

Media Release

30 November 2022



Lithgow Council approves a financial re-set for the future

This week Lithgow Council made a major commitment to improving the city's infrastructure, growing the local economy and improving service delivery. Councillors endorsed to move forward with an application for a permanent increase to land rates.

Mayor Maree Statham highlighted that "The key feature of the decision, which was voted to be locked in, is that the increase to the residential, farming and business (general) rating categories will be limited to 27.7%. This demonstrates the deep regard the Council has had for the impact of any increase on residents and business-people."

"After months of the most extensive community consultation ever undertaken in this city, we received a mandate to address the great challenges we face – lifting investment up to the real cost of maintaining the community's assets (especially roads) and services, and transforming the local economy because it will, inevitably, be disrupted as mining and power generation reduce in output over time. A Special Rate Survey found that 80% of local people consulted consider maintaining and improving roads to be a key priority."

"The Council was also empowered to take the decision to increase land rates because the large business sectors of mining, power generation and quarries accepted that Lithgow needs to be financially secure as a city. The position taken

by these sectors is incredibly mature, and I thank them. Clearly, they share this Council's and the community's vision for a successful and resilient city."

Lithgow Council's General Manager, Craig Butler said, 'To do nothing was not an option. We heard that loud and clear from the many hundreds of people who we engaged with around this proposal. This Council has agreed not to accept an inevitable decline in the city's and the community's prosperity. The Council's decision is the correct decision because it provides the means to fundamentally re-position Lithgow for a desirable and sustainable future."

Mr Butler also said, "The proposal has been very carefully shaped. The result is that while the Council's overall income from land rates will increase by a maximum of 45.7% (including a 3.7% government approved amount for inflation), the average resident will have their increase limited to 27.7%. Discussions also continue with the mining and power generation businesses around the creation of a future fund, targeted at economic transformation. This could see the total land rate increase fall to around 38%."

Lithgow Council has previously heard that most rural and regional councils rate financial sustainability as their biggest challenge. It has been reported that numerous councils are considering increasing land rates so as to survive at a level where they can provide services. This includes –

- Armidale – cumulative 58% over three years
- Tenterfield - cumulative 104.49% general rate increase over two years
- Federation - cumulative 74.59% general rate increase over four years
- Walcha Shire - cumulative 57.74 % increase over three years
- Leeton Shire - cumulative 52.52% increase over two years
- Port Stephens - cumulative 34.92 % increase over three years
- Bega Valley – 35% in one year

- Cootamundra-Gundagai – cumulative 53.47% over four years from 2021-22
- Snowy Valleys – cumulative 35.9% over two years from 2022-23.

END

Contact: Craig Butler
General Manager
Tel: 02 6354 9999



Mayoral Message



The Councillors and staff at Lithgow City Council would like to wish the entire community a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.



Christmas Closure

Council will be closed over Christmas/ New Year from close of business Friday 23 December and reopen on Monday 9 January 2023.

During this time essential services will operate. If assistance is required please call 6354 9999.



Reminder

Closure of Wallerawang Garbage Depot

Residents are reminded that Wallerawang Garbage Depot will close permanently on Saturday 31 December 2022.

Waste will not be accepted at the Wallerawang Garbage Depot from 1 January 2023. Residents can use the Lithgow Solid Waste Facility and Portland Garbage Depot for domestic waste at no charge.

Residents are also reminded to follow the signs at the entrance to the waste facilities and to only dispose of permitted items.

Should you require further information, please contact Council on 6354 9999.

On Exhibition

Council is inviting you to have your say on the following:

- **Public Notice – Proposed classification of Public Land Closes 2 Feb**
- **DRAFT PLAN OF MANAGEMENT PART OF CROWN RESERVE 590046 TONY LUCHETTI SPORTSGROUND AND SHOWGROUND (section 38 Local Government Act 1993)**

At the ordinary meeting of Council on 26 September 2022 Council resolved to place on public exhibition the draft plan of management for part of Crown Reserve 590046 - Tony Luchetti Sportsground and Showground.

Once adopted, the plan will authorise the subject area to be used for construction of a multi-function building (including Women's Shed) (STCA) as outlined in section 6 of the draft plan of management, and the granting of leases, licenses or other estates for the purposes outlined in section 7 of the draft plan.

Public exhibition

The draft plan of management will be on public exhibition from Thursday 10 November 2022 to Friday 23 December 2022.

View the draft plan of management

The draft plan of management is available for viewing:

- on Council's website at www.council.lithgow.com
- in Council's Administration Building at 180 Mort Street, Lithgow, between 9.15am and 4pm weekdays during the public exhibition period

Submissions

Submissions are invited from the public in relation to the draft plan of management. Submissions must be:

- in writing Marked "Submission – draft plan of management Tony Luchetti"
- Sent to Council's email council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au OR posted/delivered to Council's Administration Building at 180 Mort Street, Lithgow
- Received by Council no later than 4pm on Friday 23 December 2022

- **It's Our Place, Our Future - Have Your Say! Closes 2 Feb**

Council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) documents were adopted by Council at the 27 June 2022 meeting (Min. No. 22-114). The documents include the following plans:

- Community Strategic Plan 2035
- Combined Delivery Program 2022– 2026 and Operational Plan 2022/23.
- Resourcing Strategy;
- Long Term Financial Plan 2022-2032;
- Strategic Asset Management Plan 2022-2032; and
- Workforce Plan 2022-2026.

The IP&R suite of documents adopted by Council was regarded as interim as the pathway to financial sustainability was under development at the time of preparing that version of the Long Term Financial Plan. There have now been changes to the adopted Long Term Financial Plan and these have been integrated with updates to the other IP&R documents. Council is calling for submissions from the community regarding the updates to the Long Term Financial Plan 2022-2032 and the Options for a Sustainable Future section of each of the abovementioned documents.

The Our Place, Our Future suite of documents will be on exhibition for public comment until Thursday 2 February. All community submissions received will be reported to Council (personal information will be redacted) for consideration at its January meeting.

Be a part of the process and visit www.ourplaceourfuture.lithgow.com to view the plans and make a submission.

**Scan here to view
career opportunities
with council**





Mayoral Message



After months of the most extensive community consultation ever undertaken in the city, Council has endorsed to move forward with an application for a permanent increase to land rates. **The key feature of the decision, which was voted to be locked in, is that the increase to the residential, farming and business (general) rating categories will be limited to 27.7%.** This demonstrates the deep regard the Council has had for the impact of any

increase on residents and business.

The Council received a mandate to address the great challenges – lifting investment up to the real cost of maintaining the community's assets (especially roads) and services, and transforming the local economy because it will, inevitably, be disrupted as mining and power generation reduce in output over time. A Special Rate Survey found that 80% of local people consulted consider maintaining and improving roads to be a key priority.

The overall income from land rates will increase by a maximum of 45.7% (including a 3.7% government approved amount for inflation), but the average resident will have their increase limited to 27.7%. Discussions also continue with the mining and power generation businesses around the creation of a future fund, targeted at economic transformation. This could see the total land rate increase fall to around 38%.

On 1 December, Deputy Mayor Cass Coleman and I attended an exciting initiative organised by the Western Sydney University School of Education and Lithgow High School. This initiative is an attempt to overcome the challenge of recruiting sufficient and quality teachers to the Lithgow area.

The trip introduced Pre-Service Teachers from the Master of Teaching (Secondary) Program to the Lithgow region and Lithgow High School and give them a taste of what it might be like to live and work in a region outside of Sydney. The ultimate goals are to convince them to complete a placement at Lithgow High School or other high schools in the Lithgow area, and to hopefully then consider teaching in the area. If successful, it will benefit the children of the area as well as the community as a whole.

On Exhibition

Council is inviting you to have your say on the following:

- Proposed Lease to Wallerawang Memorial Men's Shed Inc Closes 13 Dec
- DRAFT PLAN OF MANAGEMENT PART OF CROWN RESERVE 590046 TONY LUCHETTI SPORTSGROUND AND SHOWGROUND (section 38 Local Government Act 1993)

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Council Half Day Closure

Council facilities will be closed for half a day Thursday 8 December 2022 to enable staff to attend the Council's Staff Service Awards and Christmas function.

The Council administration centre, libraries and depots will close at 12 noon to enable staff to attend the function.

The JM Robson Aquatic Centre will operate as normal.

Council will re-open for normal business Friday 9 December 2022.

Christmas Closure

The staff of Lithgow City Council wishes the entire community a Merry Christmas and a safe, happy New Year.

Council will be closed over Christmas/New Year from close of business Friday 23 December and reopen on Monday 9 January 2023.

During this time essential services will operate. If assistance is required please call 6354 9999.

Join our team

Council is currently seeking applications for the following position/s:

- Casual Learn to Swim Instructors closes 24 Feb
- Casual Lifeguard closes 24 Feb
- Graduate Development Planner closes 6 Jan
- Apprentice Greenkeeper closes 16 Dec
- Trainee Building & Development Officer closes 16 Dec
- Unlicensed Plumber closes 9 Dec

Applications must be received by the advertised close date. For further information on any of these positions and to apply, go to the Council's website.

A SUMMARY OF BUSINESS FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING

Lithgow council endorses notification to IPART for SRV

Council has made a major commitment to improving the city's infrastructure, growing the local economy and improving service delivery. To create the capacity for these activities, councillors endorsed to move forward with an application for a permanent increase to land rates.

The overall income from land rates will increase by a maximum of 45.7% (including a 3.7% government approved amount for inflation), but **the average resident will have their increase limited to 27.7%**. Discussions also continue with the mining and power generation businesses around the creation of a future fund, targeted at economic transformation. This could see the total land rate increase fall to around 38%.

Statewide road emergency

Lithgow City Council is one of 126 Councils in NSW that have had natural disaster declarations within the last 12 months. Council resolved to join with Local Government NSW and the Country Mayors Association of NSW in supporting their declaration of a Statewide Road Emergency. The LGA NSW and Country Mayors Association of NSW are calling for:

- An acceleration and significant increase in funding for the \$1.1 billion Fixing Local Roads and Fixing Country Bridges program from the New South Wales Government.
- A boost to Road Block Grant funding to compensate for the damage to the regional road network from the Federal Government
- New funding to provide councils with plant machinery and skilled workers to expedite road repairs from the Federal Government.

Lithgow community private hospital

The Council considered a report on progress with the negotiations to retain specialist medical services provided by the Lithgow Community Private (LCP) Hospital.

Council has been active in advocating for a long-term agreement which ensures that much needed specialist medical services will continue to be available in Lithgow.

LCP Chair, Robert Swinton has advised Council that normal operations will continue beyond November 2022. Discussions with the Local Health District around a sustainable model and service agreement that provides certainty for both parties are ongoing.

Council will continue to collaborate with ironfest

The Council re-affirmed a commitment to Ironfest when it considered a late request for funding. The request was for a substantial amount of money but lacked clarity about the deliverables. With all available funds allocated for this year, the Council chose to continue to work with the Ironfest organising committee for a return of the event in 2023/24

Disability Inclusion Action Plan Progress Report

A report was received on Councils' progress implementing the Disability Action Inclusion Plan (DIAP). The DIAP takes a holistic approach to ensuring people with a disability have better access to services, information and facilities offered by Council. By implementing these actions, not only do people with disability benefit, but older

people, people with acute or short-term injuries, and parents with young children will also benefit.

2021/22 Annual Report

The 2021/22 Annual Report explains the many diverse projects and programs that the Council undertook during 2021/22. It also acknowledges the ever changing and challenging operating environment (COVID 19 restrictions, natural disasters, and global economic challenges which have resulted in rising costs and short supply of both materials and resources). Some of the many projects undertaken during 2021/22 include:

- \$2.161m funding received for the EPA Bushfire Generated Tree Waste Program to address 8.7 tonnes of fire affected dangerous trees & residual green-waste generated by the 2019-20 bushfires. 80 Individual landowners and business, public land and roadside reserves benefited.
- The Rydal Footbridge and Turon Gates Bridge were renewed under the NSW Governments Timber Bridges program.
- Over 1,000 trees planted in the district, including expanding forage and habitat plants for the Purple Copper Butterfly as part of a joint program with Lithgow Oberon Landcare Association.

Advocacy priorities for NSW State Election

Drawing from the community priorities identified in the Community Strategic Plan 2035, Council agreed on its advocacy priorities to bring to the attention of candidates and political parties in the lead up to the NSW State Election in March 2023.

1. *Sustainable Local government* Substantially review and reform funding arrangements for local government to provide the sector with the capacity to meet the many challenges of the 21st century.
2. *A diverse, strong and resilient local economy*
 - Finalise and implement the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan – cross-government commitment, 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 supporting funding over 7 – 10 years).
 - Bring forward new employment precincts - utilise the capacity of the NSW Government to examine and facilitate the re-purposing of the city'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.
 - Implement the Lithgow EV Strategy
 - Improve road connections - Advance the Great Western Highway upgrade (including addressing the matters raised in Council's submission)
 - 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.

WORKS PROGRESS REPORT

- *Get Active NSW Grant* – contract planning works completed for successful footpath construction projects for Lithgow (Hartley Valley Road, Maple Crescent), Wallerawang (Barton Avenue, Pindari Place), Cullen Bullen (Castlereagh Highway), and Portland (High Street)
- *Civic Ballroom* – building improvement works completed, including fire service and electrical / lighting upgrades
- *Kremer Park Grandstand, Portland* – heritage consultancy completed, detailed designs and scope of works being prepared for release of tender documents
- *Lithgow Library* – replacement of façade and awning completed
- *LINC Building* – building improvement works completed, official opening scheduled for 7 December 2022
- *JM Robson Aquatic Centre* – Solar panel installation and landscaping completed, sauna installation planning underway
- *Fixing Country Bridges Round 1* – Crown Creek Bridge replacement completed and opened to traffic, works started on Airly Bridge replacement
- *Fixing Country Bridges Round 2* – planning, studies and approvals commencing for Charles Street Rydal and Red Hill Road, Palmers Oaky
- *Pipers Flat / Range Road intersection* improvements – sealing works completed, linemarking scheduled for December 2022 to complete the project
- *Rydal Toilets* – consultation with UGL Regional Linx and additional approvals being prepared.
- *Cullen Bullen Sewer* – Reticulation and on property services nearing completion, STP beginning to be constructed after rainfall and inclement weather as well as long delays in delivery of items has caused issues.
- *Portland Water Mains* – all mains renewed and connected by 16th of December 2022 with large sections of east Portland renewed and trunk main to service Portland Foundations site ready and in use.
- *Smoke Testing of sewer lines* – has begun in the Lithgow area and will be used as part of an ongoing program to detect illegal connections. Larger areas will be completed as part of program such as extension estate in early 2023.
- *Sewer relining* – CCTV of mains to identify defects for repair being completed December 2022 with relining to begin in Extension estate area in early 2023.
- *Browns Gap Road* has continued to show movement on the subsidence site which has delayed the rectification of the subsidence. The unstable part of the escarpment is looking to be worked on at the same time. Browns Gap Road will remain closed until further notice.
- *Wolgan Gap* remains closed until further notice. Wolgan road is being assessed for the best way to resolve the latest landslip as it is a complex issue due to the amount of unstable material. Works have begun on the Donkey Steps emergency access. It is hoped to have it prepared just prior to Christmas but this will be dependent on weather and site conditions. Access to Wolgan Valley for residents and businesses only, is via the Old Coach Road through the National Park.

A SUMMARY OF BUSINESS FROM THE COUNCIL MEETING

Lithgow Council takes bold action to secure the future of the Lithgow area

The current Council has engaged significantly with the community about their priorities. As an outcome, the Council has made a major commitment to improving the city's infrastructure, growing the local economy and improving services. To create the capacity for these activities, councillors endorsed that an application be made to IPART for a permanent increase to land rates.

The overall income from land rates will increase by a maximum of 45.7% (including a 3.7% rate peg), **but the average resident will have their increase limited to 27.7% (including 3.7% rate peg).**

Wolgan Valley access

Wolgan Road was closed to traffic in early November 2022 because of immediate concerns regarding slope stability. This has stranded a community of about 150 residents. Businesses have also been gravely affected, including the Emirates One&Only Resort.

The Council has actively constructed a new access (the Donkey Steps) with the second section of pavement being concreted on the top steep section. **Council is aiming to have the track opened to residents and essential business needs in the week of the 6th February while minor safety works continue on the track.**

The Council has worked with the NSW Government's Public Works and Peter Gracey (the contractor) who have excelled in their management and construction of the new access over difficult terrain for residents.

The support of the Mingan Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation, who have assisted in assessment and safeguarding of any indigenous heritage, is also acknowledged.

A detailed geotechnical report has found that the Wolgan Road is built upon highly erodible material and any attempt to maintain this route for long term access will be extremely difficult. As a backstop, the Council has commenced work on the identification of an alternate, permanent resilient access route as a matter of priority. Council will also actively explore all avenues to secure funding and move forward with minimal delay.

Council will continue to work at getting the long-term access issues resolved. Continued support from State and Federal government departments for the residents and businesses of Wolgan Valley is being pursued.

The well-being of residents in the Wolgan Valley is a priority for Council and we continue to work closely with residents, the Wolgan Valley Association and businesses of the valley to ensure their needs are met.

Community Cultural Protocol – working together as one with our Aboriginal Community

Council has affirmed its commitment to work together with the local Aboriginal Community to protect and improve the interests of all Aboriginal people in the Lithgow area.

The recently endorsed Community Cultural Protocol fosters unity, ownership, participation, and leadership. The Protocol acknowledges the significance of local Aboriginal people and heritage to the Seven Valleys.

The protocol is a valuable guide for organisations seeking to engage with our local Aboriginal people and is available for viewing on Council's website.

"Living within the Environment", Waste Management & Resource Recovery Strategy

Council adopted the Waste Management & Resource Recovery Strategy 2022-2026 "Living within the Environment". The strategy recognises waste as a resource and focuses actions on reducing, reusing and recycling.

Key actions include developing a kerbside organics (FOGO) implementation plan, finishing construction of the Resource Recovery Centre and undertaking material separation on site to match available recycling markets.

The completion of the Resource Recovery Centre (RRC) has experienced long delays due to poor weather conditions which has slowed the construction of new roadways. Dry weather conditions have been required to allow underlying subbases time to appropriately dry out and to warm to an appropriate level for hot-mixing. The RRC is nearing completion. Once the road ways are completed, the RRC will be quickly approaching its opening to the community.

WORKS PROGRESS REPORT

- **Main Street CBD** - final plans are being prepared for community consultation to commence in February
- **Burton Street Crossing over Farmers Creek** - design work and environmental assessments have been completed for a low level causeway crossing over Farmers Creek near Burton Street. Council will be calling for quotations to undertake the works. Construction is expected to be completed by 30 June 2023. Completion of these works will reinstate this crossing which forms an integral part of the Farmers Creek shared pathway.
- **Union Theatre Upgrade** - Council is awaiting delivery and installation of a modern seating system to replace the decades old theatre seating. Installation is expected in April 2023.
Design work will soon be completed for upgrade of the theatre kitchen including installation of a servery between the kitchen and theatre. kitchen works are expected to be completed in the second half of 2023 after development consent is obtained.
The upgrade works will further enhance the functionality of the theatre for performances and provide greater comfort for patrons.
- **Get Active NSW Grant** – quotations for footpath construction projects for Lithgow (Hartley Valley Road, Maple Crescent), Wallerawang (Barton Avenue, Pindari Place), Cullen Bullen (Castlereagh Highway), and Portland (High Street) and are currently being assessed.
- **Kremer Park Grandstand, Portland** – heritage assessment has been completed. Detailed designs and scope of works are being prepared for the tender documents.
- **JM Robson Aquatic Centre** – plans are currently being prepared for a sauna to be installed.
- **Fixing Country Bridges Round 1** – works have commenced on Coco Creek Bridge replacement. For further information on the Glen Davis Bridge Replacement program please visit <https://council.lithgow.com/glen-davis-road-bridge-project/>

- **Fixing Country Bridges Round 2** – planning, studies and approvals are commencing for Charles Street Rydal and Red Hill Road, Palmers Oaky
- **Rydal Toilets** – consultation with UGL Regional Linx and additional approvals being prepared.
- **School Zone Infrastructure Program** – Linemarking is being undertaken - to be completed in February.
- **Pothole Repair Round** – planning underway.
- **Cullen Bullen Sewer Scheme** has taken shape with the majority of serviced properties in the village having the low pressure units and their auxiliaries installed on site. All reticulation has been laid and connected awaiting the commissioning of the treatment plant.
Construction of the treatment plant has begun with the large tank being excavated currently and buildings such as the Administration and Laboratory Building and Electrical Switch Room bases ready to accept the prefabricated buildings.
There have been some delays due to the weather in the last twelve months with the site being difficult to access and excavate without causing undue damage in the area however, Council and its contractors are progressing the project forward.
- **Portland Water Mains** – This project is now in the remediation stage with all sites that have been excavated being repaired prior to finalisation. The project has replaced and renewed a vast amount of the water mains in East Portland as well as constructed a new trunk main to service the Portland Foundations sites to allow for site activation and future usage. This project was funded by the NSW Government and delivered by Council.
- **Smoke Testing of sewer lines** – has commenced

in various sections of the Lithgow area and will progress in the early parts of 2023. This will be a process of inserting a nonhazardous smoke into the sewer mains and connections across the area and examining properties and the area for breakages and illegal connections. This project is part of Council's ongoing sewer management works to remove illegal connections and overflows from Council infrastructure.

- **Sewer relining** – the sewer relining project will begin on the 6th of February 2023 with the inspection of lines to be completed this financial year. The initial works will include CCTV inspection of lines, the repair and renewal of any issue areas in the mains prior to the relining of the sewer main. This work is being completed as part of the sewer management and repair program to reduce the ground water infiltration into the sewer mains across the Lithgow area.
- **Browns Gap Road** is continuing to show movement in the adjacent slopes. Assessments are continuing to identify the best treatment. Mines Subsidence is looking to repair a collapsed sinkhole next to the road. Council can then repair the unstable section of the road. Browns Gap Road will remain closed until further notice.
- **Wolgan Valley Evacuation Plan** expressions of interest are expected to close and be assessed in February.
- **Recreation update** - The warmer weather brings a fast growing environment and Council's Recreation Team have been extremely busy catching up after the Christmas / New Year Break.

The focus has been on preparing parks, gardens and sporting facilities for high level events such as the recently secured NRL Laurie Daley Cup and the commencement of regular events & carnivals including the annual Nick Way Memorial Touch Football Cup & Rydal Show.