

LEEP NEWS



Aerologix CEO Tom Caska addresses students and community at the LEEP Speaker Series.

Drone visionary inspires Lithgow with glimpse into the future of aerial tech

Students in Lithgow were treated to a high-flying dose of inspiration when Tom Caska, Founder and CEO of Aerologix, visited the Central West Adaptive Skills Hub to deliver a powerful talk on the future of drone technology.

Caska, a former Qantas pilot turned tech entrepreneur, shared his journey from the cockpit to the cutting edge of drone innovation. His company, Aerologix, has built a groundbreaking platform dubbed the “Uber for drones,” connecting thousands of pilots with clients across Australia and NZ for aerial imaging, mapping, and data services. Speaking as part of the LEEP Speaker Series, Caska painted a bold picture of how drones are transforming industries – from agriculture and infrastructure to environmental monitoring and logistics.

The event also showcased the Lithgow STEAM Uplift Pilot Program, where local primary school students are participating in an innovative cross-school STEAM education program, and secondary school students are learning to code, design, and operate drones – including developing a pioneering drone light show.

The program to prepare young people for the careers of the future is part of Lithgow’s broader transition agenda, the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP).

“Tom’s visit highlights Lithgow’s growing reputation as a hub for innovation and future-focused education, reinforcing our commitment to equip local students with the skills to thrive in a rapidly evolving tech landscape,” said Councillor Cassandra Coleman, the Mayor of Lithgow.

Future Jobs and Investment Authority established = important step towards economic resilience for Lithgow

The Future Jobs and Investment Authority will partner with coal-producing regions across NSW to help guide the future economic development of the four coal mining regions – the Hunter, Central West including Lithgow, Illawarra, and North West – from coal production and coal-fired power generation towards other economic opportunities and employment.

The 2025-26 NSW Budget will include \$27.3 million over four years to fund the Authority. The initiative is backed by the Future Jobs and Investment Fund, unlocking more than \$100 million in funding which was held back under the Royalties for Rejuvenation scheme. The Government has also confirmed it will continue its existing commitment to deliver \$22.5 million into the fund each year.

Lithgow Mayor, Cr Cassandra Coleman, emphasised that the establishment of the Future Jobs and Investment Authority as an important step towards building economic resilience for communities such as Lithgow. "Lithgow City Council has already committed significant investment to transition management by allocating \$1.07m each year to support the implementation of the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP). "The LEEP program is already actively delivering real, long-lasting benefits for our community through educational programs for our emerging and existing workforce to help prepare them for future employment opportunities, and making inroads in strategic land use planning, precinct development, and economic diversification."



Lithgow Mayor Cassandra Coleman reviews the 2025-2026 LEEP Action Plan with Lithgow City Council Director of Infrastructure and Project Delivery, Jonathon Edgecombe.

Mayor Coleman noted that the groundwork is already underway as part of the LEEP could be harnessed to support the Future Jobs and Investment Authority to hit the ground running.

Additionally, the Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041 identifies that Lithgow has a key role to play in the future of the region, which makes it a natural and strategic location for the Central West Future Jobs and Investment Authority office.

"Lithgow City Council is committed to ongoing co-operation with the NSW Government, and all stakeholders, to ensure we are proactively positioned to support the jobs of the future", Mayor Coleman said.

"We look forward to working with the Future Jobs and Investment Authority and welcome discussions to commit funding to the existing work which is currently occurring in the Lithgow region under the LEEP."

For more information about the Future Jobs and Investment Authority visit – www.nsw.gov.au/regional-and-primary-industries/future-jobs-and-investment-authority

Further information about the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan Transition Report and the LEEP Action Plan 2025-2026 is available on the LEEP website – www.leep.lithgow.com

LEEP recognised in 2025 National Awards for Local Government



Lithgow City Council's Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP) Program was recognised for its leading practice work in transitions management with an Honourable Mention in the Regional Growth category at the 2025 National Awards for Local Government.

Awarded for its outstanding achievement among a strong field of 192 total submissions, Lithgow City Council's entry highlighted the LEEP team's work implementing the actions outlined in the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan.

"This work shows that Lithgow City Council is actively delivering real, long-lasting benefits for our community – in particular, educational programs for our emerging workforce to help prepare them for future job opportunities", Mayor of Lithgow, Cr Coleman said.

Pictured: Lithgow City Council General Manager Ross Gurney, Mayor Cr Cassandra Coleman, and Deputy Mayor Cr Steven Ring at the Awards ceremony.



Pictured - some of the Transitions Management Certificate Course participants and Council staff with Professor Andrew Beer (back row, centre), 4 April, 2025. Image credit - Sandy Horne Photography

Transition Management – setting the stage for Lithgow's future

More than 20 people attended the Economic Transitions Management Certificate Course held at the Central West Adaptive Skills Hub in April. Delivered by leading Australian economist Professor Andrew Beer, the course explored the role of transitions management in changing economies, and the key interventions that are effective in transitions management.

Participants told us they would highly recommend the course, and that they appreciated the local context and opportunities to engage with Professor Beer and fellow participants in a hands-on and productive way: "It is really exciting to be part of the discussion and consider the challenges and opportunities ahead for this amazing community."

Due to popular demand, we are considering running this course again!

INTERESTED?

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or visit leep.lithgow.com/events



Central West Adaptive Skills Hub Update

The Central West Adaptive Skills Hub is offering to pay for you to study a range of exciting and industry-ready short courses!

- **Carbon Accounting | Australian Centre for Business Growth**

Deep dive into carbon footprints, emissions and scopes, current standards, reporting frameworks and policies. Designed for non-experts eager to master carbon accounting.

- **Green Supply Chain Management | Western Sydney University (WSU)**

Identify Green Supply Chain Management practices, map out your whole supply chain and prepare an environmental initiative plan.

- **Audit your Environmental Management System | WSU**

Build on your Environmental Management System to identify, assess and mitigate environmental risk, and facilitate a third-party audit of your EMS.

- **Life Cycle Assessment | WSU**

Learn how to perform a Life Cycle inventory analysis, complete a Life Cycle impact assessment, interpret results, and carry out a Life Cycle Assessment using LCA software.

- **Setting your Path to Net Zero | Western Sydney University (WSU)**

Understand what it really means to reach Net Zero – start building your own Environmental Management System (EMS).

INTERESTED?

Scan the QR code
or visit
leep.lithgow.com/events
to find out more!



Lithgow STEAM Uplift Pilot Program

Our LEEP Primary STEAM Team has been busy bringing STEAM and 21st-century adaptable learning into our local classrooms! Throughout our primary schools, students have been coding video games based on class novels and the environment on Makecode Arcade, developing digital dioramas for various biomes through Minecraft, enhancing filmmaking and photography skills with our filmmaking kits, designing and coding interactive posters, exploring planetary rotation and orbits using Edison robots and combating waste by conducting waste audits.

We are immensely proud of all the students we have had the pleasure to work with, as we witness their critical thinking, creatively, collaboration, problem-solving and communication skills improve tenfold. We are also grateful to the teachers who have opened their doors to us, eager to encourage new skills and learn a few themselves!

LEEP SPEAKER SERIES

Join us for an update
about LEEP and hear from
inspiring guest speakers.

Ashley Bland
Energy Literacy 101
and

Tim Elderton
Made in Lithgow – World-First Solar Train



WHEN
Wednesday September 17
at 4.30pm

WHERE
Central West Adaptive Skills Hub
176 Mort Street Lithgow