



# MINUTES

Infrastructure Committee Meeting

held at

Council Administration Centre  
Committee Room  
180 Mort Street, Lithgow

on

Tuesday 5 May 2026

at 5:00 PM

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# ORDER OF BUSINESS

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The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 5pm.

## **1. Acknowledgement of Country**

The Chair acknowledged Wiradjuri Elders past and present of the Wiradjuri Nation — the original custodians of the land on which Lithgow's communities reside — and extended respect to neighbouring nations.

## **2. Present**

Present: Cr Tom Evangelidis, Cr Steve Ring, Cr Darryl Goodwin, Cr Eric Mahony, Cr Ray Smith

Officers: Matthew Trapp, Perrin Walsh, Owen Mabumbo, Richard Jane, Glynnis Nancarrow  
Minute Taker: Sharron Wood

## **3. Apologies**

Apologies NIL

## **4. Confirmation of Minutes**

The Chair noted that the minutes of the previous Infrastructure Committee meeting had been endorsed by Council at its meeting of 23 March 2026 (Minute 26-63) and did not require re-confirmation by this Committee.

## **5. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

The Chair called for any matters arising from previous minutes. NIL

## **6. Declaration of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

## **7. Staff Reports**

### **7.1. Sewerage Systems**

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A report on sewerage system matters was presented covering sludge lagoon infrastructure, the Cullen STP discharge trial plan, recycled water reuse, asset rationalisation and financial considerations.

#### **Sludge Lagoon — Project Background**

The sludge lagoon project at the Lithgow SDP is one of the final stages of a broader programme to improve sludge handling across all plants. The project was deferred for financial reasons in the current year but remains a priority. Historical issues with sludge management at Portland, including non-compliant ammonia discharge that triggered a Pollution Reduction Plan from the EPA, led to significant investment in improved sludge handling infrastructure. The lagoon enables sludge to be transported, settled, thickened and ultimately de-watered before it can be reused or further treated.

#### **Groundwater Study (Preliminary)**

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Members queried why the groundwater study remained at a preliminary stage. Officers explained that a contractor-led approach was preferred to ensure independent identification of all contaminants, reducing Council's risk exposure. This approach means the contractor, not Council, takes on responsibility for subsequent investigation of any contamination found.

### **Sludge Management — Current Practice and Future Direction**

Current practice involves transporting Class C sludge to Gloucester at a cost of approximately \$182,000–\$220,000 per annum (daily or alternate-day runs by contractor). The product is used on farmland for agricultural purposes after a five-year period. Officers confirmed the current arrangement is economical due to low PFAS levels in the sludge. The new lagoon infrastructure, combined with future thermal treatment options, will enable all sludge from all plants to be handled in-house, eliminating the need for contractors. The more water that can be extracted from the sludge, the better the product.

Purchase of a pump truck (quoted at approximately \$500,000 plus two staff) was discussed as a potential income-generating option through hire to other operators, as well as enabling in-house sludge pumping at Cullen in lieu of the current contractor arrangement (confirmed at \$182,000 per year).

### **Cullen SDP — Discharge Trial Plan and Reuse Pathway**

Officers provided an update on the long-running issue of the Cullen Sewage Treatment Plant discharge licence. Council has been in negotiations with the EPA regarding an environmental discharge licence. The EPA has responded indicating that specified testing is required before a trial discharge plan can be approved. Officers have estimated the cost of this testing at approximately \$290,000. Critically, completing this testing would still not guarantee a permanent licence.

Considering this, officers are now exploring an alternative reuse pathway as a more productive use of that investment. Options under investigation include agricultural irrigation reuse, reuse by mines operations (including Centennial Coal), and recreational reuse (such as keeping sporting fields irrigated during drought conditions). Recycled water from the Cullen plant produces approximately 20 kilolitres per day. Officers noted the water quality at Cullen is treated to the same parameters as Lithgow and Wallerawang, both of which discharge into the Cox River and ultimately Warragamba Dam.

Members raised concerns that the Cullen infrastructure has been a significant ongoing cost since the original grant in 2016–2017, that approval to operate was not secured at the outset, and that the facility continues to consume operational funds that are not recovered through access charges given the small population (approximately 100 households). Members and officers agreed that pursuing the reuse pathway represents a better outcome than spending \$290,000 on testing for a licence that may still be refused.

Members also noted the desirability of applying political pressure to the EPA regarding non-potable reuse approvals, particularly as drought conditions are anticipated. An example from Walgett was cited where political pressure, including from the Mayor, was used to secure a non-potable reuse approval that proved critical during severe drought. Officers noted a link to the golf course is geographically challenging at present, though a potential small treatment facility at the course was discussed as a longer-term option.

### **Financial Considerations — Borrowing**

The broader question of Council's reluctance to borrow for infrastructure was discussed. Members noted the water fund account must not operate in deficit, and that the general fund has limited

capacity following a \$7.2 million government payment. Officers noted that borrowing is a legitimate and well-established tool for intergenerational infrastructure investment, with repayment incorporated into fees and charges over 30–40-year loan periods. The alternative — funding all capital through access charges and waiting for payback — creates significant intergenerational inequity. The loan funding discussion was referred to the next Finance Committee meeting.

### Risk Assessments in Staff Reports

The Chairperson requested that a brief risk assessment section be included in all future staff reports, identifying the key risks arising from each report item. Officers agreed to action this.

<b>ACTION</b>	Develop and incorporate brief risk assessments into all future staff reports.
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<b>ACTION</b>	Discuss the water fund account balance and Council's position on infrastructure borrowing at the next Finance Committee meeting.
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### ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT the committee receive the report on sewerage issues and ongoing strategic plans.

**MOVED:** Cr Goodwin

**SECONDED:** Cr Evangelidis

**CARRIED**

## 7.2. Education and Techtalk

A report on community education and engagement initiatives was presented. Discussion covered the following topics:

### Schools Engagement and Leak Detection Dogs

Officers noted ongoing engagement with local schools regarding water education — where water comes from, how it is treated, and the infrastructure behind it. The following week, Zigzag Primary School students were visiting the Chambers. Officers from the Joint Organisation were also bringing a canine leak detection team to assist in identifying leaks across the network, with school students invited to observe.

### FOGO Programme — Community Recognition

Officers advised that Lithgow Council's FOGO programme is to be recognised by the NSW Environment Minister, Penny Sharp, at the Cox Harper Waste Conference the following week. Lithgow's contamination rates remain very low and the community has engaged exceptionally well with the programme. Members and officers acknowledged the significant cross-departmental effort involved in the programme's success. Officers noted that from July 2026, a FOGO business mandate commences, and organisations such as hospitals and TAFE are approaching Council to

use the domestic FOGO service given the absence of commercial providers. Council is working with these organisations to manage limitations including once-weekly collection frequency and bin weight.

### **Community Closet — PCYC Partnership**

Officers reported on a successful collaboration with the Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) under a 'Fit for Work' programme for young people disengaged from school. Council provided premises and waste education support to enable the PCYC to run a community clothing store. Over the programme, approximately 1,100 garments were distributed and approximately \$2,200 raised. The PCYC is now exploring leasing the shop space on a longer-term basis. The programme provided useful learnings for Council regarding the operation of the Reuse Shed, noting that clothing donation to a dedicated clothing outlet makes reuse shed management significantly easier for staff.

### **Battery Fire at Solid Waste Facility**

Officers reported that a large lithium battery, disposed of as general waste, ignited in the landfill at the first solid waste facility on the Saturday prior to the meeting. Staff were present and managed the incident quickly, preventing escalation. Officers noted that lithium battery fires cannot be extinguished — they are thermal events requiring isolation until they self-extinguish — and represent a serious safety risk for waste facilities. Uncontained fires at waste sites can become extremely difficult to manage. The incident underscored the importance of correct battery disposal and ongoing community education about hazardous materials.

### **Asbestos Awareness and Disposal**

Officers highlighted the NSW Asbestos website and noted a recent increase in incorrect asbestos disposal at waste facilities, likely linked to increased DIY home renovation activity driven by cost-of-living pressures. Asbestos was used in approximately 3,000 products prior to the ban and is difficult for the average person to identify. Officers noted the current community messaging approach has been somewhat fear-based and suggested shifting to a more reassuring, step-by-step 'identify, wrap and dispose safely' approach.

Members discussed the current minimum disposal charge of \$126 (based on a 300kg minimum under the construction and demolition waste charge) and agreed this may deter proper disposal of small quantities. Officers cautioned that a fully free service creates perverse incentives for tradespeople to abuse the system, citing examples from other councils. A proposal was floated to apply the standard construction and demolition minimum charge for small asbestos quantities, rather than the dedicated asbestos charge, to remove the financial disincentive while still recovering some cost. Members discussed a possible Council collection service for small quantities (like a bulky waste pickup) though costs and feasibility would require further investigation.

The Chairperson noted that fees and charges must cover costs, and that the days of heavy cross-subsidisation are ending. The matter was noted as one suitable for a Finance Committee discussion and/or community submission through the operational plan process. Members expressed confidence that when the community is given clear guidance on doing the right thing, they generally comply — citing FOGO and water restrictions as examples.

### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the committee note the report and the activities undertaken and in the planning phase engagement and education.

**MOVED:** Cr Mahony

**SECONDED:** Cr Smith

**CARRIED**

### 7.3. Strategic Project Review

<b>Project</b>	<b>Status / Notes</b>
<i>Water Resourcing &amp; Security (Clarence to Wallerawang)</i>	Off track. The Review of Environmental Factors (REF) was nearly complete when a Fisheries NSW issue arose. Fisheries identified an endangered Macquarie Perch species downstream in Wollangambe Creek and raised concerns about reduced flows associated with groundwater discharge. Officers noted that the groundwater discharge is scheduled to cease by 2035 when the mine closes. Once the study is complete, the REF will be finalised, and the project will proceed to detailed design. Members queried whether the Macquarie Perch concern was scientifically sound given the species has historically relied on groundwater rather than surface discharge.
<i>Lithgow Solid Waste Facility— Gatehouse Project</i>	Project had a total approved budget of \$1.35 million and was finalised at approximately \$600,000 — significantly under budget. This raised questions from members regarding the accuracy of the original project scope and cost estimate, with concerns about planning and scoping rigour. Officers to provide further background, including through Finance Committee. Update to be confirmed with Nigel.
<i>Sewage Pumping Stations Capital Works</i>	40% complete overall. The crane replacement component was withdrawn after responses came in above budget. Toy Mill work completed. Once withdrawn items are excluded, the remaining programme is effectively complete. The safety issue associated with the crane is noted but is not being ignored — alternative approaches are being considered.
<i>Sewer Mains Capital Works</i>	To be carried over into the new financial year. Includes CCTV works. Mostly BAU items commencing in the new financial year. Future reports will clearly identify carried-over items.
<i>Water &amp; Wastewater Infrastructure Mapping</i>	To be completed in-house over 24 months (Chairperson’s requested timeframe). SWP and SOP completed. A Trimble GPS unit has been purchased and a dedicated operator assigned. Mapping commences this month, starting with valve locations and isolation zones. All hydrants and sewer assets will be mapped with condition assessments. Data will integrate with Council’s GIS system, enabling layered views of mains, valves, and hydrants. The in-house approach builds and retains knowledge within the plumbing team.
<i>Capital Works Schedule of Rates</i>	4+2+2 procurement package being developed. Work will not be spent this financial year. This packaging approach (like roads) reduces procurement overhead. High-value contracts will return to full Council for endorsement as required under delegation thresholds.
<i>Landfill Gas Management</i>	50% cost increase noted. Officers to seek update from Nigel on reasons (believed to relate to project management costs) and report back. Members noted the 410 tonnes of shredded waste used in rehabilitation works via a public-private partnership as a positive waste diversion example and encouraged further exploration of such opportunities.

### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Committee note the progress of the 2025–26 Water, Wastewater and Waste Capital Works Program.

**MOVED:** Cr Goodwin

**SECONDED:** Cr Mahony

**CARRIED**

#### **7.4. Waste and Recycling Management**

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A comprehensive update on waste management matters was presented, covering actions arising from Council resolutions (August 2025, October 2025 and March 2026) and the Infrastructure Committee meeting of 9 March 2026.

##### **Portland Garbage Depot — Supervised Operations**

Council resolved (Minute 26-63, 23 March 2026) to introduce supervised operating hours at the Portland Garbage Depot. Operations under revised hours (Wednesday to Saturday, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm) commenced from 8 May 2026. An error in the previous minutes regarding opening hours was acknowledged and corrected at this meeting. The adopted times will affect budget, and Staff recruitment is progressing and should be finalised during May 2026.

An LBin system (5 ground-level, flat-fronted bins in a designated sorting area) will be implemented once the site is supervised, targeting operational readiness by 1 July 2026. The system will facilitate waste diversion, improved resource recovery, safer public access and interception of hazardous materials. Recycling streams will include scrap metal, green waste, co-mingled recycling, cardboard/paper and e-waste.

Community feedback is being collected via Council’s ‘Have Your Say – Let’s Talk Seven Valleys’ platform (open 21 April 2026 to 1 December 2026). Members noted minimal community pushback to date regarding the change in hours. A financial report on waste and recycling operational change costs will be presented to a future Finance Committee meeting.

##### **Waste Infrastructure Strategy**

Development of the next Waste Strategy is underway with a focus on rural infrastructure. A review of transfer station numbers and opening hours is proposed, including consideration of a rotating supervised model. The Chairperson stated firm opposition to reducing transfer station hours without legislative mandate from the EPA or State Government.

Supervision of facilities would enable transition to a user-pays model, providing a more equitable cost structure and greater recycling options. A detailed plan will be brought to a future Infrastructure Committee meeting.

##### **Reuse Shed — Resource Recovery Pathways**

Alternative Reuse Shed models are being reviewed under a current grant. Members noted a visit to the Canberra waste facility as a comparator and expressed interest in a public-private partnership model for building materials reuse. Members noted that the PCYC Community Closet has provided useful learnings about how to manage clothing reuse effectively. Officers noted a potential

unintended consequence of the Reuse Shed: facilitating guilt-free disposal or opportunistic removal of free items, which may inadvertently increase waste generation.

### **Waste Community Forum and Rural Workshop**

The Waste Community Forum remains in the planning stage. Members agreed on the importance of community involvement in rural waste service decisions, with representatives sought from outlying areas including Glen Davis, Glen Alice, Tara and Hampton (noting that some areas do not have formal community groups, but suitable representatives could be identified). The preferred sequencing agreed by the Committee is:

- Finance Committee cost review to be completed first, to establish a clear understanding of the cost of each service and options;
- An Infrastructure Committee workshop to follow, to align the Committee on service level options before community engagement; and
- Community engagement / forum to then occur with rural representatives invited, with the objective of reaching a service level agreement.

Members noted the absence of formal service level agreements with the community as a fundamental gap that this process should address. The Chairperson confirmed a workshop format is preferred over a formal community forum as the first step, and that the next Infrastructure Committee meeting (1 July 2026) provides an opportunity to conduct this workshop.

### **Building Waste Charges vs Neighbouring Councils**

Members raised concerns that building and construction waste charges may be higher than neighbouring councils (notably Bathurst), potentially driving operators to dispose of waste elsewhere. Officers noted this is a known issue and that unsupervised transfer stations in the region are susceptible to out-of-area waste. Officers noted Council is working collaboratively with Bathurst Regional Council on this issue. The Chairperson cautioned that direct comparison with other councils can be misleading given differences in scale and operations. Fees and charges must cover Council's actual costs. Further analysis to be incorporated into the broader service level and waste strategy work.

### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the committee note the report on Waste and Recycling Management.

**MOVED:** Cr Goodwin

**SECONDED:** Cr Mahony

**CARRIED**

## **7.5. Water Resourcing and Security Projects**

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A progress update on Water Resourcing and Security works was presented. The following key items were discussed:

### **Mains Cleaning Program — Completed**

The two-year mains cleaning programme has been completed across the Lithgow network. All mains in the villages (Cullen, Wallerawang, Lidsdale, Portland, Marrangaroo) were completed in the previous cycle. This cycle covered all Lithgow area mains, with approximately 60km of trunk mains (over 200mm diameter) excluded as these require physical pigging rather than air scouring.

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The programme has delivered measurable improvements in free chlorine disinfection levels across the network.

### **Integrated Water Cycle Management (IWCM) Strategy**

Work is continuing the IWCM Strategy, which is a key strategic document required by the NSW Government for water utilities. Officers noted this is a highly data-intensive project encompassing asset management plans, asset renewal schedules, a review of Development Servicing Plans, the typical residential bill for water and sewer, and a 50-year capital works model. Officers noted that significant restructuring at the State level (formerly DPIE/NRAR) has created shifting goalposts, with the previously mandatory OWCM and Risk-Based Assessment frameworks effectively being dismantled. Council will continue developing the strategy as it is needed regardless of State-level direction. The strategy will integrate with the Growth Management Strategy (nearing completion), the Community Strategic Plan and other key Council documents.

### **Clarence to Wallerawang Pipeline**

The Clarence to Wallerawang pipeline project is continuing. Environmental approvals are nearing completion, pending resolution of the Fisheries / Macquarie Perch study noted under Item 5.3. Council has engaged Section 51 consultants to assist with grant writing, with a focus on linking the pipeline project to broader precinct development to maximise grant competitiveness. Officers noted that Council has good relationships with Centennial Coal, State Government and regulators, and that while progress has been slower than desired, the project is continuing.

### **Water Security — General**

Members noted that Lithgow has historically been water-smart, having not imposed water restrictions for many years and never utilising the full Fish River water allocation. Officers acknowledged this while noting it is partly an engineering matter. The importance of not relying on a single water source was emphasised, with reference to the Bathurst experience during the last drought (storage reaching as low as 21 days' supply). Officers and members agreed that the risk of groundwater-dependent systems during extended drought is real and must be addressed through the IWCM strategy.

### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Committee note the progress of the Water Resourcing and Security works.

**MOVED:** Cr Goodwin

**SECONDED:** Cr Mahony

**CARRIED**

### **7.6. Water Outage Report - Action review**

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The Water Outage Action Review document was presented. Members provided the following feedback and agreed the following approach:

- The Chairperson requested the document be reformatted as a Gantt chart with timelines so the Committee can track progress and connections between actions clearly.

- Officers agreed to tidy up the document and bring a revised presentation format (including potential use of the Doc Assembler system displayed on screen) to the next meeting.
- At each future meeting, two to three priority sub-actions will be selected for a deep-dive discussion, with the relevant responsible staff member invited to present.
- Members noted the importance of understanding resource allocation and priorities across the action items, including whether adequate funding and staffing exist to complete actions within the required timeframes.
- Work Health and Safety concerns regarding contractor use in emergency situations — specifically unacceptable working hours during the water outage response — were raised and acknowledged by officers as unacceptable. Officers confirmed this is being addressed.

<b>ACTION</b>	Reformat the Water Outage Action Review as a Gantt chart with timelines. Present revised workbook at next meeting (potentially via Doc Assembler). Select 2–3 sub-actions for deep-dive discussion with responsible staff invited.
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**ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the committee note the action sheet and future works to be undertaken as part of the water outage review.

**MOVED:** Cr Goodwin

**SECONDED:** Cr Evangelidis

**CARRIED**

**8. General Business**

**Drought Preparedness and Response**

Cr Smith raised the question of Council’s preparedness for drought conditions and offered to share relevant reference material with the Director of Infrastructure. Members discussed Council’s circle of control during drought periods, including:

- Provision of water at standpipes for rural properties relying on tank water;
- Rate hardship provisions for affected residents;
- Potential provision of washing and showering facilities in town for farmers preserving tank water for drinking and food preparation; and
- Advocacy to State and Federal Governments for drought relief support.

Members noted the State Government no longer classifies drought as a natural disaster. Members agreed that any drought response measures must clearly identify financial implications and potential funding sources before being brought to Council.

<b>ACTION</b>	Cr Smith to share drought preparedness reference materials with M. Trapp. A report on Council’s drought response options and financial implications to be brought to the next Infrastructure Committee meeting including Council drought management and plans for drought.
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**ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

That a future report be brought back to the Infrastructure committee on drought management and support.

**MOVED:** Cr Smtih

**SECONDED:** Cr Mahony

**CARRIED**

## **9. Meeting Close**

Next Meeting to be held 1st of July 2026, The Administration Building of Council 180 Mort St, Lithgow

There being no further business the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 6:50pm.