

Tourism

PROPOSED OUTCOME

The relevance of tourism to Lithgow's economy and the employment of young workers is enhanced by strategic investment and strong marketing initiatives that capitalize on the diversity and uniqueness of local natural, historical, and cultural tourism opportunities.

CONTEXT

Tourism's economic contribution is reflected in several sectors, including accommodation and food services, arts and recreation services, and retail trade.

Estimates indicate tourism contributes to **2% of total value** added in Lithgow (12th out of 20 industries) and provides **4% of total employment**. It supports around 204 mostly locally owned businesses in Lithgow and approximately 598,000 people visit the region annually.

Its diverse offerings range from camping facilities to luxury services, catering to tourists at facilities such as Black Gold Motel at Wallerawang, Emirates One&Only

Wolgan Valley, and Bubbletent.

Nearly two thirds of the region is national park or state forest, including Capertee (the second largest canyon in the world), Gardens of Stone, Marrangaroo, Turon and Wollemi National Parks.

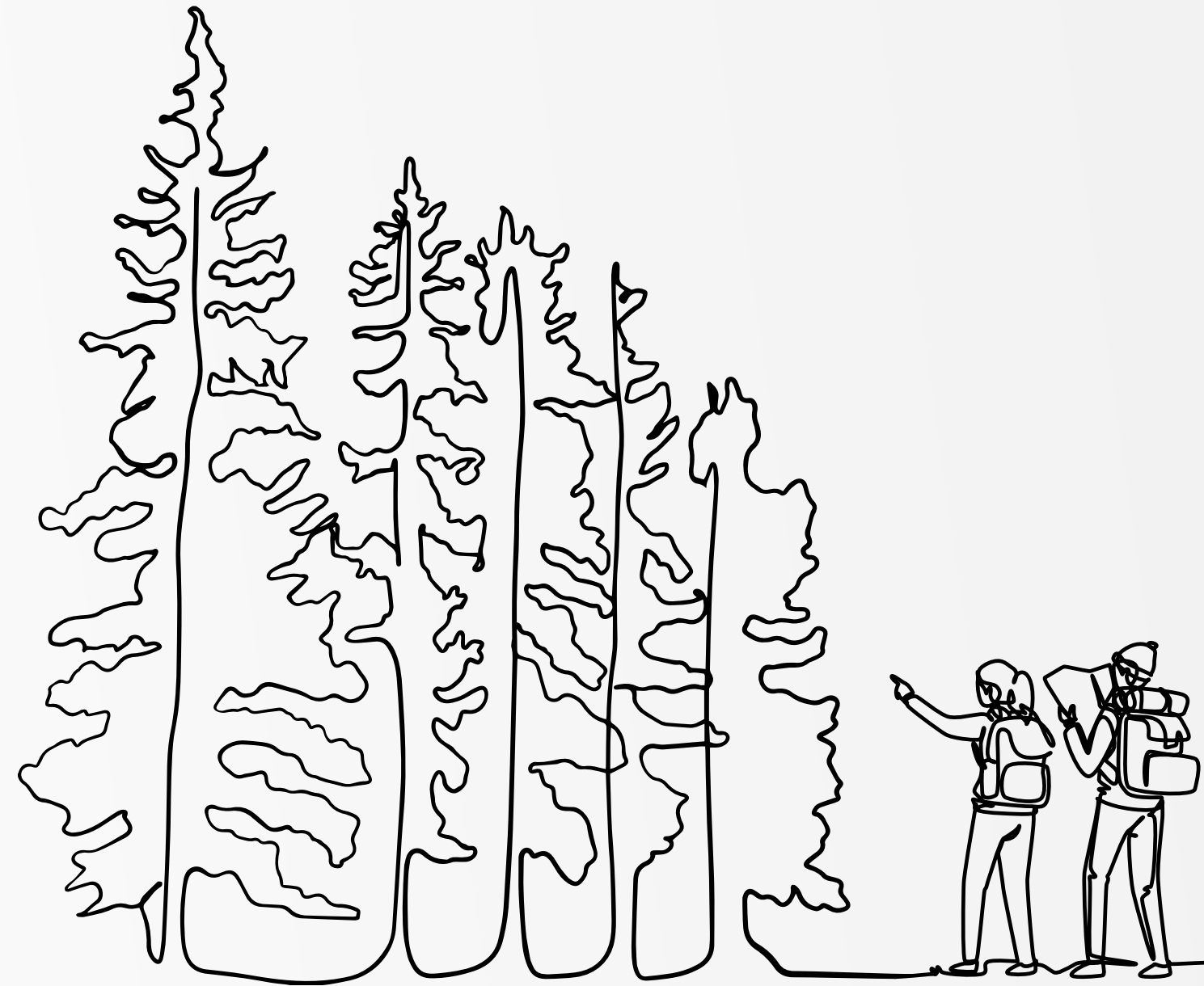
These natural assets offer outdoor activities ranging from rock climbing, bird watching, hiking, orienteering, camping and off road 4WD. This is complemented by the area's waterbodies, which offer water skiing, sailing, fishing, canoeing, swimming and dragon boat rides.

Located within the Wiradjuri Aboriginal Nation, with the Gundungurra Nation to the south and the Darug Nation to the east,

Lithgow has a rich aboriginal cultural heritage and unique tourist attractions including rock engravings and art, fish traps, carved trees, stone arrangements and spiritual sites, such as Maiyingu Marragu.

Lithgow has a growing arts and cultural movement and its long mining and industrial history is embodied in numerous tourist sites, such as The Foundations Portland and Blast Furnace.

These are increasingly featuring in a calendar of events, festivals and trails, such as the Lithgow Arts Trail, Portland Signs of Yesteryear, Ironfest, Lithglow, and Lithgow Halloween.



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GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism will likely play a more significant role in the future local economy. As the gateway between the Blue Mountains and the Central West, Lithgow can leverage its many regional endowments and favourable conditions for investment to develop an effective tourism strategy for coming decades.

The number of visitors to Lithgow is well below the neighbouring Blue Mountains, which receive around 2 million tourists a year – almost four times as many as Lithgow – and the cities of Bathurst and Orange, with approximately 1.2 million visits a year.

The opening of Western Sydney Airport in 2026 (100km from Lithgow) and improvements to the Great Western Highway are projected to significantly increase passenger traffic, alongside growing population trends in Sydney and the greater region, offering a demand opportunity for tourism.



The Foundations Portland



Destination of choice

Lithgow can position itself as a destination of choice for:

- **Eco-tourism**, capitalising on its natural assets for the growing and specialised naturalist market
- **Extreme sports** such as trail running and mountain biking, building on events such as the Glow Worm Trail running festival, the Lithgow Ridgy-Didge trail run, Portland Born to Run Festival and the Jetblack 24 Hour MTB in Lidsdale State Forest.
- **Regional tourism**, such as foodie trails linked to Bathurst, Orange and Mudgee.

Strategic investments and aggressive marketing will be required, potentially including joint approaches with the Blue Mountains and Central West-Orana. Growth in the tourism sector will also be dependent on:

- Placemaking initiatives to enhance the community and built environment and increase visitations
- Upgrading roads to key attractions, positioning Lithgow as the regional train interchange, and leveraging transport connections effectively, including for trail bike loops
- Improving and expanding trails, signage, mapping, bike paths, parklands, and parking at access points
- Improving regional services, such as water supply and Internet access in more remote areas
- Promotion of tourism investment opportunities, including to increase the offering of 4-5 stars accommodation, targeting high-income and international tourists
- Training the local workforce, particularly young people, and supporting Aboriginal operators, rangers and tour guides.



Tourism

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- In 2021, the NSW Government announced a plan to invest \$50 million to promote the expansion of the state conservation area around the **Gardens of Stone** and **Wollemi National Parks** and its further development as an adventure and ecotourism destination. Planning to attract 200,000 visitors a year, this project is expected to create around 200 jobs for the Lithgow area.
- Rocky Trail Destination is promoting the development of a **mountain bike tourism transformation** project in the region, in partnership with Lithgow City Council. The project will connect new and existing recreational and tourism assets in the LGA, including gravity trails at Hassans Walls and eco-tourism opportunities in the newly reserved Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area. The Lithgow MTB Transformation project will deliver crucial economic benefits for the region through increased and repeat visitation, overnight stays and spending, while also improving community wellbeing, liveability and quality of life.
- Lithgow City Council has commenced work on a **Destination Action Plan** to bring the Seven Valleys tourism brand to life by showcasing the region's unique endowments. The Seven Valleys Destination Action Plan will be a strategic roadmap to leverage state and federal government funding and identify partnership opportunities with key local stakeholders, such as tourism operators, local business chambers and government agencies.



Hassans Walls Lookout, Lithgow