSW Joint Organisation on a number of initiatives that will integrate resilience and water security into our Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework;
 - Local Water Utility Strategic Planning (Integrated Water Cycle Management Strategy)
 - Regional Disaster Risk Reduction
 - Regional Climate Change
 - Bathurst, Lithgow and Oberon Drought Resilience Plan.
- Participate in an Asset Management Audit for Central NSW Councils undertaken by the Institute for Regional Futures, University of Newcastle.
- Preparation of a Masterplan for the Tony Luchetti Sporting Precinct which encompasses Tony Luchetti Showground, The Trotting Track, Lithgow Basketball Stadium, Skatepark, Jim Monaghan Memorial Athletics Field, Watsford & Conran Ovals, Lithgow Tennis Courts, Lithgow Croquet Court, Glanmire Hockey Fields, Marjorie Jackson Sporting complex and parking.



Service Review Framework

An Integrated Approach

The Service Planning Framework is a vital component in our Integrated Planning and Reporting process serving as a connecting agent between individual and organisational performance. The Framework considers:

People

- Workforce, employee engagement, values, behaviours, performance management, learning and development, Work Health & safety.

Planning and Reporting

- Integrated Planning, reporting, measuring and engaging with the community.

Process Improvement

- Service focus, service reviews, continuous improvement.

Outcomes

- Provide a service-based approach to planning
- Apply an integrated process for planning and budget development.
- Consideration of service delivery to inform budget needs.
- Increased community and employee engagement in relation to planning and delivery.

Council continues to implement the Service Planning Framework and undertake process improvement to identify efficiencies, improve organisational performance and work towards ensuring that your council is 'Fit for the Future'.

For example, the library refurbishment addressed outstanding actions from the service review which included providing quiet spaces, better seating and event spaces enhancing its ability to deliver events and provide routine service without disruption simultaneously.

Local History storage and access issues were addressed during the process with continued works to make the collection more accessible i.e. cataloguing and digitising.

A review of Customer Service was undertaken resulting in formulation of a Customer Service Framework. Training was provided for all Council staff. The Customer Service Request System is being updated to improve the capture of customer requests and improved customer experience and reporting.

Individual Service Plans have been developed for all Council Services which help to determine the most appropriate mix of services to achieve the best value outcomes for the community within Council's resource capacity.



GL2

To be a Council that focuses on strong civic leadership, organisational development and effective governance with an engaged community actively participating in decision making processes affecting their future.

Only 15% feel that information about Council decisions is clear and accessible and just 10% believe Council adequately considers community concerns in decision-making. Only 9% agree Council plans well for the long-term future. This suggests a need for improved transparency and community engagement in planning.

Source: (Community Satisfaction Survey n=400 - October 2024)



OUR Strategies

- We will ensure Council's decision making is transparent, accessible and accountable.
- Our community leaders will work together to deliver the best possible results for the community.
- Council's leadership and decision making will reflect the diversity of our community.
- We will be proactive and innovative in our engagement with the community, ensuring our engagement programs are equitable, accessible, inclusive and participatory.
- Community awareness and understanding of Council services and longterm plans will be increased.

Council's Role

While the council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the Community Strategic Plan on behalf of the Lithgow Local Government Area, it is not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other partners, such as the state and federal governments, non-government organisations and community groups may also be engaged in delivering the long-term objectives of the plan. There are 8 critical roles that the council performs on behalf of the community.

The Council engages with its community by sharing information about its government of business, thereby providing constituents with opportunities to influence and participate in decision-making.

The Council facilitates economic development by working with community businesses to attract and retain investment and support sustainable economic growth Strategic Leadership.

The Council provides strategic leadership by continuously enhancing its understanding of current and future operating environments, identifying opportunities and risks, and making decisions that align with long-term strategic plans.

The Council enforces relevant state and national legislation. Where extra support is required for its efficient and effective functioning, supplementary policies are implemented.

The council facilitates and works with the community to develop a sense of place through branding, the promotion of local identity, and enhancement of the community's social cohesion, health and wellbeing.

The Council works with the community to create an environment that guides the use of land such that it supports the community's economic and environmental development and aligns with its values.

The Council responsibly manages its finances, exemplified by its delivery of cost-effective, equitable and efficient services and assets which:

1. Align with the long-term strategic plans and objectives identified in the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework. And
2. Meet the community's needs

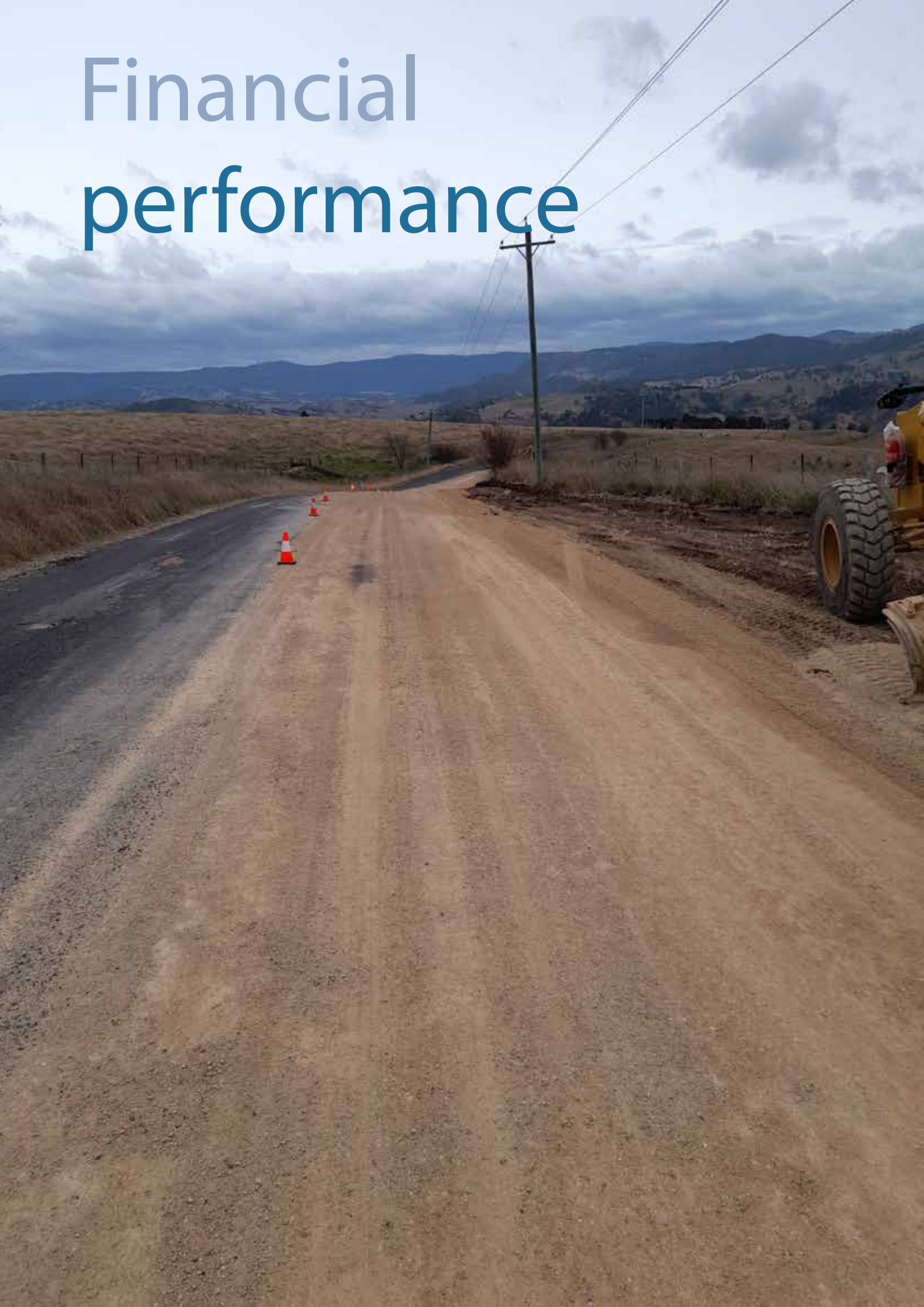
Council Meetings

All council decisions are made at council meetings or through them, council meetings are conducted on the fourth Monday of each month. Additionally, the council began live-streaming and recording meeting to increase their accessibility. All meetings are available for viewing on council's website.

<https://council.lithgow.com/council/council-meetings/>

In response to COVID 19 public health restrictions, council has adapted to ensure that it continues to conduct its meetings in an open and democratic manner. This includes, when required, video conferencing to comply with social distancing requirements.

Financial performance



On 1st of July 2023, IPART fully approved Council's special Rate variation (SRV).

The approved overall increase to land rates for the 2023/24 year is 45.78% (including 3.7% rate peg) which equates to \$6.2m in income. The Council limited the increase in the residential, farming and business (general) rating categories to 27.7% (including the 3.7% rate peg). The balance of the increase (approximately \$3M) is levied against the business power generation sub-category, mining category and a new quarrying business sub-category or sub-categories.

The council sought the special variation to:

- improve its financial sustainability
- maintain its existing services
- reduce its infrastructure backlog and increase its infrastructure renewals.

The Special Rate Variation is a major step towards better maintenance of the LGA's roads and infrastructure. It will also help to transform and grow the local economy and assist the with delivery of quality services to the whole community.

Before considering applying for a Special Rate Variation, the Council's administration developed a Financial Sustainability Plan to identify the key actions the Council will undertake to achieve its objective of delivering best value to the community. The broad suite of actions in the plan ensures that a cross-organisational commitment is made, and sustained, for continuous responsible financial management and improvement.

The Rating Review identified a target of \$1.3M in productivities and improvements to be implemented with resources generated from a Special Rate Variation. The planned productivity improvements have been modeled and accounted for in the Long-Term Financial Plan.

The table (over page) provides a summary of the key actions Council will undertake to deliver sustainable best-value outcomes to the community.

The strategies are designed around S8B of the NSW Local Government Act - principles of sound financial management.



1. **Financial Assistance Grants:** Increase the Financial Assistance Grants (FAGs) to more than 1% of national taxes (presently at an historical low of 0.55%)
2. **Mining Royalties:** Increase NSW Government funding for local economic transformation from royalties paid to the government by local mining.
3. **Developer Contributions:** Capture benefits of major development through monetary contributions for economic transformation and local infrastructure.
4. **Land Rating Strategy:** Increase own source revenue through a contemporary land rating strategy.
5. **Financial Sustainability Plan Implementation:** Implement the actions in the Plan including a ongoing identification and implementation of productivity initiatives.

Financial Sustainability Plan & Productivity Improvements Progress

Strategy	Actions	Progress
Responsible & Sustainable Income and Spending		
Living within our means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expenditure does not exceed income. Balanced operating result (before capital) 	Commenced from 2023/24 budget - ongoing
Increased income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibly generate increased own source revenue maximise opportunities and fully recover costs. Seek grant opportunities for planned works. 	Commenced from 2023/24 budget - ongoing
Service Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the community on affordable service levels. Review service levels to focus on priorities 	Council commenced a review of its Service Catalogue in 2023/24. This process will identify gaps and a priority list of Service Reviews to be undertaken.
Investment in Infrastructure		
Adequate funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund infrastructure renewals as they are due. Fund required asset maintenance. 	The Special Rate Variation has enabled asset management planning to be fast tracked in 2023/24. Asset Management Plans for Buildings and Stormwater commenced in April 2024. Transport and Open Spaces Assets will be presented to Council in the July - December 2024 period.
Clear backlogs	Clear infrastructure renewal backlogs	To commence from 2024/25.
Meet service levels	Bring assets to agreed service levels	To commence from 2024/25.
Life cycle costing	Whole of life cycle costing integrated in business case process	Whole of Life Cycle costing is built into the Business Case template and is considered when developing the annual budget - ongoing.
Focus on asset renewal	Capital budgets focused on asset renewal rather than new works,	The 2022/23 capital budgets were focused on asset renewal rather than new works and ongoing Natural disaster recovery works.
Financial & Asset Management		
Build staff capacity	Budget management training -leading to accountability.	Budget management training was completed in 2022.
	Finance resource working across Departments to help put in place budget management improvements.	A Finance staff member with responsibility for improving Directorate budgets was appointed in 2023.
	Focus on organisational culture and look after the staff.	In the second half of 2023, a number of Human Resources strategies were implemented with a focus on organisational culture and looking after the staff.
Improved budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return to zero-based budgeting and review of cost drivers for the 2023/24 budget. Improved phasing of operational and capital Rolling cashflow model, payroll and HR, dashboards budgets 	Zero-based budgeting and review of cost drivers was utilised for the 2023/24 budget, as appropriate. The Directorate Budgets Finance Officer will be focused on improving phasing of operational and capital budgets for the 2024/25 budget. A rolling cashflow model will be developed in 2024.
Improved Asset Management	Asset management plans for preparing long-term asset maintenance and renewal programs.	Asset Management Plans for Roads, Kerb & Gutter, Footpath and Open Spaces which has been completed during 2023/24.

Strategy	Actions	Progress
Financial & Asset Management		
Reduce the risk of shock	Improvements to finance systems to reduce the risk of “shocks” and earlier detection of issues.	\$250k Contingency funding (from the SRV) is reserved annually to ensure Council is able to absorb future financial shocks. Council commenced a review of its Service Catalogue in 2023/24. This process will link Service Plans to the Long-Term Financial Plan and Workforce Plan.
	Improved integrated systems – customer requests module, works online.	Implementation of the customer requests has been completed. Works online will be implemented in 2023/24.
	Rolling cashflow model, payroll and HR, dashboards budgets.	Human Resource Management & Payroll system upgrades have been completed.
Intergenerational Equity		
Consider future generations in decision making.	Meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs	Council commence a review of its Service Catalogue in 2023/24. This process takes into consideration trends which will impact services now and into the future so that Council can adjust service needs and levels, adapting to service demand in a changing environment.
Plan borrowings	Responsible planned borrowings for long-life infrastructure	There were no new loan borrowings in the 2022/23, or 2023/24.
Rating review findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement actions to address the findings of the Rating Review report, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Rate Variation application for 2023/24 Productivity, savings and user fees Rating structure improvements Additional levels of service 	<p>IPART approved Council’s Special Rate Variation (SRV) application in full.</p> <p>The approved overall increase to land rates for the 2023/24 year is 45.78% (including 3.7% rate peg). Council will limit the increase in the residential, farming and business (general) rating categories to 27.7% (including the 3.7% rate peg) with the balance of the increase to be levied against the business power generation sub-category, mining category and a new quarrying business sub-category or sub-categories.</p>
Ongoing Productivity Improvements		
Implement annual budget strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2.5M savings – extra revenue achieved in the 2021/22 year (4.6% of operating expenditure) \$3.4M savings – extra revenue budgeted in the 2022/23 year (6.4% of operating expenditure) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2.5M savings – extra revenue achieved in the 2021/22 year (4.6% of operating expenditure) \$3.8M savings – extra revenue achieved in the 2022/23 year (4% of operating expenditure) \$3.9M savings – extra revenue budgeted in the 2023/24 year (5% of operating expenditure)
Improve productivity	Special Rate Variation will enable Council to build its capacity.	<p>Council was successful in obtaining a 45% (plus 3.7% rate peg) Special Rate Variation which increased revenue in 2023/24 by \$6.2m.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$1.67m Transport Maintenance Program. \$1.37M Roads Renewal Program \$2.79k Stormwater Maintenance Program \$180K Stormwater Drainage Renewal Program \$250k to increase strategic capacity in the areas of governance, risk and internal audit. \$250 to support productivity projects \$250k Contingency funding to be reserve annual to ensure Council is able to absorb future financial shocks. \$1.092M Transitions Management Program.
	Generate a greater proportion of revenues from user fees	
	Dividends from waste business	



Next steps
2025-2029

Where are we headed?

Lithgow City Council is committed to a sustainable future for the Lithgow Region.

Advocating for our community

1. Sustainable Local government

- Review and reform of funding arrangements for local government to provide the sector with the capacity to meet the many challenges of the 21st century.
- Improvement to the current model of funding for disaster recovery works to enable Council's to repair infrastructure without a lengthy and delayed approvals processes which further exacerbates asset deterioration and erodes community trust

A diverse, strong and resilient local economy

- Finalise and rapidly implement the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan – this encompasses cross-government commitment and collaboration affirmative action, significant increase to the levels of funding provided for economic transformation (recognising that the task of transforming the Lithgow economy will require significant financial support for the next 7 – 10 years).
- Bring forward new employment precincts – utilise the capacity of the NSW Government to examine and then re-purpose the LGA's brownfield sites for employment purposes. Secure Lithgow's housing growth – resolve the issue of traffic access.

3. Sustainable transport options linking the Central West and Western Sydney to the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area.

- Work with Council to implement the Lithgow Electric Vehicle Strategy
- Improve road connections – GWH upgrade – Advance the Great Western Highway upgrade.
- Recognise and act on the potential for Lithgow to act as a hub for improved rail services to the east and west.
- More frequent rail services between Lithgow and Western Sydney.
- Consider the potential for faster and more frequent passenger rail services between Western Sydney and regional centres in the Central West.

Transitioning our community for the future

We're committed to working with State & Federal Government, businesses and the community to transition our economy from one based on mining and power generation to encompass a diverse set of industries for the Lithgow LGA.

Through the **Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP)** we will:

- Leverage Lithgow's reputation as an energy provider for NSW with a switch to scaled-up renewable energy by taking advantage of existing infrastructure, including transmission lines and water resources.
- Seek out opportunities to become a hub for the circular economy and create precincts specialising in advanced logistics, health and aged care.
- Leverage the potential of agribusiness and tourism.
- Look for solutions to resolve issues such as the need for affordable housing, high quality schools and higher education in the region to attract skilled workers and grow the community.
- Identify and develop initiatives to make Lithgow a great place to live and work.

Using **targeted strategic land use planning** we will progress the development of key plans and strategies to guide future growth and development in the area including the:

- Growth Management Strategy
- Employment Lands/Centres Review
- Review of Agri-tourism and Employment Zones Reforms within the local planning framework by the NSW State Government.

Enabling development

Marrangaroo Urban Release Area (MURA)

In 2017, the Council, in conjunction with the Marrangaroo community developed a Structure Plan, Draft Marrangaroo Masterplan and supporting studies for the development of Marrangaroo. The Council is committed to delivering the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area.

The proposed development site is located within the Marrangaroo Urban Release Area as shown in the LEP Rezoning Map, 2014. The site is bounded by Marrangaroo Creek to the North, Special Purpose Zone to the east, Environmental Management Zone to the south and Great Western Highway to the west. The majority of the site is currently used for cattle and sheep grazing. There are some rural residential area and commercial developments along the Great Western Highway.

The site encompasses approximately 390ha of rural land and plans to accommodate:

- A residential precinct;
- An enterprise corridor;
- An industrial Precinct;
- Open space/drainage reserves; and
- Village centre development.

It is proposed to develop approximately 1600 residential lots along with a network of industrial roads, collector roads, local roads, pedestrian footpaths and cycleways.

The Lithgow Strategic Traffic Model by Transport for NSW requires that a grade separated intersection (a road which uses an underpass or overpass) with the GWH be constructed at the cost to Council or future developers.

The Council will continue to advocate for alternative intersection treatments in this area to improve motorists safety, but also to create capacity for future growth in the precinct.

Greenspot Development Proposal

We are working closely with the Department of Regional NSW and Greenspot to realise this major development proposal in Wallerawang. The Planning proposal, which requires multiple land-use rezoning, will take up to 18 months to receive approval from the Department of Regional NSW.

The project will play a major role in Lithgow's economic transition and is a priority project for the Lithgow region. The 620ha site includes an employment enterprise centre, mixture of tourism, recreational, residential, retail and public open space (green corridors) which will create growth and vibrancy in the Wallerawang area and must be part of a managed growth strategy for the LGA.

Portland Foundations

The Council will continue to work with the Portland Foundations site to enable growth, economic and cultural development in Portland. The development of the site will see:

- 300 residential lot subdivision to be completed by 2029.
- Development of 90,000m² B4 zoned land suitable for accommodation, wellness, tourism, hospitality, aged care etc.
- Adaptive re-use of 6 significant heritage buildings for cultural and business use.
- Development of multiple green-space areas centred around 3 large lakes adjoining the town centre.

South Bowenfels Housing Initiative

The Council is committed to delivering 222 new homes by 2030. The \$3.3m project address the future housing needs of the growing Lithgow region and is required to meet the recommendations given by the Regional Housing Taskforce which includes:

- Delivery of Local Housing Strategy to improve housing supply planning.
- Residential land subdivision to meet market demand for diverse, smaller, compact housing typologies. Includes land acquisition to facilitate development.
- Comprehensive review of Council's development contributions framework and policies, to ensure clarity and support developer confidence in creating new housing.
- 1 new pumping station servicing 386 equivalent tenements (ET) by 2025 and 682 ET by 2030.

Ensuring water security - Clarence to Wallerawang Pipeline Project

The Council is working with Centennial Coal and key government departments to deliver the Clarence to Wallerawang Pipeline Project.

The project will be delivered in two stages:

- Stage 1A: The construction of a proposed 600mm diameter pipeline from Clarence Colliery to Oakey Park Water Treatment Plant.
- Stage 1B: Construction of a proposed 500mm diameter pipeline from Oakey Park, through Lithgow City to Wallerawang and the Greenspot Development site.

The project will create regional water security, and enable business to plan and maximise investment in the region by providing opportunities for the development of 2,900 new homes in the LGA.

Revitalising our CBD

The Council is committed to the restoration of Lithgow Main Street and creating a vibrant town centre.

Stage 2, Bridge Street to Cook Street will commence in the second half of 2024/25. Works will include:

- A revamped streetscape; greens-scaping and street furniture.
- Replacement of old and dated pavers;
- Replacement of drainage systems to ensure asset protection;
- Improved safety balustrade,
- A parking zone review (including disability acces/loading zones and bus zones).

Due to the loss of Federal Government Grant funding in August 2024, the project will focus on the replacing the footpath between Bridge to Eskbank Street. This section of Main Street has been identified as a priority based on the greater risk posed to pedestrians by uneven pavers.

The Council is actively pursuing funding through the Growing Regions program to ensure we have the funds to deliver in full, the second stage of this project to renew the section of footpath between Eskbank Street to Cook Street Plaza footpath.

Browns Gap Road

Council is committed to reopening the Browns Gap Road to two lane traffic flow. Motorist safety is of the utmost importance and resolution of ongoing slope instability is key to ensure safe re-opening of the road.

Wolgan Valley Reconstruction Project

Council has engaged Wassabi Group to manage the Wolgan Valley Reconstruction Project. The construction of a new access road into the Wolgan Valley will take 6 years to complete and cost an estimated \$327m.

This is the largest project ever undertaken by the Council and the project is contingent upon State Government funding.

State Conservation Area, Eco-Tourism and Adventure Destination

The Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, which covers an impressive 28,322ha is a major opportunity to establish Lithgow as a world-class eco-tourism and adventure tourism destination.

The Council is committed to working with the State Government to develop sustainable tourism infrastructure and strengthen the visitor economy, while delivering important conservation outcomes for the park.

Lithgow Animal Shelter

The Council is committed to ensuring that the Animal Shelter meets its legislative requirements under the Companion Animals Act and has commenced investigations into the feasibility of renewing the current facility or constructing a new facility. This will be a multi-year project which may include sourcing a new location for the facility. Final costings and quantity surveyors report will be provided to Council for consideration in 2024/25.

Building a resilient community

We're committed to working with the community to adapt our city and build resilience to the projected impacts of climate change.

In partnership with the Central NSW Joint Organisation, the Council has developed a series of toolkits which guide the integration of resilience into Council's Integrated Planning & Reporting (IP&R) framework.

The following documents developed by the Central NSWJO will be incorporated into the IP&R Framework:

- Transitioning Local Water Utility Strategic Planning into the Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework.
- Regional Climate Change Framework for Integrated Planning and Reporting.
- Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Framework for Integrated Planning & Reporting.
- Bathurst, Lithgow & Oberon Drought Resilience Plan.





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