

11 December 2025

Transport for NSW

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Dear Sir / Madam,

## **Lithgow City Council Submission on the Draft Central West & Orana Strategic Regional Transport Plan (SRITP)**

### **1. Executive Summary**

Lithgow City Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Draft Central West & Orana Strategic Regional Transport Plan (SRITP)*.

Transport infrastructure and rail service uplift in Lithgow is a precondition of successful economic transition.

Council supports the vision for a safer, better connected and more productive regional transport network. However, the draft SRITP does not yet fully recognise Lithgow's strategic significance within the regional and state transport system, nor the transport settings required to support a deep-transition economy undergoing once-in-a-century structural change.

Lithgow is the point of intersect between Greater Sydney and Central NSW. The SRITP acknowledges the importance of gateway towns, but Lithgow's role is unique:

- The only electrified railhead west of Sydney,
- The interchange city through which all Western NSW passenger rail services must pass,
- A freight corridor, and
- A potential future zero-emissions logistics hub.

Lithgow is uniquely positioned at the intersection of metropolitan and regional NSW.

Lithgow's future is defined by once-in-a-century economic transition, featuring:

1. the decline of coal-fired power generation,
2. the required rise of advanced manufacturing / emergence of pumped hydro and renewables corridor proposals, and
3. transformation of former industrial, transport, and mining lands into new employment precincts to enable successful economic transition.

Transport planning and connectivity are vital to support a successful transition and reduce the risk of embedding long-term economic and social disadvantage. Council's economic evidence base demonstrates the scale and urgency of this transition:

- Mining remains an \$885 million GVA sector (*Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy 2023*);
- Approximately 1,800 workers are directly or indirectly employed in coal and energy generation industries and will require future mobility into new jobs;
- Housing vacancy rates remain below 1%, and median house prices have increased 30% since 2018 demonstrating constrained labour mobility; and
- Lithgow forms the catchment centre for a 47,000-person workforce within one hour and has the region's highest concentration of engineering and technical capability.

Improved passenger rail services, increased frequency, and express shoulder-peak patterns are essential enablers of this labour force transition. Rail service modelling (Donovan, 2025) demonstrates that better frequency and interchange design could significantly increase mode share using existing rolling-stock assumptions.

The SRITP identifies the importance of freight and supply chain efficiency, but it does not embrace the strategic opportunity presented by the Pacific National Chifley Road rail precinct, a state-significant brownfield asset with direct access to the Main West rail line and Great Western Highway. Activation of this site strongly aligns with the SRITP's objectives for:

- Intermodal integration,
- Freight productivity,
- Industry clustering, and
- The NSW Government's focus on repurposing energy and industrial lands.

Council considers the Pacific National site a flagship opportunity for a future rail technology, maintenance, and clean-energy logistics precinct, critical to Lithgow's economic transition as identified in the *Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy 2023*, the *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041* and *Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP)*.

Transport constraints are also limiting the release of new residential and employment lands identified in the *Central West & Orana Regional Plan 2041* and Council's *Land Suitability Analysis*. Marrangaroo, Wallerawang and Bowenfels each face enabling infrastructure barriers including arterial access, public transport connectivity, and active transport safety. Without corridor upgrades and improved rail-bus integration, these precincts cannot deliver the housing and jobs necessary to meet regional and state planning objectives.

While the SRITP emphasises safer roads across the region, it does not outline a timeline and funding cycle for the Bells Line of Road safety program. This is an essential requirement given that corridor's function as an alternative to the Great Western Highway, and its role in emergency evacuation and freight resilience.

*The Lithgow Active Transport Plan* provides a detailed, community-endorsed, fully mapped program of pedestrian, cycling, school access and main-street improvements across Lithgow, Wallerawang, Portland, Capertee and Cullen Bullen. Council encourages the SRITP to incorporate these works directly into regional funding pathways, particularly where they intersect with rail stations, bus interchanges, schools, industrial precincts, and the tourism network.

Council also notes that while the SRITP Action Plan is divided into short, medium and long-term actions, it lacks a clear prioritisation framework. Without transparent weighting, large population centres may dominate funding decisions, and competing

objectives (such as freight efficiency versus pedestrian safety) may be resolved inconsistently.

Council supports the use of performance measures in the Plan but recommends the inclusion of published prioritisation criteria to ensure transparent decision-making and inter-regional equity.

In summary, Council supports the overall direction of the draft SRITP but urges the final Plan to accurately reflect Lithgow's critical transport, economic and strategic role within NSW.

Council looks forward to working with Transport for NSW to ensure that the final SRITP captures these opportunities and delivers the transport foundations needed for Lithgow and the Central West to prosper.

## 2. Introduction

This submission was prepared by Lithgow City Council in accordance with the Council's Resolution of 1 December 2025, authorising a comprehensive response to SRITP.

The submission draws on a wide evidence base, including:

- *Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP)*.
- *Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy (2018-2022 and 2023 Update)* which identify economic diversification, labour force transition and land activation as regional priorities.
- *Planning for Labour Market Change in Lithgow (2025)*, which confirms the scale of the workforce transition required and identifies transport connectivity as a prerequisite for labour mobility, industry diversification, and attraction of new employers.
- *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041* which designates Lithgow as a strategic centre and a gateway corridor.
- *Pacific National Site Feasibility and Employment Lands Analysis* identifying the state-significant opportunity of the Chifley Road rail precinct.
- *Freight Policy Reform Consultation Paper (2024)* and *Interim Directions (2024)* which emphasise the need for freight precinct optimisation, mode shift to rail, and renewal of regional logistics infrastructure - all of which directly support Lithgow's transition and the activation of the Pacific National site.
- Council's technical documentation on the *Great Western Highway, Bells Line of Road and Marrangaroo Interchange*.
- Council's road safety and mobility policies and plans including the *Lithgow Active Transport Plan* which outlines a comprehensive, community-endorsed pipeline of pedestrian, cycling and school-access upgrades across the LGA.
- *Rail timetable uplift modelling scenarios* (Donovan 2025).

In addition, Council's submission aligns with:

- *NSW Future Transport Strategy*.
- *NSW Net Zero Plan*.
- *NSW Regional Development & Transition Policy*.

- *Australian Government Net Zero 2050 Plan.*
- *National Skills Agreement.*
- *Jobs & Skills Australia Net Zero Workforce Roadmap.*
- *Infrastructure Australia's Priority List.*
- *National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy.*
- *OECD Regions in Industrial Transition and Territorial Approach to SDGs* which emphasise the need for integrated transport, workforce and land-use reforms in transitioning industrial regions.

Lithgow is a textbook example of a region requiring integrated transport, land use and transition planning. The *Planning for Labour Market Change in Lithgow* report (2025) provides the most authoritative assessment to date of the region's transition challenge. It finds:

- Lithgow is entering a multi-decade structural adjustment cycle;
- Between 1,500 and 1,800 workers in mining, energy generation and associated supply chains will require transition pathways, many involving commuting to new job locations or accessing new training hubs with reliable public transport;
- Transport connectivity, rail frequency, interchange performance, east-west corridor reliability, and multimodal access is identified as a primary enabler of labour mobility, comparable in importance to skills investments; and
- The report highlights Lithgow's engineering and trades workforce as a regional competitive advantage, however, notes that poor inter-regional transport limits the ability of firms to scale or recruit.

The NSW Government's *Regional Housing Taskforce (Findings and Recommendations Reports)* further reinforces Lithgow's strategic context:

- Housing pressures in regional NSW are increasingly influenced by workforce mobility, infrastructure sequencing, and the inability to activate zoned land due to servicing and access constraints;
- The Taskforce identifies infrastructure alignment and sequencing as a key barrier in the Central West and Orana region, requiring upfront planning and coordination across transport and utilities; and
- The *Recommendations Report* calls for place-based infrastructure compacts, strategic use of government land, and prioritisation of diverse and affordable housing supply, all of which is highly relevant to Lithgow's growth precincts at Marrangaroo, Bowenfels, Portland and Wallerawang.

These findings confirm that transport is not simply a mobility issue: it is a determinant of economic resilience, workforce transition, precinct activation, and housing feasibility in a deep-transition region such as Lithgow.

The 2024 NSW Government's Freight Policy Reform work provides an important statewide context. It identifies:

- A focus on rail precinct uplift and innovation in rail-based logistics; and

- The importance of regional intermodal precincts in supporting both productivity and regional economies experiencing transition.

This aligns directly with Lithgow's Pacific National Chifley Road precinct opportunity. The transport choices made in the final SRITP will determine whether Lithgow as a strategically located, economically diverse, and highly skilled community can fully realise the opportunities outlined in key NSW Government strategic planning and economic transition documents. These documents consistently identify connectivity as a determining factor in Lithgow's transition success.

Council acknowledges and supports several core directions within the draft SRITP, particularly its emphasis on:

- Regional movement and safety,
- Mode shift,
- Freight efficiency and supply-chain reliability,
- East-west corridor resilience, and
- Investment prioritisation based on safety and place.

These are consistent with the *NSW Movement and Place Framework*, the *Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy*, and with local planning initiatives including the *Lithgow Active Transport Plan* and *Lithgow CBD Revitalisation Action Plan*.

The SRITP's recognition of the need for safer rural road networks, and the importance of freight reliability on the Great Western Highway and Main West rail corridor are also strongly supported. These are consistent with resilience priorities identified in the *Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy*.

Council also welcomes the SRITP's acknowledgement that Lithgow's Main Street and rail line divide the town, and that TfNSW will work with Council on Marrangaroo interchange upgrade planning. These references are accurate and constructive.

### **3. Lithgow's Strategic Role in NSW**

#### **a. Gateway Between Regions**

Lithgow is the first regional city west of Sydney and the 'hinge' between Greater Sydney and the Central West, a role broadly acknowledged but underdeveloped in the SRITP's discussion of gateway towns.

No other location in the Plan's geography influences as many inter-regional outcomes simultaneously:

- All Main West rail freight movements traverse Lithgow, and the *Freight Policy Reform* papers all emphasise the need to optimise rail freight corridors and precincts.
- More than 47,000 workers live within one hour of Lithgow, forming a highly skilled engineering and trades labour pool whose mobility is constrained by transport access.
- Lithgow is the single convergence point for both the Great Western Highway and the Main West rail line. During natural disasters or closures elsewhere, Lithgow becomes the state's primary east-west continuity link.

- Lithgow is the gateway to the Gardens of Stone, Capertee Valley, and the Western Blue Mountains, all destinations prioritised in NSW tourism strategies.
- Lithgow is the interchange point for residents travelling to Western Sydney, universities in Bathurst and Sydney, and specialist employment across the metropolitan-regional interface.
- Lithgow’s median house price remains less than half of Sydney’s, positioning the city as a key housing affordability valve for Greater Sydney (DRNSW Investment Prospectus).

Lithgow’s performance as this inter-regional hinge directly affects the productivity and access outcomes sought in the SRITP. A transport plan that does not fully leverage Lithgow’s location risks undermining the efficiency of both the metropolitan and regional networks.

## **b. A Deep-Transition Region**

Lithgow is a textbook deep-transition region as defined by:

- the Australian Government’s *Net Zero Workforce and Skills Roadmap*,
- the OECD *Regions in Industrial Transition* framework, and
- findings from the *Planning for Labour Market Change in Lithgow* (June 2025) report.

The transition is characterised by:

- Closure of Mount Piper Power Station and declining coal mining employment
- A shift to advanced manufacturing, defence technologies and precision engineering, leveraging a workforce with one of the highest concentrations of engineering and trades skills in regional NSW;
- Emergence of a pumped hydro and renewable energy corridor, building on existing transmission and grid infrastructure;
- Opportunities for intermodal logistics and clean-energy supply chains;
- Circular-economy industries linked to mine rehabilitation, materials recovery and large industrial land-reuse;
- A growing tourism and outdoor recreation sector, centred on the internationally significant Gardens of Stone and the western escarpment; and
- Development of a modern skills ecosystem, anchored by the Lithgow Transformation Hub and regional TAFE and university partnerships.

All evidence indicates that transport connectivity is the determining factor in whether workers can shift into these emerging industries. The Labour Market Change Report identifies:

*“Transport access - particularly rail frequency, interchange performance and east–west corridor reliability - is a primary enabler of Lithgow’s labour mobility and transition success.”*

Transport connectivity determines how quickly workers can move into these new industries, which is a core requirement of a just economic transition.

The SRITP notes broad economic change across the Central West, however, does not yet acknowledge that Lithgow's transition is structural, multi-sectoral and economy-wide, not sector-specific. The SRITP must therefore not approach Lithgow as a 'typical' regional centre, but as a state-significant location and transition community where transport planning is inseparable from economic, skills and land-use planning.

#### **4. Core Submissions**

Lithgow City Council has identified a series of priority actions that must be incorporated into final SRITP to achieve the Plan's intended outcomes for safety, connectivity, and productivity, to align with the scale of economic transformation underway in Lithgow and the Central West, and to support a 'just transition':

- Improving access to jobs, health and education;
- Encouraging mode shift and safer, healthier mobility;
- Strengthening freight efficiency and supply-chain reliability;
- Supporting industry diversification and place-based planning; and
- Enhancing resilience on the east-west corridor .

##### **A. Identify the Pacific National (PN) Chifley Road Site as a Flagship Strategic Opportunity for NSW**

The SRITP references the need to leverage strategically located industrial assets but does not identify the PN precinct as one of the most significant brownfield rail assets in NSW:

- Directly connected to the Main Western Line (dual-gauge, electrified east of Lithgow);
- Adjacent to the Great Western Highway, enabling integrated road-rail logistics;
- Large enough to support intermodal freight, maintenance facilities, fleet conversion, advanced manufacturing and clean-energy logistics;
- Located 1 km from Lithgow Railway Station and the future Transport Interchange, supporting workforce access and multimodal integration; and
- Represents one of the few remaining brownfield rail-serviced industrial sites in NSW capable of accommodating growing defence, heavy engineering, renewable energy and circular-economy sectors.

The site is central to Lithgow's transition, as documented in the *Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy* and the *Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan*.

The site also uniquely achieves SRITP objectives to:

- Facilitate the repurposing of strategically located industrial land;
- Improve freight productivity;
- Support clean-energy and manufacturing pathways; and
- Integrate land use, jobs and transport.

Council recommends that the final SRITP include a new named strategic initiative under freight and place-based planning: "*Activate the Pacific National Chifley Road Precinct as a State-Significant Freight, Rail Technology and Transition Hub.*"

Required commitments:

- The PN site is to be formally recognised in the SRITP as a state-significant freight and employment precinct and a priority brownfield site for transition investment.
- Incorporate the PN site into freight network planning, long-term demand modelling, and the Main West corridor optimisation program.
- TfNSW to commit to:
  - Siding reactivation and signalling assessments,
  - Rail access and interface upgrades, and
  - Safe heavy-vehicle access designs from Chifley Road and the Great Western Highway.
- Co-deliver with Council a precinct structure plan supporting:
  - Intermodal operations,
  - Advanced manufacturing,
  - Defence and rail technology functions,
  - Clean-energy logistics,
  - Training and workforce transition pathways, and
  - Application to 'Future Made in Australia' funding for purchase.
- Recognise the precinct as a key re-employment location for Lithgow's skilled engineering, trades and energy workforce (1,500-1,800 transition-affected workers), consistent with the Planning for Labour Market Change (2025) findings.
- Ensure the PN site is embedded in:
  - The NSW Freight Policy Reform implementation actions, and
  - Regional Job Creation and Transition programs.
- Explicitly identify the PN site as a state-significant freight, rail technology and transition precinct.

## **B. Deliver a transformational uplift to the Western Rail timetable, centred on a 'High-Frequency Express Overlay' model**

Lithgow's future labour mobility, tertiary participation, visitation growth and transition into new industries cannot be achieved under the current Western Line timetable. Improved rail services are critical to:

- Enabling workers to move into new employment sectors (Labour Market Change Report 2025);
- Supporting access to specialist health and tertiary education in Greater Sydney and Bathurst;
- Enabling mode shift and reducing highway congestion as Marrangaroo and Wallerawang developments come online; and
- Supporting the activation of new employment precincts including the PN site
- Opening housing supply in Marrangaroo, Wallerawang and Bowenfels.

Donovan (2025) has modelled three service models and concludes that only one delivers the SRITP's stated outcomes. The modelling is included with this submission.

### **i. High-Frequency Express Overlay**

A two-tier timetable providing:  
**Express Tier**

- Targeted express services between Sydney, Parramatta, Penrith, Springwood, Katoomba and Lithgow,
- Reduced journey times and higher reliability, and
- Future integration with Western Sydney Airport and Parramatta.

#### **All-Stops Tier**

- Improved frequency for Blue Mountains stations,
- Predictable headways,
- Improved span of hours for early-shift and late-shift workers, and
- Better timetable harmonisation with Bathurst Bullet and coach connections to Orange, Cowra, Mudgee and the Western Plains

Modelling confirms that a High-Frequency Express Overlay is feasible under current rolling stock assumptions and would significantly improve reliability and mode share across the Central West-Sydney corridor, aligning with SRITP goals of:

- Delivering mode shift
- Improving access to jobs, health and education
- Supporting labour mobility across the Sydney-Lithgow-Bathurst-Orange corridor
- Supporting precinct activation and transition industries

#### **ii. Improved All-Stops with Shoulder Express**

This model provides incremental benefits and is useful as an interim uplift but insufficient to support economic transition.

- Does not support large-scale workforce transition,
- Does not materially improve labour mobility between Sydney, Lithgow, Bathurst or Orange,
- Insufficient travel-time savings to encourage mode shift, and
- Is not adequate to support transition precincts (PN site, Bowenfels, Marrangaroo, Portland).

#### **iii. Minimal Changes**

This model contradicts the SRITP's goals for mode shift, productivity and resilience, limits access to Greater Sydney labour markets, and undermines regional diversification.

Council strongly recommends TfNSW commitment to working with Lithgow City Council to further develop the High-Frequency Express Overlay model.

Required commitments:

- Establishment of a Joint TfNSW-Lithgow City Council Rail Uplift Working Group to refine service patterns, infrastructure pinch points, interchange improvements and express stopping strategies; and
- Commitment to timetable improvements within the SRITP 5-10 year window but potentially sooner.

### **C. Name and Support Priority Precincts Identified in LEEP**

The SRITP highlights the importance of precinct planning, integrated land use and transport, and industry diversification. Council welcomes the proposed focus on the South Bowenfels Health & Aged Care Precinct, which is correctly identified as a priority employment area in the Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP). This precinct will play a key role in:

- Responding to demographic change,
- Attracting and retaining the regional care workforce,
- Improving local access to essential health and ageing services, and
- Reducing avoidable travel to Greater Sydney.

However, the LEEP identifies four additional precincts that are central to Lithgow's economic transition and require targeted transport interventions. Their inclusion is essential if the SRITP is to align with NSW Government objectives for housing delivery, labour-market transition, industrial diversification, and place-based planning.

Council recommends these precincts be explicitly named, mapped and supported within the final SRITP:

1. Former Commonwealth Defence Manufacturing Site (33°29'20.50"S, 150° 8'29.48"E). The site is the most strategically located industrial redevelopment opportunity in Lithgow, supporting advanced manufacturing, defence supply chains and high-skill jobs. Supporting this precinct aligns with NSW and Federal priorities for defence, advanced manufacturing and regional job creation, and is consistent with the labour market transition analysis identifying Lithgow's engineering workforce as a competitive advantage.
2. Former NSW State Rail Yards / Pacific National Site (33°28'21.08"S, 150°10'42.39"E). This precinct should be escalated in the SRITP as one of the most significant brownfield rail assets in the region, as a unique brownfield asset for freight, rail technology, fleet conversion and clean-energy manufacturing. This precinct is already addressed in Council's submission but must also appear in SRITP precinct mapping and place-based planning frameworks.
3. Hermitage Site (33°28'32.67"S, 150° 9'8.47"E). The Hermitage site is a regionally significant economic opportunity that complements the internationally important Gardens of Stone and supports outdoor recreation, tourism and training sectors. Tourism and outdoor recreation are identified in NSW Government regional planning documents as major transition sectors expected to absorb future workforce change, but they rely heavily on transport access.
4. Lithgow CBD (33°28'51.66"S, 150° 9'25.02"E). Lithgow CBD is the administrative, civic, cultural and commercial centre of the LGA. Its performance directly influences investment confidence, retail viability and liveability. As the civic and commercial heart of the region, it requires accessibility, pedestrian safety and Main Street renewal consistent with the *CBD Revitalisation Plan* and *Active Transport Plan*. A functional, attractive CBD is essential to attracting workers, supporting retail and hospitality sectors, enabling new denser housing typologies, and delivering social cohesion during transition.

Council recommends that these precincts be explicitly named and supported in the final Plan as their success directly influences regional productivity, labour-force resilience and the spatial distribution of future housing and industry.

Council further recommends that TfNSW co-lead place-based transport planning for each precinct as part of SRITP implementation, ensuring transport access aligns with the NSW Government's housing, jobs, freight and transition priorities.

#### **D. Explicitly Reaffirm Commitment to Completing the Full Great Western Highway Upgrade Program, including the 'Central Section' Tunnel**

The draft SRITP correctly identifies the importance of east-west corridor resilience. Lithgow City Council strongly supports the full completion of the Great Western Highway Upgrade Program, including the Central Section tunnel, which is vital for the performance of the metropolitan-regional network.

The Great Western Highway is a nationally significant freight route, a critical visitor economy corridor to the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Central West, and the primary road connection supporting workforce, logistics and essential services between Greater Sydney and the Central West.

However, the draft SRITP does not explicitly recommit the NSW Government to delivering the Central Section which is the most transformative element of the program.

Council notes the evidence base:

- Traffic volumes in the Upper Blue Mountains reach approx. 20,000 vehicles/day resulting in recurrent congestion, delays and poor travel-time reliability;
- Heavy vehicles comprise 12-24% of flows with steep grades and tightly curved sections reducing safety and efficiency;
- Freight volumes exceed 18,000 tonnes/day with projections increasing under *NSW Freight Reform* analysis;
- \$4.5 billion has already been committed to the upgrade program by the NSW and Australian Governments; and
- 37% of total project benefits will not be realised without the Central Section tunnel.

Completion of the Central Section, including the tunnel, will reduce travel times, improve safety performance, and ensure redundancy during extreme weather and bushfire events. These improvements are essential to supporting long-term growth in the Central West and to maintaining Lithgow's function as the metropolitan-regional gateway.

Council recommends the inclusion of a clear statement reaffirming the NSW Government's commitment to delivering the full Great Western Highway Upgrade Program, including the Central Section tunnel, as a non-negotiable component of NSW's long-term east-west transport strategy.

One solution alone (rail) will not solve concerns relating to freight and commuter transport between Sydney and the Central West. The state of NSW requires an integrated transport solution that addresses bottlenecks across all transport modes if growth in the Central West is to be supported by projects like the Gardens of Stone, or the construction of the Western Sydney International Airport. This should include rail, as is heavily referenced within the SRITP, but also road in the form of the Great Western Highway Tunnel and ongoing safety upgrades to the Bells Line of Road.

Council notes its advocacy for a tunnel as the only effective means of resolving long-term road bottlenecks.

#### **E. Establish a Delivery Timeline for a Safety and Reliability Program for the Bells Line of Road**

Council acknowledges and supports the SRITP's reference to Bells Line of Road (BLOR) as a corridor requiring resilience and safety improvements. However, the draft Plan does not provide a staged, funded or time-bound program.

Given its strategic role as a primary alternative east-west route to the Great Western Highway, Bells Line of Road requires a committed and particularised delivery program in the final SRITP for:

- Overtaking lanes,
- Shoulder widening,
- Curve realignments,
- Intersection upgrades from Lithgow to Kurrajong Heights, and
- Reliability treatments to support north-west Sydney's growth.

Council's evidence, reinforced by neighbouring councils, identifies intersections, pinch points and high-risk tourist segments where upgrades will deliver immediate safety benefits and long-term reliability improvements.

#### **F. Support Sustainable Road Funding Models for Local Government**

Local Government owns and maintains more than 85% of the region's road network yet lacks revenue capacity to match the increasing burden of natural disasters, rising construction costs and evolving freight demand. Council therefore strongly supports the SRITP's commitment to sustainable road funding models.

Required commitments:

- Recognition of the structural inequity between metropolitan and regional councils,
- Development of an equitable allocation system reflecting unique LGA conditions,
- Recurrent funding programs such as the Regional Road and Transport Recovery Package, and
- Advocacy for DRFA reform to allow proactive resilience works.

Council welcomes opportunities to co-develop new road funding models that meet the needs of regional LGAs.

## **G. Remove Western Sydney University Reference**

Council requests removal of the reference to Western Sydney University providing services in Lithgow.

This is no longer accurate and highlights the urgent need for improved transport connections to Bathurst and Western Sydney to ensure equitable tertiary access for local residents.

## **H. Transport, Resilience and Disaster Recovery Alignment**

The SRITP should also acknowledge the evolving relationship between TfNSW and the *NSW Reconstruction Authority* in administering and advocating for improvements to the *Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements* (DRFA).

Current DRFA settings unintentionally embed vulnerability by funding 'like-for-like' replacement rather than resilience upgrades. Council supports TfNSW advocating for DRFA reform to reduce administrative burden, enable proactive mitigation works, and align disaster recovery with asset resilience objectives in the SRITP.

## **I. Heavy Vehicle Rest Stop Locations**

Council supports improvements to heavy-vehicle rest stop infrastructure to reduce fatigue-related incidents. However, rest stops must be sensitively located. For example, Little Hartley is an inappropriate location due to its environmental and heritage values.

Council recommends that the SRITP recognise the need to locate rest stops away from sensitive communities and landscapes, and prioritise more suitable locations such as Marrangaroo or Mount Lambie.

## **J. Electric Vehicle Infrastructure in Alignment with Local Strategies**

Council recognises the SRITP's commitment to supporting a strategic regional EV charging network. Lithgow's location positions it as a prime destination charging node.

Council has partnered with UTS to prepare a local EV charging strategy. Council requests that TfNSW align the strategic regional rollout with local EV strategies to maximise economic benefit, visitor dwell time, and network efficiency.

## **K. Prioritise the Upgrade of the Marrangaroo Interchange to Unlock Housing and Employment Lands**

The draft SRITP notes that TfNSW will work with Council on future interchange planning. Council welcomes this commitment and acknowledges its importance. While there is significant opportunity embedded within the bounds of the former Wallerawang Power Station, Lithgow requires a diversity of opportunity to unlock employment and housing opportunity if it is to rise to the challenge of diversifying its economy and weather the shocks of structural economic adjustment.

However, given Marrangaroo's critical role as the primary enabling infrastructure for Lithgow's largest planned housing releases and emerging employment

precincts at South Bowenfels, Wallerawang and Portland, the final SRITP must escalate the Marrangaroo Interchange as a priority upgrade.

Council's Land Suitability Analysis demonstrates unequivocally that strategic housing and employment lands cannot be delivered without:

- A redesigned interchange,
- Safe and efficient arterial access, and
- Improved public transport connectivity.

This represents a material constraint on regional housing supply, contradicting the *NSW Regional Housing Taskforce* emphasis on development-ready land and the *Central West and Orana Regional Plan 2041* designation of Lithgow as a growth location.

Required commitment:

- Identify Marrangaroo Interchange as a priority interchange requiring staged funding, design and delivery.

Unlocking Marrangaroo is essential to meeting NSW housing, transition and productivity goals.

## **L. Make Main Street and City Connectivity an Actionable Initiative**

The SRITP correctly identifies that regional centres like Lithgow are often divided by Main Streets and rail lines, consistent with Council's *Active Transport Plan* and *CBD Revitalisation Action Plan*.

Council further emphasises that historic state infrastructure has physically bisected Lithgow in two critical ways. The Great Western Rail Line limits access between the residential base and key sporting precincts, reducing opportunities for active lifestyles. Similarly, the Great Western Highway isolates Bowenfels from the remainder of the city, worsening entrenched social disadvantage.

Council supports efforts to improve pedestrian accessibility across state road and rail assets as a means to address local social inequity.

To deliver genuine Movement & Place outcomes, the SRITP should identify Lithgow as a candidate for town-centre reconnecting interventions that address:

- Pedestrian and cycling links across the rail corridor,
- Improved permeability between the CBD and station,
- First–last mile access improvements, and
- Opportunities to integrate PN site activation with Main Street renewal.

Explicitly addressing these issues will support integration with regional funding programs, and Council seeks explicit alignment between these local plans and regional funding pathways in the final SRITP.

Further, Council notes that while many regional Main Streets double as state roads and benefit from high traffic exposure, Lithgow's Main Street does not. This must not diminish its priority within the SRITP's regional Main Street revitalisation agenda. Main Streets that lack state-road status require equal or greater support to become vibrant economic and social hubs.

### **M. Formally Recognise the Central West as a “Deep-Transition Region” within the SRITP framework**

The draft SRITP references broad economic change but does not acknowledge the scale and type of transition facing the Central West.

National and international frameworks classify Lithgow and the Central West as deep-transition regions, including:

- Australian Government Net Zero Workforce and Skills Roadmap,
- *OECD Regions in Industrial Transition*,
- *OECD Territorial Approach to SDGs*,
- *Planning for Labour Market Change in Lithgow (2025)*, and
- *Lithgow Regional Economic Development Strategy (2018-22 & 2023 Update)*.

These frameworks describe deep-transition regions as areas where:

- Structural change affects the entire economy, not individual sectors.
- Energy, industry and workforce composition are simultaneously shifting, and
- Transport, housing, skills and land-use systems must be deliberately aligned.

The SRITP must identify transport as a primary enabler of transition.

Council requests that the final SRITP:

- Formally recognise the Central West, including Lithgow, as a deep-transition region;
- Embed deep-transition principles in the SRITP's implementation framework, ensuring transport actions align with economic diversification and workforce mobility needs;
- Include a statement confirming that transport planning will support transition industries, including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, tourism, transport, and defence supply chains; and
- Prioritise transport uplift in deep-transition precincts, where economic restructuring is most critical.

Lithgow City Council looks forward to collaborating with the NSW Government to refine the final SRITP so that it provides a strong platform for economic diversification, industry growth, freight productivity, housing supply, community wellbeing and long-term resilience across the Central West and Orana.

Yours sincerely

**Ross Gurney**  
GENERAL MANAGER