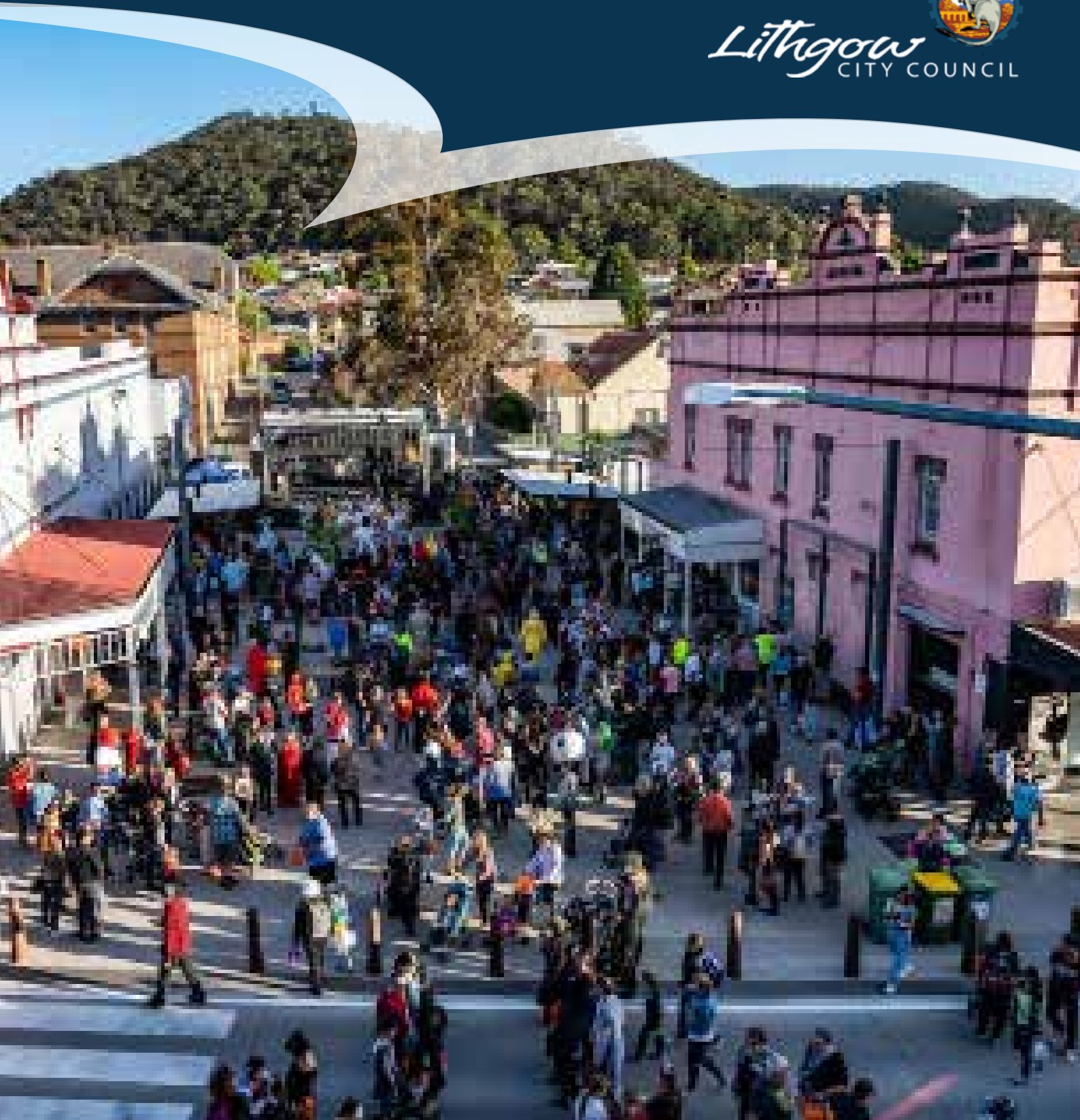


# Our Place Our Future

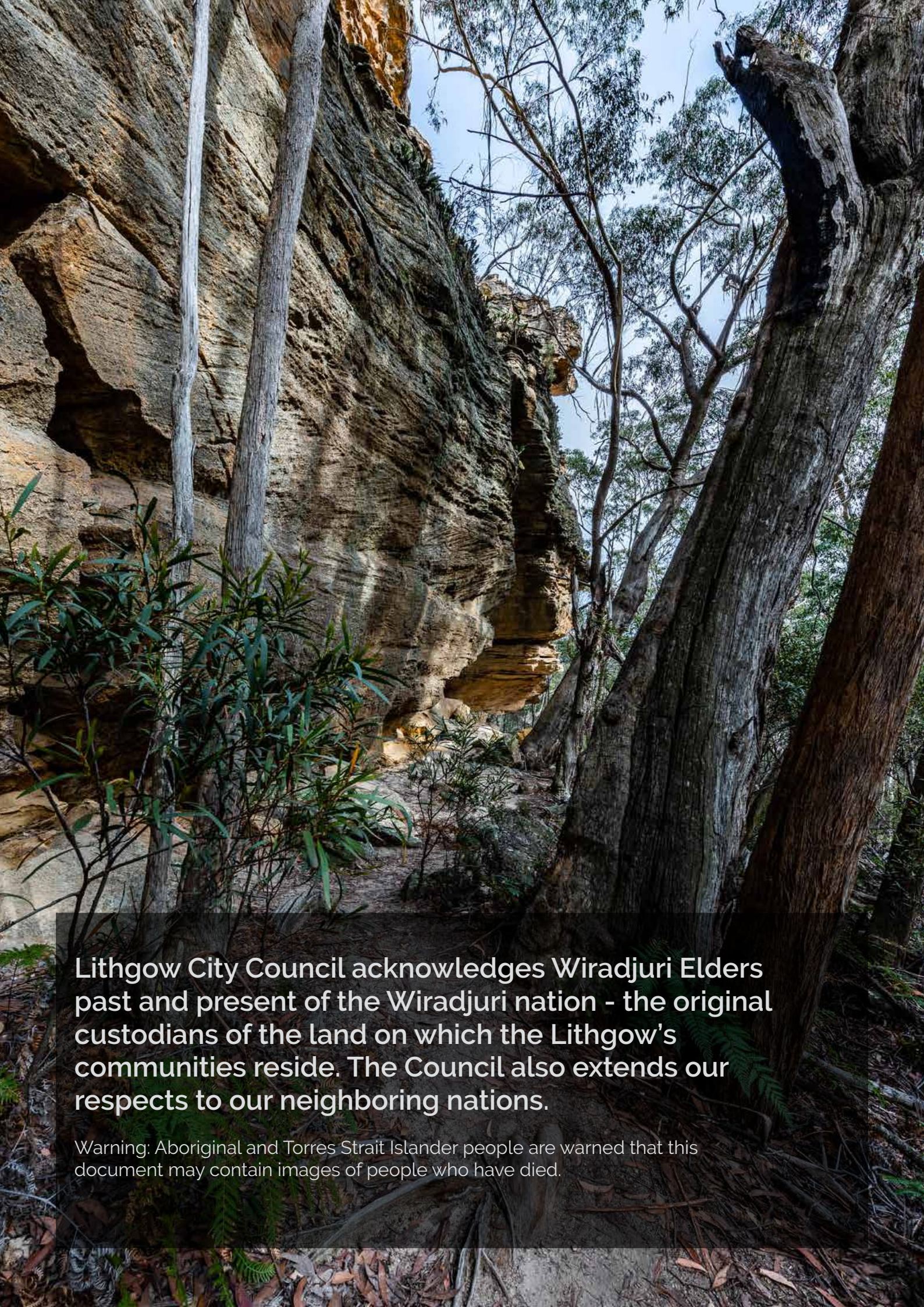
Community Strategic Plan  
Community Engagement Strategy



*Lithgow*  
CITY COUNCIL







**Lithgow City Council acknowledges Wiradjuri Elders past and present of the Wiradjuri nation - the original custodians of the land on which the Lithgow's communities reside. The Council also extends our respects to our neighboring nations.**

Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this document may contain images of people who have died.



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# OUR COMMUNITY





**4,567** km<sup>2</sup> AREA

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**20,724** ESTIMATED RESIDENTIAL POPULATION

**7.7%** ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RESIDENTS

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**32%** ARE AGED 60 AND OVER

16.5% ARE PARENTS & HOME BUILDERS WITH 19.7% AGED BETWEEN 0-17

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---

**\$1.75 BILLION**

Gross Regional Profit NEIR - 2023

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**1,306** LOCAL BUSINESS

**9,246** EMPLOYED RESIDENTS

**32%** LONE PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

**10%** RESIDENTS BORN OVERSEAS

**82%** RESIDENTS BORN IN AUSTRALIA

# INTRODUCTION

This [Community Engagement Strategy](#) provides a guideline for Council's engagement with the community to:

- Develop the [Community Strategic Plan](#) and associated documents in the Integrated Planning Framework.
- Engage with the community on how to best achieve affordable and acceptable levels of service.



Council has a high level of commitment to engaging with the community and actively seeks community input and advice into its strategic plans and processes on a regular basis.

Over the coming months Council will seek community input into the development of its Integrated Planning Framework and its proposal to ensure a balanced budget and secure future for the Lithgow LGA.

Throughout this process we will be:

- Seeking community validation that the vision and key themes in the Community Strategic Plan are relevant
- Working with the community to construct a hierarchy of future projects for the Lithgow LGA
- Creating awareness around Council's role and the roles the community, State and Federal partners have in the implementation of the Community Strategic Plan.
- Gaining an understanding of community satisfaction with Council Assets and what you believe are the asset funding priorities for the future
- Asking the community's views on Councils current and future service level priorities and levels.



Diagram of the Community Strategic Plan Engagement Process.





This [Community Engagement Strategy](#) guides how Council will engage with the community to develop the [Community Strategic Plan](#) and associated documents.

This document:

- Provides an overview of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and how Council and the community intend to ensure a sustainable future for the LGA.
- Outlines the overall approach to community engagement, including level of engagement planned, key messages, guiding principles and key target groups being consulted and engaged.
- Presents a detailed Community Engagement Strategy.

# INTEGRATED PLANNING & REPORTING FRAMEWORK

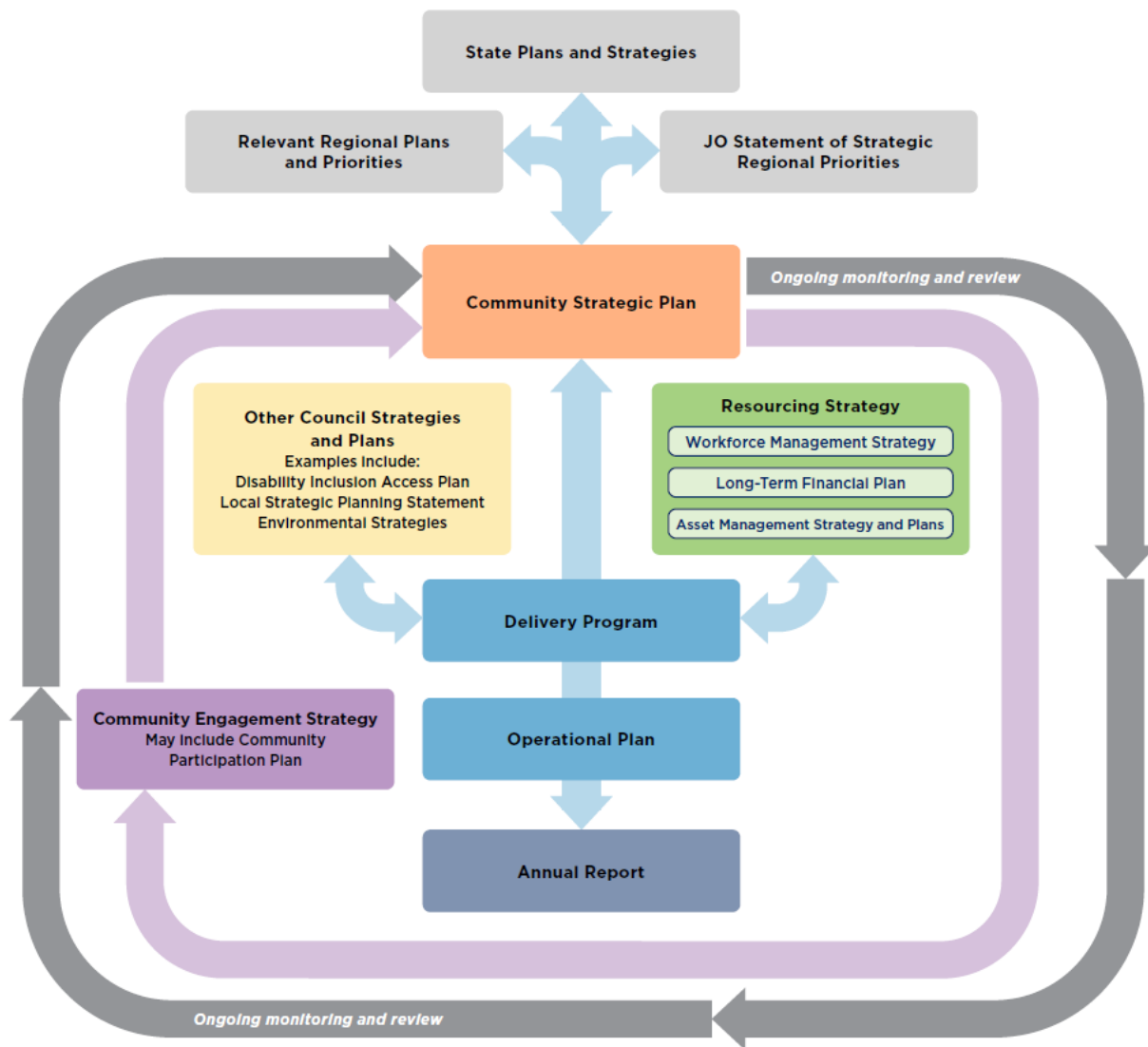
## Our PLACE Our FUTURE

In October 2009, NSW Parliament passed the Local Government Amendment (Planning and Reporting) Bill 2009, requiring all NSW local Councils to develop a Community Strategic Plan in consultation with the community.

The Community Strategic Plan must identify the communities vision and priorities for the future of the local government area for a period of at least 10 years.

The Community Strategic Plan must establish strategic objectives and strategies to achieve social, environmental, economic and governance outcomes in an integrated manner.





Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework

A key component of the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework is for Councils to adopt a Community Engagement Strategy for the development of their Community Strategic Plan. This strategy will also be used as a guide for engaging with the community for the development of all strategic documents which comprise the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

# INTEGRATED PLANS

## Community Strategic Plan

Council, is required as part of the Integrated Planning process to develop a Community Strategic Plan. The Plan will guide Council for the next 10 years, with a review of the Plan to occur every four years within nine months of the Council elections.

## Resourcing Strategy

A Council must have a long term Resourcing Strategy for the provision of resources required to implement the strategies established by the Community Strategic Plan that Council is responsible for. The Resourcing Strategy must include:

### Long-Term Financial Plan

The Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) must be for a minimum of 10 years. It tests the communities aspirations and goals identified in the Community Strategic Plan against economic pressures, economic growth and community priorities.

The LTFP must be used to inform decision making during the finalisation of the Community Strategic Plan and development of the Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan.

### Strategic Asset Management Plan

The Strategic Asset Management Plan includes the Council's endorsed Asset Management Policy and identifies assets that are critical to the Council's operations outlining risk management strategies for these assets.

This document is supported by Asset Management Plans for Council's physical assets such as Buildings.

### Workforce Plan

The Workforce Plan is a four-year plan, developed to address the human resourcing requirements required to implement Council's Delivery Program.

## Delivery Program

The Delivery Program details the principal activities Council will undertake to achieve the objectives of the Community Strategic Plan within the resources available under the Resourcing Strategy.

The Delivery Program is for the four year period commencing 1 July following the ordinary election.

## Operational Plan

The Operational Plan is adopted by 30 June each year outlining the activities to be undertaken commencing 1 July as part of the Delivery Program. The Operational Plan must include the Statement of Council's Revenue Policy.

Council has a committed to engaging with the community and actively seeks community input and advice into its strategic plans and processes on a regular basis.

The Council will be **seeking community input into the development of its Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.**

The Framework is made up of an integrated suite of documents which will guide the actions that Council, the community and key stakeholders will take to meet the aspirations and priorities of a changing, vibrant and dynamic community.

The Framework will ensure that Council can plan within its means for sustainable provision of services maintenance and renewal of infrastructure.



# INTEGRATED REPORTING

## Quarterly Reporting

Council is required to report quarterly to the community (except the June Quarter) on the budget in the annual Operational Plan.

## Six Monthly Progress Reporting

Council also reports six monthly on the implementation and effectiveness of the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

## Annual Report

The Annual Report focuses on Council's implementation of the Delivery Program and Annual Operational Program. It is required to be reported to Council and the Office of Local Government by 30 November each year.

## State of the Region Report

The State of the Region Report is a review of progress in implementing the Community Strategic Plan during the Council's Term of Office. It is reported to the second meeting of the incoming Council and included as a supplement to the Annual Report to be reported to the Office of Local Government. This report informs the development of the Community Strategic Plan.



Roles and responsibilities under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

# The Community Strategic Plan, a vision for the future of the Lithgow Region.

The Community Strategic Plan (CSP) reflects the changing needs of the community.

The CSP is the **highest level plan** that Council will prepare. It takes into consideration the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future of the Lithgow region.

It **takes into consideration the issues and pressures** that may affect the community and the **level of resources that will realistically be available** to achieve its aspirations.

The CSP is a document by the community, for the community. It is a vision for future growth and development and for the long-term sustainability of the Lithgow local government area.

The Community Strategic Plan addresses four key questions for the community:

- **Where are we now?**
- **Where do we want to be in ten years' time?**
- **How will we get there?**
- **How will we know when we have arrived?**

Lithgow City Council looks forward to working in partnership with the community and State and Federal Government agencies to implement the CSP making the Lithgow LGA a desirable place to live, work and invest.



In 2007, Council adopted the following vision developed by the community for the first Strategic Plan; Our Place Our Future.



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.

In 2019, Council adopted a modified version of the original vision as part of the development of the Lithgow 2040 Local Strategic Planning Statement. This 20 year vision for the LGA is drawn from the vision statements of the five key themes in the Community Strategic Plan and is reflective of the our community and its desire for a resilient future.



The Lithgow region is an ideally located strategic centre with an evolving economy and a resilient and connected community which embraces its proud heritage and world class natural environment.

This engagement strategy will test community support for the 2019 futuristic statement as the overarching vision for the Lithgow LGA.

# Integrating the Lithgow 2040 Local Strategic Planning Statement & the Community Strategic Plan 2040

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) introduced new requirements for local councils to prepare Local Strategic Planning Statements (LSPS). This change sought to shift the planning system to be proactive, rather than reactive to development thereby enshrining the role of strategic planning at a local council level in Section 3.9 of the EP&A Act.

The council's LSPS sets out:

- The 20-year vision for land use in the local area;
- The shared community values to be maintained and enhanced;
- How future growth and change will be managed; and
- The special characteristics which contribute to local identity.

Although the Lithgow 2040 LSPS was developed to align with regard to the Community Strategic Plan 2030, it is now time, to further integrate these two important planning instruments.

The Community Strategic Plan will be developed to align with the LSPS themes of Environment, Liveability, Infrastructure and Economy with the inclusion of Resilience.

# KEY THEMES

## Community Strategic Plan 2040

### CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

Retaining, respecting and strengthening both our overall sense of community, and the unique linked communities of groups, rural areas, villages and towns that make up the Lithgow LGA.



LIVEABILITY

### STRENGTHENING OUR ECONOMY

Providing 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.



ECONOMY

### DEVELOPING OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Providing 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.



INFRASTRUCTURE

### ENHANCING OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

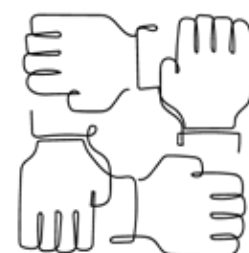
Balancing, protecting and enhancing our diverse environmental elements, both natural and built, for the enjoyment and support of both current and future generations.



ENVIRONMENT

### RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE & CIVIC LEADERSHIP

Developing community confidence in the council by the way it is directed, controlled and managed.



RESILIENCE



# VALUES & CHALLENGES

“Council has a high level of commitment to engaging with the community and actively seeks community input and advice into its strategic plans and processes on a regular basis.

## Caring for Our Community

We 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.

A valued aspect of the Lithgow area by the community is the 'friendliness and spirit of the community'. Community services such as health are seen as strengths while the aging population and supporting youth and keeping them in Lithgow and attracting/retaining young families are key challenges.

An ageing population provides opportunity for increased employment, as the sector grows to accommodate the needs of senior citizens moving forward.

Challenges which will impact this include:

1. Current services and facilities.
2. Rate income due to increased demand for pensioner rebates.
3. Availability of appropriate infrastructure to enable easy access to services and facilities.
4. Attracting and retaining young people and families to the area.
5. Provision of Care Services - paid or unpaid care.
6. Significant pockets of isolated households located in the rural areas not serviced by public transport -- including a growing number of older people with disabilities

## Enhancing Our Natural Environment

Balancing, protecting and enhancing our diverse environmental elements, both natural and built, for the enjoyment and support of both current and future generations

## Developing Our Built Environment

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

Lithgow's location, provides a rural lifestyle in a beautiful area whilst still being within relatively close proximity to Sydney.

The Natural Environment and Heritage along with clean air, low noise, no traffic and location - scenic attraction are identified as attributes to be valued.

Growth potential (availability of land), tourism, education, transport connections and location are seen as strengths. However, environmental management is considered to be a challenge for Lithgow.

Challenges which will impact this include:

1. Managing and sustaining the environment
2. Climate change
3. Natural disasters
4. Transitioning from a coal based economy to renewable energy
5. Creating a "smart city" across the LGA.

The most valued aspect of the Lithgow area is considered to be the location, providing a rural lifestyle in a beautiful area whilst still being within relatively close proximity to Sydney.

Growth potential (availability of land), tourism, education, transport connections and location are seen as strengths. Managing change - that is, ensuring that any changes are made whilst retaining the natural heritage and rural community spirit of the area are seen to a challenge for Lithgow.

Challenges which will impact this include:

1. Creating employment and business opportunities.
2. Improving standards within the community e.g. Main Street Revitalisation and infrastructure.
3. Coping with an aging population.
4. Population growth.
5. Managing and sustaining the environment

Values & Challenges based on Micromex Research Community Visioning Surveys 2012, 2016, 2021 & 2024

## Strengthening Our Economy

Providing 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.

The Lithgow area is considered to be the 'location providing a rural lifestyle in a beautiful area whilst still being within relatively close proximity to Sydney'. Growth potential, tourism, education, transport connections and location are seen as strengths.

Community services such as health are considered strengths while the aging population, and supporting youth and keeping them in Lithgow, are seen as challenges.

Since 2014/15, the Lithgow LGA has suffered downturns (including closures) in the local power and coal generation industries which in turn have had major flow-on effects to business relying on these industries. In order to build a more economically diverse and sustainable region, Council and the community must plan for a future beyond coal.

Challenges which will impact this include:

1. Providing leadership and communications that foster collaboration which maximises Lithgow's economic potential.
2. Managing sustainable growth that supports population and business growth.
3. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of infrastructure and land that underpins and supports current and future industry and business.
4. Facilitating and encouraging the ongoing development, diversification and sustainability of the local business and industry base.
5. Encouraging and facilitating the provision of appropriate business support services to assist growth.
6. Encouraging employment and skills development to address industry needs and promote self development.
7. Managing land use conflict.
8. Ensuring employment and learning opportunities for young people in the LGA.

Values & Challenges based on Micromex Research Community Visioning Surveys 2012, 2016, 2021 & 2024



## Responsible Governance & Civic Leadership

Developing community confidence in the council by the way it is directed, controlled and managed.

The most valued aspect of Lithgow Council is considered to be its position as a major employer in the LGA and its ability to advocate on behalf of the community for improved services.

Assessment of Council assets to see whether development opportunities could be created by selling unused land within the centre of Lithgow. The sale of surplus land/properties to create a reserve of funds for the LGA that could be used to support the projects and plans was identified as an opportunity for Council.

Challenges which will impact this include:

1. Population growth.
2. Natural disasters
3. Cost shifting from other levels of government

To ensure a sustainable future for the Lithgow local government area we need to:

1. Provide services to meet demand
2. Encourage and manage population growth.
3. Facilitate the transition from a coal based economy to renewable energy
4. Develop strategies and reserves to 'shock proof' Council against natural disasters
5. Ensure communication to the community is open and accessible,

Values & Challenges based on Micromex Research Community Visioning Surveys 2012, 2016, 2021 & 2024

## Council's Role

Council has a custodial role in initiating, preparing and maintaining the CSP on behalf of the Lithgow Local Government Area. However, it is not wholly responsible for its implementation. Other partners, such as state and federal government, non government organisations and community groups may also be engaged in delivering the long-term objectives of the plan.

# OUR COMMUNITY

The Lithgow local government area is located on the western ramparts of the Blue Mountains, 140 kilometres from Sydney. The Lithgow LGA totals 4,567 square kilometres from the Capertee, Turon and Wolgan Valleys in the north, Hartley, Megalong and Kanimbla Valleys in the east, Tarana in the south and Meadow Flat in the west.

The major urban centre of Lithgow nestles in a valley of that name, overlooked by the sandstone escarpments of the Blue Mountains.

In addition to the major urban centre of Lithgow, the Lithgow local government area has 12 villages with mining or farming backgrounds. These smaller centres have proven to be attractive rural residential areas, along with the broader rural areas.

The Lithgow LGA lies almost wholly within the Wiradjuri Aboriginal nation, with the Gundungurra nation situated to the south and the Darug nation to the east.

Lithgow was previously perceived to be an inland mining and industrial centre, however, recent developments have seen Lithgow recognised as an important tourism destination, heritage centre and a desirable residential area as well.

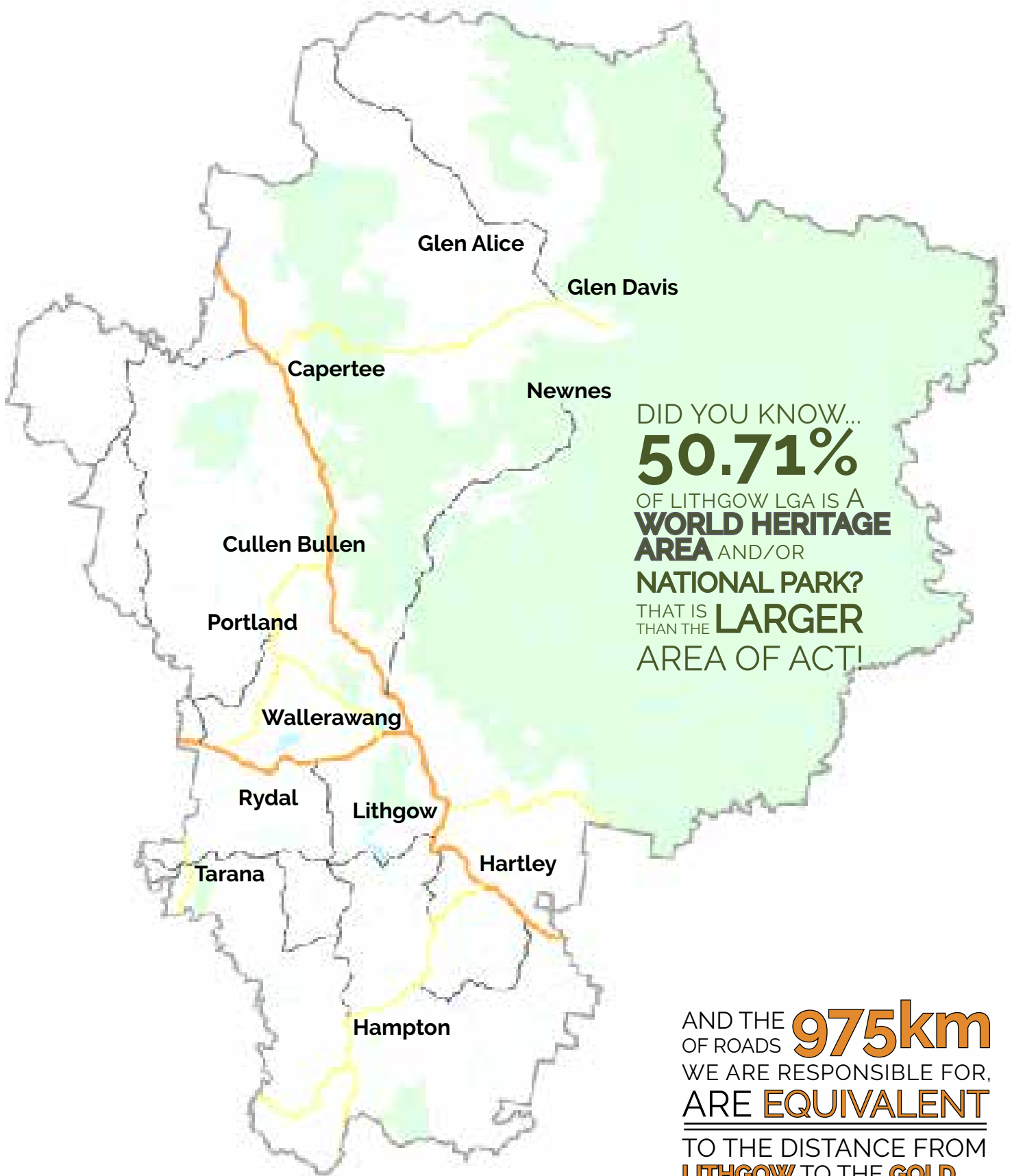
The Lithgow local government area includes World Heritage listed National Parks, and State Forests, making Lithgow an important leisure destination for Sydney residents.

Lithgow has extensive opportunities for outdoor activities such as bush walking, rock climbing, camping, orienteering, horse riding, bike riding, off road 4wd, fishing, sailing and water skiing.

Financial challenges facing NSW councils, and the Lithgow Local Government Area are the result of real costs rising faster than available revenue, rate pegging (limiting the amount by which rates can rise), cost shifting from other levels of government. Councils in NSW also only collect approximately 3% of total tax revenue (through rates) but have responsibility for provision of approximately 36% of the state's built assets and infrastructure (much of which is old and in need of renewal and upgrade)

Due to the size of the LGA, Lithgow City Council has a number of challenges, including:

- A large proportion of the Lithgow LGA is unrateable being National Park or State Forest.
- Service provision to Lithgow, Wallerawang and Portland and across 12 villages and localities from Capertee, Turon and the Wolgan Valleys in the north, Hartley, Kanimbla and Megalong Valleys in the east, Tarana Valley in the south and Meadow Flat in the west.
- Additional expenses arising for emergency management responsibilities, as the area is prone to costly natural disasters, especially bushfires and storms.
- Increased resident expectations for high levels of service particularly in the rural areas.



DID YOU KNOW...  
**50.71%**  
 OF LITHGOW LGA IS A  
**WORLD HERITAGE**  
**AREA** AND/OR  
**NATIONAL PARK?**  
 THAT IS **LARGER**  
 THAN THE  
**AREA OF ACTI**

AND THE **975km**  
 OF ROADS  
 WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR,  
**ARE EQUIVALENT**  
 TO THE DISTANCE FROM  
**LITHGOW** TO THE **GOLD**  
**COAST.**



# OUR COMMUNITY

Analysis of the age groups of Lithgow City in 2021 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion of people in the younger age groups (0 to 17 years) and a higher proportion of people in the older age groups (60+ years).

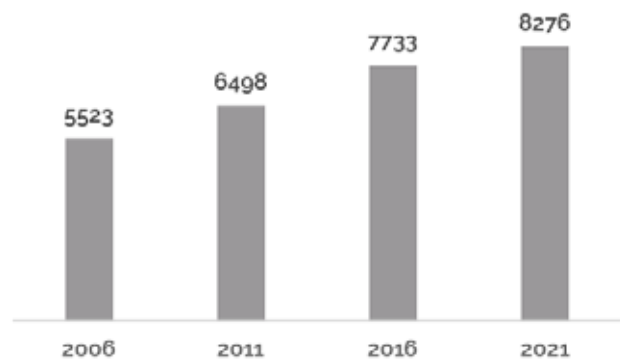
Overall,  
**19.7%**

of the population was aged between

**0 - 17 years,**  
**32.1%** were aged  
**60 years and over,**  
compared with  
**21.4%** and **29.1%** respectively  
for Regional NSW.

Source: <https://council.lithgow.com/community/community-profile/>

## Increase in Ageing Population



From 2016 to 2021, Lithgow City's population **decreased** by 236 people (1.1%). This represents an average annual population change of -0.22% per year over the period.

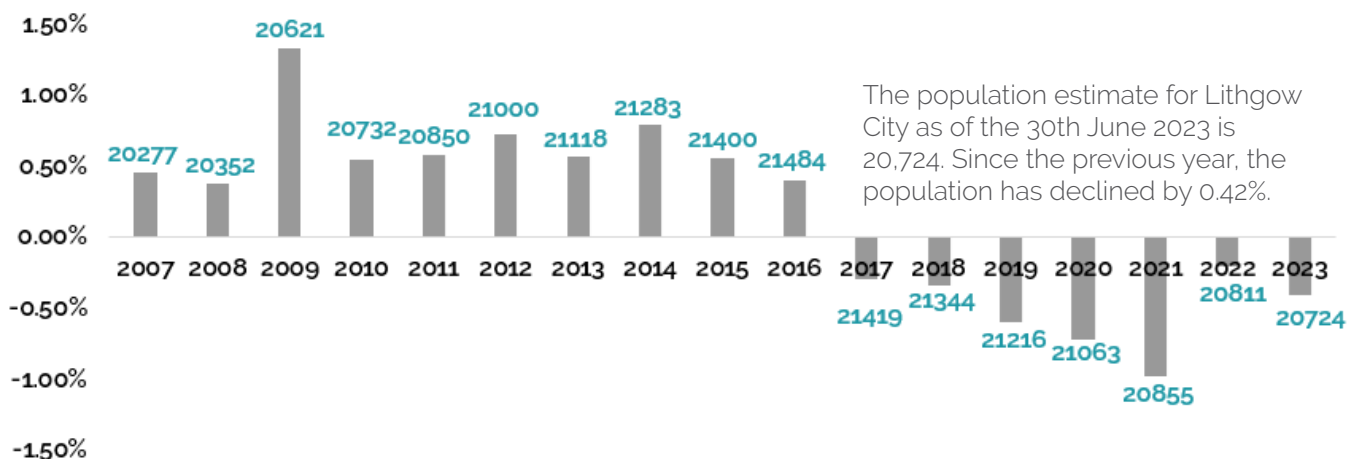
The major differences between the age structure of Lithgow City and Regional NSW were:

- A larger percentage of 'Seniors' (70-84) (14.9% compared to 13.0%)
- A larger percentage of 'Empty nesters and retirees' (60-69) (14.7% compared to 13.3%)
- A larger percentage of 'Older workers & pre-retirees' (50-59) (13.9% compared to 12.8%)
- A smaller percentage of 'Parents and home builders' (35-49) (16.5% compared to 17.5%).

The largest changes in the age structure in this area between 2016 and 2021 were in the ages groups:

- Seniors (70-84) (+482 people)
- Older workers and pre-retirees (50-59) (-273 people)
- Parents and home builders (35 to 49) (-255 people)
- Babies and pre-schoolers (0-4) (-220 people).

## Estimated Resident Population (ERP)



The Estimated Resident Population (ERP) is the Australian Bureau of Statistics' official 2023 population figure for all Local Government Areas (LGAs) - but is subject to review after the next Census release. For areas smaller than LGAs, the ERP is derived from SA1 geographies based on population distribution from the previous Census.

## Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage

Lithgow City Council's small areas and benchmark areas

- Index of relative socio-economic disadvantage contains only disadvantage indicators (i.e. Unemployment, low incomes or education levels, lack of internet access etc)
- Index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage contains all of the disadvantage indicators plus indicators of advantage (i.e. Professional occupations, high income, higher education levels, larger homes etc..)

Area	Disadvantage		Advantage & Disadvantage	
	2016 Index	Percentile	2016 Index	Percentile
Rural South - Little Hartley	1046.0	70	1020.7	70
South Bowenfels - Littleton - South Littleton	1001.8	43	961.1	36
Australia	1001.2	42	1002.5	60
Upper Blue Mountains	1000.7	42	1001.5	59
New South Wales	1001.9	42	1016.0	67
Rural North - Marrangaroo	999.1	41	970.5	41
Bathurst Regional Council area	991.5	37	967.3	39
Regional NSW	982.0	31	962.0	36
Mid-Western Regional Council Area	978.6	31	948.6	29
Central West SA4	977.0	30	953.0	32
Wallerawang - Lidsdale	949.2	19	913.7	16
<b>Lithgow Local Government Area</b>	<b>934.7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>911.5</b>	<b>15</b>
Portland	915.1	11	880.9	9
Lithgow - Hermitage Flat & District	908.2	10	889.1	10
Lithgow Urban Area	903.3	10	886.3	10
Morts Estate - Oakey Park - Vale of Clwydd	898.7	9	871.7	7
Bowenfels	778.2	3	801.5	3

# Our GOVERNANCE AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP VISION STATEMENT

“ is to:  
develop community  
confidence in the  
Council by the way it  
is directed, controlled  
and managed.

Lithgow City Council seeks to ensure a sustainable future for the Lithgow Local Government Area. Our Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Our Place, Our Future 2036, outlined key environmental, social, economic and civic leadership objectives for making the Lithgow Local Government Area a better place.

This Community Engagement Strategy has been developed to guide community engagement on how best we can achieve levels of service that are both affordable and acceptable, given the significant financial challenges our LGA faces.

Key focus areas previously endorsed by the community to achieve this, include:

- **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.
- **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.







# FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

What the Council is doing to be efficient and address the financial challenges of the Lithgow local government area.

1. Through sound financial planning, the Resourcing Strategy positions us to manage risks and cope with unexpected events, such as natural disasters and lower interest income.
2. Council's Resourcing Strategy implements and resources the vision of the Community Strategic Plan with clear priorities. For example, the Long Term Financial Plan identifies how additional assets will be funded, or existing assets renewed or upgraded and what provisions are made for changes to services.
3. Costs have been rising faster than revenue and Council must efficiently deliver the services which can be provided within our means. For example services reviews will need to consider available funding.
4. Council has commenced reviews of its service delivery to ensure it is meeting community needs and providing 'value for money'. Council will work with the community to set affordable levels of service. Areas recently reviewed include Waste Management, Library Services and Ranger Services.
5. Council will continue to advocate for a fair share of resources for the Lithgow area. We will continue to build partnerships with neighbouring and Central NSW Joint Organisation member councils as well as State and Federal Governments.



# PURPOSE OF THE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

This Strategy includes a detailed Community Engagement Action Plan which seeks community input and feedback for the comprehensive suite of integrated planning and reporting documents.

This strategy aims to ensure within available resources, that the community and stakeholders engage in the development of 'Our Place, Our Future - Community Strategic Plan 2050.

The strategy and documentation developed to support the community engagement process demonstrates the Council's commitment to consulting and seeking feedback on the future priorities and strategies to issues facing the community.

Throughout the process, Council will inform the community of issues likely to impact on our community across social, environmental, economic and civic leadership themes over the next decade. This includes demonstrating **council's commitment to financial sustainability** and not seeking to increase rates without first doing everything possible to address financial challenge.

Operating within available funding means setting justified priorities and responsibly managing risks to achieve the best possible outcomes for the community

This commitment includes:

1. **Avoiding Shocks** - Pro-actively implementing sound financial planning to ensure Council operates responsibly within its means, managing risks and prioritising resources to achieve best outcomes.
2. **Balancing the Budget** – taking action to ensure a balanced budget by finding efficiencies and cost savings.
3. **Borrowing** only for key infrastructure projects which are assessed on a business case basis including consideration of life cycle costs. The Council will manage its borrowings within industry benchmarks, which measure repayment capacity.
4. **Increasing Income** – For every dollar residents pay in rates and annual charges, the Council will source grant funding to maximise income, where appropriate.
5. **Reviewing and adjusting services** – The council is committed to ongoing review of its services to ensure provision of quality, value for money services responsive to the changing requirements of the community.
6. **Increasing Advocacy and Partnerships** - advocating to other levels of government for a fair share of funding and reduced cost shifting onto local government and building partnerships to achieve positive outcomes.
7. **Provide feedback** to participants on the results of the engagement processes.
8. **Monitor, evaluate and review** the effectiveness of implementation of this Community Engagement Strategy.





The development of the Community Strategic Plan and suite of documents which make up the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework involves:

- A broad range of stakeholders in the development and implementation of strategies and actions to address identified issues.
- Collaboration with community groups, government agencies and the wider community to identify solutions and accountabilities

Our **engagement objectives** are to:

1. Provide a range of opportunities for the community to meaningfully participate and contribute to the review and update of the Community Strategic Plan.
2. Ensure community engagement is well planned, meaningful, timely and accessible.
3. Ensure the community is aware of Council's financial situations and to gain agreement on acceptable service levels to be provided to the community.
4. Ensure the update of the Community Strategic Plan is adequately informed by sound research, strategic planning and the results of community engagement.
5. Take into consideration and build upon other relevant community engagement and research processes, initiatives, plans and strategies that have already been effectively implemented.
6. Provide feedback to the community on the results of the engagement process.
7. To monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of implementation of this community engagement strategy.

# HOW WE COMMUNICATE & ENGAGE

## HOW WE COMMUNICATE

NEWS LETTERS		PROJECT SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
	SURVEYS	
VISITOR INFORMATION		REPORTING DOCUMENTS
	ADVERTISING	RATES NOTICES
COUNCIL MEETINGS		
	EMAILS	WEBSITE
POSTCARDS/ POSTERS/ FLYERS		SOCIAL MEDIA
	BLOGS/ ONLINE FORUMS	
MEDIA RELEASES	SMS	APPS

## HOW WE ENGAGE

- 'Pop-up 'Information booths, displays and exhibitions
- Face-to-face
- Council meetings
- Drop-in sessions - 'Pop-up Cafes' and displays
- Events
- Workshops
- Focus Groups
- Social media

## Key Stakeholders

we engage with are:

- General community
- Ratepayers – residential, business, farmland and mining.
- Local community groups and organisations
- State and Federal Government
- Non-government agencies and organisations
- Council

We use

## IAP2 community engagement levels

to connect in the best way with the community

<b>Inform</b>	Giving information to our community
<b>Consult</b>	Seeking feedback from our community
<b>Involve</b>	Working directly with our community
<b>Collaborate</b>	Creating partnerships with our community to produce recommendations and solutions
<b>Empower</b>	Putting final decision making in the hands of our community.

## Social Equity and Justice Principles

underpin our engagement:

<b>Equity</b>	Everyone will have a fair opportunity to participate in the future of our community, by inclusive engagement and planning processes which protect the interests of people in vulnerable circumstances.
<b>Access</b>	Everyone will have fair access to services, resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life.
<b>Participation</b>	Everyone will have maximum opportunity to genuinely participate in decisions which affect their lives.
<b>Rights</b>	Everyone will have the opportunity to participate in community life while respecting cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.





# GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

## Inclusive

Everyone should have an opportunity to participate in shaping the future of our LGA. Council recognises and values the diversity of the community. Engagement processes will be inclusive, endeavouring to capture the range of values and perspectives of the community including the silent majority and those hard to reach.

### Key questions we will consider:

- What range of engagement techniques and processes are required to enable all voices to be heard?
- What promotion is required to encourage participation?

## Accessible

Community engagement processes will be accessible to the community.

### Key questions we will consider:

- How can we ensure our engagement is accessible e.g. in terms of venue, and engagement methods?
- How can we provide participants with the information they need to be able to reflect and contribute in a meaningful way?
- How can we achieve clear, easy to understand communication that does not use jargon?

## Respectful

Community engagement processes will be implemented with integrity and respect. Outcomes of engagement will not be pre-determined. Engagement will aim to promote dialogue and genuine discussion. While it may not lead to agreement or consensus, it can support better understanding of issues and foster mutual respect for different views.

### Key questions we will consider:

- How will community contributions be recognised and valued?
- Will engagement processes be able to accommodate changing community views on significant issues?
- How can we ensure the views of participants are heard and valued?

## Transparent & Accountable

Council will aim to implement community engagement processes that are transparent and accountable. Participants will be provided with an understanding of how their input will be used and the extent to which it will inform Council policy and /or decision making processes.

### Key questions we will consider:

- How can we ensure open, transparent and accountable engagement processes?
- How can the results of engagement be considered and assessed in a transparent and accountable way?
- How can we ensure timely feedback to participants on the outcomes of engagement processes?

## Civic Leadership

We will demonstrate civic leadership seeking the best possible outcomes for current and future residents. The Council will foster and grow partnerships with the community, other levels of government, agencies, business sectors to support the review, update and implementation of the plan.

### Key questions we will consider:

- How can engagement processes support best possible outcomes for current and future residents?
- How can we foster and strengthen partnerships with the community and other agencies and organisations?

## Sustainable

We will encourage development of a sustainable Community Strategic Plan that enhances the quality of life for residents of the Lithgow LGA now and into the future.


### Key questions we will consider:

- How can we support achievement of a more sustainable Lithgow LGA - socially, environmentally and economically.
- How can we best meet the needs of our community whilst ensuring a balanced budget.

# BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The community engagement process will provide an opportunity for the community to identify their priorities and aspirations for the Lithgow LGA and the level of service that they are willing to accept.

## Key questions our community engagement will address:

- 
1. What progress have we made in implementing our Community Strategic Plan?
  2. What are the key issues, challenges and opportunities currently facing the Lithgow LGA?
  3. What will the Lithgow LGA look like in 2050?
  4. Do we need to change the Vision, Objectives and Strategies in Our Place, Our Future Community Strategic Plan 2050?

## How will we engage?

Council remains committed to ensuring the community and other key partners have the opportunity to have their say and provide meaningful input into the update of the Our Place, Our Future - Community Strategic Plan 2050 and the proposed options for achieving a balanced budget and acceptable service levels for a sustainable future.

In order to reach our rural communities we will seek to connect with local forums/village associations and networks either in person or via virtual 'kitchen table' conversations. This will provide these groups with an opportunity to facilitate community-led discussions. This approach will enable our communities to come together in informal settings to have casual but important conversations. It will encourage the sharing of stories and experiences, investigation of solutions to so-called 'wicked problems' - those that are difficult, complex and can't necessarily be solved by traditional methods.

## Online technologies

Online technologies enable a mix of creative, engagement techniques encouraging interactive, deliberative conversations.

We will include the use of online platforms to engage with our community through social media - live streaming videos on key issues for the community and enabling interaction through question & answer forums. This technique is a valuable part of our engagement toolkit as it provides an accessible way to reach members of our community who are unable to attend face to face engagement.

[www.ourplaceourfuture.lithgow.com](http://www.ourplaceourfuture.lithgow.com)

The Council's dedicated website for all online engagement activities will be kept up-to-date throughout the engagement process with details of all engagement activities, supporting documentation, fact sheets, media releases, links to recorded online presentations and forums and opportunities to have your say.

The Our Place Our Future is also available from the Have Your Say menu on the Council webpage.

### Face-to-Face engagement

We will use face-to-face sessions where appropriate and achievable in line with social distancing protocols (when in force). This will include taking advantage of opportunities to attend or coordinate meetings with key community organisations across the LGA.

We will seek to make our engagement as accessible as possible by hosting 'pop-up cafes' and displays:

- in rural communities.
- at school drop-offs, shopping centres, sports clubs etc. where permissible.

### Surveys

Surveying will be undertaken utilising a variety of methods to ensure we capture a wide range of opinions:

- Online
- Telephone surveys utilising specialist engagement consultants.
- Hard copy forms (when applicable).

### Building on previous community engagement

To avoid duplication and over consultation we will build on what you have already told us and test to see if this is still relevant. This includes considering recent community surveys and engagement informing newly

developed strategic plans.

### Background research

To inform and prepare for the engagement process and update the Community Strategic Plan, analysis of new and existing research will be undertaken to compile background information to ensure that the community's participation and engagement is informed.

This will include:

- Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the Lithgow LGA.
- Assessment of key national, state, regional and local issues and change drivers.
- Analysis of key socio-economic, demographic trends and census data.
- Preparation of the State of the Region Report
- Review of the Councils Resourcing Strategy; Long Term Financial Plan, Strategic Asset Management Plan and Workforce Plan
- The NSW State Plan and Premiers Priorities and regional planning priorities.
- Review of regional plans and strategies developed by the Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO).



# ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

Effective engagement requires a range of methods to be employed to keep participants willing to be involved throughout the process, or alternatively participate in a time and manner of their choosing. It is important that we build on past experience and avoid the notion of 'over consultation', where stakeholders feel they have provided the same opinion and advice to Council on the same or similar issues. It is also important that contributors' are acknowledged.

Our engagement will aim to:

- Acknowledge people for their contribution.
- Keep people engaged during the process via regular updates.
- Provide feedback mechanisms and ongoing opportunities for people to be involved in the refinement and evaluation of the 'Our Place, Our Future Community Engagement Strategy'.

## Success Indicators

A range of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to assess the success of the 'Our Place, Our Future' community engagement process.

This will include:

- Number of presentations at community/stakeholder forums
- Number of people attending online/face-to-face sessions
- Number of visitors to 'Our Place, Our Future' webpage.
- Contributions people make to 'Our Place, Our Future' at workshops, meetings and on-line forums
- Formal submissions received.
- Media coverage
- Number of questionnaires responded to
- Adoption of the plan by Council.

## Learning and Reporting

The result of engagement activities will be compiled in report format and provided to Council, as well as placed on Council's website.

The results of this feedback will also contribute to the development of Council's overall community engagement process and tools used to engage with our community.





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# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

## Actions schedule

Date	Action	Performance Targets
<b>Sept 2024 to Jun 2025</b>	<p>Background research and preparation for Community Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop community profile - assessing key demographic and socio- economic trends</li> <li>Desk top review of plans and strategies undertaken since 2021.</li> <li>Preparation for State of the Region Report.</li> <li>Assess progress to-date in implementing Community Strategic Plan</li> <li>Identify progress highlights, key strategic issues, challenges and opportunities going forward</li> <li>Establish process to record stakeholders, community engagement and capture key findings.</li> <li>Undertake forecasting and financial analysis of rating scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of past achievements, current issues, challenges and opportunities completed.</li> <li>Community profile prepared</li> <li>Engagement processes documented and established.</li> </ul>
<b>Aug 2024 to Jan 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise Community Engagement Strategy</li> <li>Community Engagement Strategy adopted.</li> <li>New Council briefed on Community Engagement Strategy and process to date.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategy adopted by Council</li> </ul>
<b>Jan 2025 to Jun 2025</b>	<p>Implement community engagement plan for Community Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Community Engagement Plan implemented in accordance with the key principles and objectives of this engagement strategy.</p>
<b>Nov 2024 to Jun 2025</b>	<p>Review and assess outcomes of community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify required changes to the Community Strategic Plan.</li> <li>Draft Community Strategic Plan presented to Council to endorse for exhibition and community feedback.</li> </ul>	<p>Draft plan finalised</p>
<b>Jul to Aug 2025</b>	<p>Community Strategic Plan exhibited</p> <p>Pulbic exhibition period (28 Days) July 2025..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consult with representatives from all target groups to review proposed changes and finalise the draft plan for exhibition.</li> </ul> <p>Review feedback and prepare final report to Council for consideration of proposed changes and final adoption. (Aug/ Sept).</p>	<p>Council endorsement of revised Community Strategic Plan</p>

## Milestones

Date	Milestones
<b>Nov 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft State of the Region 2021 - 2024 report presented to Council.</li> <li>• Draft Community Engagement Strategy adopted.</li> </ul>
<b>Jan 2025 to Jun 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Engagement Strategy adopted.</li> <li>• State of the Region Report endorsed.</li> <li>• Community/Stakeholder Engagement</li> <li>• Draft Community Strategic Plan and Integrated Planning document suite (Long Term Financial Plan, Strategic Asset Management Plan, Workforce Plan, Delivery Program, Operational Plan) prepared and endorsed for exhibition.</li> </ul>
<b>Jan - Jun 2025</b>	<p>Stakeholder engagement with new Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated Planning &amp; Reporting Framework</li> <li>• Visioning</li> <li>• Council planning and budgetary processes</li> </ul>
<b>Jul to Aug 2025</b>	Public exhibition of draft Community Strategic Plan
<b>Sept 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Strategic Plan adopted 2025.</li> </ul>



# QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

During the engagement process a number of questions will be raised by the community. Some of these have been anticipated and how they will be managed is addressed.

Matters raised across all engagement platforms will be addressed through fact sheets on the Our Place Our Future website, including a frequently asked questions fact sheet.

**Comment: Stop spending money on unnecessary events and projects and just fix our roads.**

The role of local Councils has come a long way since the days of roads, rates and rubbish. Today, we fund many more services to meet the community's needs and expectations. Some of these include:

- Creating vibrant public spaces and amenities to attract economic growth and visitation.
- Developing and encouraging events which are unique to the area for the wellbeing of the community and to attract visitation.

**Questions: How can the Council best show that it is efficient? OR How do I know the Council is being efficient?**

The Council publishes the following reports on its website which highlight councils performance against agreed indicators within Community Strategic Plan, Delivery Program and annual Operational Plan:

- Six Month Progress reports on the implementation of the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.
- The Annual Report
- Audited Annual Financial Statements
- State of the Region (formerly End of Term) Reports every four years.

### Question: You increased our rates? What are you spending the money on?

The \$6m in income received annually from the 2023 Special Rate Variation (SRV) is identified in the annual operational plan and is allocated as follows:

- \$1,141,140 Transitions Management Program
- \$1,739,733 Transport Maintenance Program
- \$1,434,519 Roads Renewal Program
- \$291,962 Stormwater Maintenance Program
- \$187,706 Stormwater Drainage Renewal Program
- \$413,613 General Asset Maintenance Program
- \$540,774 General Asset Renewal Program
- \$261,250 to increase strategic capacity in the areas of Governance, Risk and Internal Audit
- \$261,250 to implement a Business Improvement and Capacity Building Program
- \$261,250 Contingency Funding to be reserved annually to ensure Council is able to absorb future financial shocks.

### Question: How do I know that the funds from the SRV are being spent in my area?

Council places its Draft Operational Plan on public exhibition each year in April /May for the Community to review and make submissions. The Draft Operational Plan provides a detailed list of Capital Works to be undertaken and identifies the budget area that the works are funded from. Members of the community are invited to make submissions during this period which are considered by Council prior to adoption of the Operational Plan in June.

### Question: Our roads are in a terrible state. Why are you wasting money on projects and not fixing our roads?

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

Because these events have been declared as disasters by the other levels of government, they qualify for funding assistance. Government guidelines require the Council to undertake and fund the works and then claim those funds back. Regional and rural councils, like Lithgow, have very limited financial capacity. The councils do not have the ability to carry large outflows of funds for disaster recovery works, without income from the government being received to offset this. As a result, road repairs and other works must be phased, meaning the community's recovery from the effects of disasters is delayed longer.

The reality is that claims are being submitted by Councils faster than Transport for NSW can assess them. However, Lithgow City Council continues to vigorously pursue and submit claims on behalf of the community in order to progress works.