

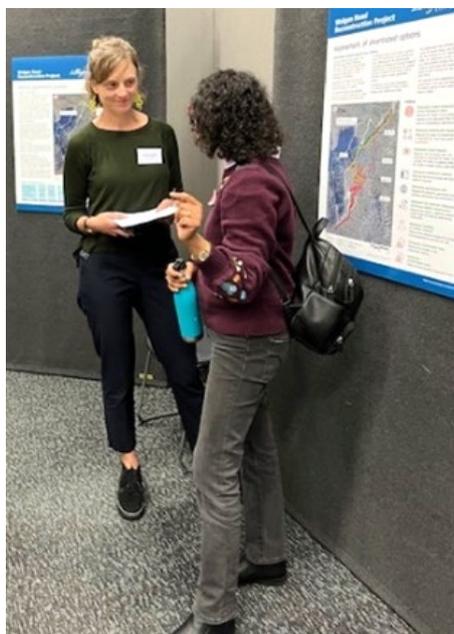
WOLGAN ROAD RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Thank you to everyone who attended Lithgow City Council's recent community engagement events. We appreciate your time and effort and for being honest about your concerns and aspirations for the project.

Community information evening – 9 April 2025

On Wednesday 9 April, we held a community information evening on the preferred option assessment process. Over 40 people attended to learn about the options considered, the assessment process, and the criteria used to select the preferred design—Option 1D. The information presented is also available on the project webpage at <https://council.lithgow.com/projects/wolgan-gap>.

More than 40 members of the community participated in the community information evening (in person and online)



What we heard

We heard from the community that there was limited support for a new alignment without exhausting existing corridors such as the Donkey Steps and the closed section of Wolgan Road. There was a clear desire for Council to collaborate more with the community including on a permanent Donkey Steps alignment. Other feedback included the urgent need for an updated Slope Risk Assessment of Wolgan Road, the importance of protecting Aboriginal cultural values, maintaining access to the Valley during construction, and frustration over the timeframes and costliness of the proposed solutions.

Our response

In response to what we heard, we have committed to improving our engagement approach.

- We have established a Community Consultative Group (CCG) to deeply explore project challenges and opportunities together with the project team.
- We are exploring the Donkey Steps alignment on the assumption that the existing Wolgan Road can be reopened for temporary access during construction.
- We will involve the community during the updated Slope Risk Assessment.



17 members of the community participated in our first Community Consultative Group Workshop

Community Consultative Group Workshop – 14 May 2025

The first CCG met on Wednesday 14 May having been established via an Expression of Interest process. A full outcomes report of what was discussed can be found at <https://council.lithgow.com/projects/wolgan-gap>.

The workshop looked at the challenges and opportunities of using the Donkey Steps as a permanent access solution, based on the assumption that Wolgan Road is safe to use during construction.

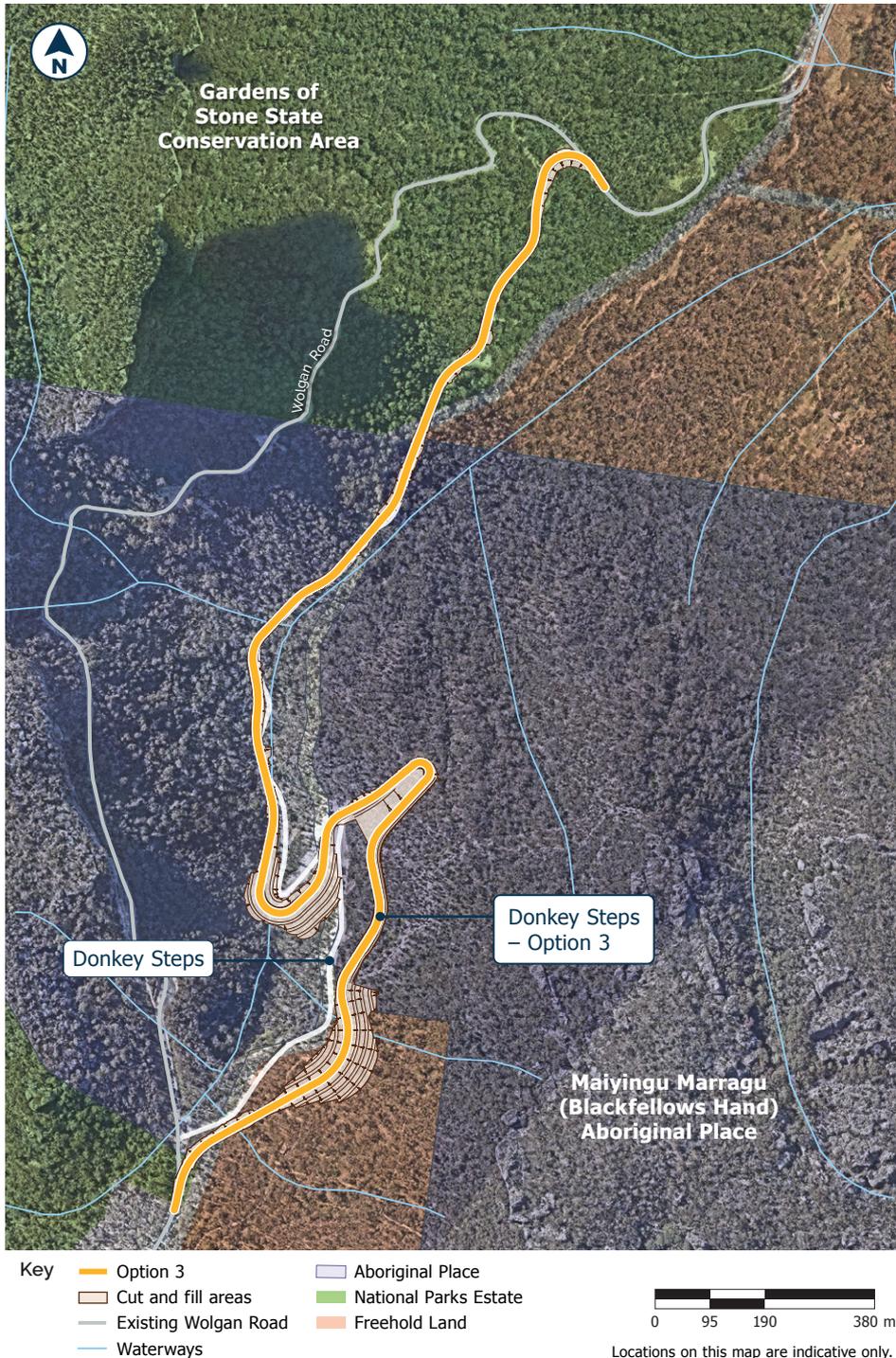
The discussion included the following topics:

Design criteria: The CCG explored the funding and design criteria for the project. This covered the minimum required standards to restore the road to its pre-disaster functionality, which needs to allow access for 12.5m trucks (i.e. firetrucks) to pass each other, and 19m semi-trailers to travel up or down using both sides of the road.

Reducing the vertical grade: We are required to comply with the Australian AusRoads Standards which allow a maximum gradient for trucks and semi-trailers of 15%. At its steepest point, the Donkey Steps gradient is 38.7%. To reduce the vertical grade, the Donkey Steps will need to be lengthened significantly, requiring vegetation clearing and rock cutting.

Donkey Steps Option 3: The project team presented an early design schematic, known as Donkey Steps Option 3 (see map below). This would realign the road along the top of the escarpment to lower its gradient and require reconstruct the Donkey Steps section within the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. Work in the conversation areas would be subject to a complex property acquisition process that could cause delays. However, work on the remainder of the road can proceed concurrently while the acquisition is underway.

Donkey Steps Option 3



Workshop outcomes

The CCG discussion highlighted a range of perspectives:

- **The need for a safe, resilient permanent access solution** while also minimising impacts on Aboriginal Place, biodiversity and private property.
- **Donkey Steps Option 3 is less impactful but riskier:** There were split views on whether the Donkey Steps Option 3 was preferable to Option 1D. Donkey Steps Option 3 has a reduced project footprint but, if a weather event closed Wolgan Road during construction, the community would have no access into the Valley.
- **Geotechnical risk assessments:** As-designed slope risk assessments are needed for each design to avoid the issues that led to the closure of Wolgan Road option. The project team will use all available investigative data, including LiDAR surveys already completed for the whole Valley and geotechnical information that is currently being collected.
- **Maintaining two access routes:** It was suggested that the existing Wolgan Road and Donkey Steps be used as one-way access routes one for entry and the other for exit—with trucks restricted to Wolgan Road. However, this approach presents operational challenges and does not align with DFRA funding requirements. Additionally, it would double Council's maintenance costs, for which no external funding is available.

Next steps and upcoming milestones

Independent risk assessment

Procurement is underway for an updated Slope Risk Assessment (SRA) of the closed section of Wolgan Road. Development of the Donkey Steps alignment option will be progressed in parallel with Council's preferred option, while the Wolgan Road Updated Slope Risk Assessment is being undertaken.

Community consultative group

The Community Consultative Group will meet again in late June to seek community input into the updated Slope Risk Assessment criteria and constructability considerations. We'll then meet again in early August to discuss the outcomes of the updated Slope Risk Assessment and what this means for the EIS. Outcomes of these meetings will be shared with the broader community.

Broader consultation

We will provide monthly newsletter updates and in-person briefings (with an option to join online). We want to continue to keep you informed, be transparent about "what's hard", and involve you where there are opportunities to influence project decisions.

Upcoming engagement activities	Date and time
Community briefing 176 Mort Street, Lithgow and online	Wednesday 4 June
Community Consultative Group Workshop consultation on updated Slope Risk Assessment criteria	Thursday 3 July 5-8pm*
Community briefing 176 Mort Street, Lithgow and online	Wednesday 9 July
Community Consultative Group Workshop outcome of updated Slope Risk Assessment and next steps	Wednesday 6 August 5-8pm
Community briefing 176 Mort Street, Lithgow and online	Wednesday 14 August

* Dates indicative and subject to change. Dates and times will be confirmed with the CCC via email.

Upcoming investigations and assessment

Geotechnical, biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural heritage assessments are ongoing throughout May and June. The community will be notified of any traffic impacts related to these investigations.

The Social Impact Assessment (SIA), which forms part of the environmental assessment for the project, is being carried out by WSP. The SIA team will interview selected community members and stakeholders, representing a range of residents and businesses, as part of this assessment. We will be in contact to arrange these interviews.

Project timelines

Pending funding, approvals and other constraints, Council and its project team are working to the following milestones. These are indicative only, but we will keep the community informed as more information becomes available.

Pending funding, approvals and other constraints

LATE 2025

Public exhibition of Environmental Impact Statement

2026

Detailed design and construction contract awarded

2030

Completion of construction and commencement of operation

What time suits you for the community briefings?

To ensure our community briefings are held at a time that suits you, scan the QR code, or click the link, to fill out this survey to select your preferred time slot and whether you'd like to attend in person or online. Please let us know by **Sunday 1 June, 2025**.



Survey link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7KLTVSL>

Further information

We are committed to keeping you informed through monthly updates. To find out more about the project, visit the project web page at: <https://council.lithgow.com/projects/wolgan-gap>.

You can also get in touch directly with the project team at wolgan.reconstruction@lithgow.nsw.gov.au