

INTERIM ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Lithgow Emerging Economy Project

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1.0 LEEP Overview

The Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan (LEEP) Report sets out the priorities and activities most likely to place the Lithgow economy in the best possible position to meet the challenges of the future due to the pending closures and scale-down of coal mining and coal-fired power in the LGA.

The Report was built up from an assessment of the existing economy and likely future scenarios analysis. It included a detailed assessment of the relative strengths and opportunities available to the economy and included consultation with key local economic actors and the wider community— including industry, workforce unions, the knowledge sector and government at all levels.

A copy of the LEEP Report and supporting documents can be found at the LEEP Portal on Council’s website: <https://www.leep.lithgow.com/transition-plan/>

Many of the LEEP actions are recommended for immediate implementation. This is because it will take some seven to ten years for the community to adequately prepare for the anticipated economic disruption and to avoid on-going entrenched economic and social disadvantage.

In November 2023, Council adopted an Interim LEEP Action Plan to ensure that it was playing its part in the meaningful progress of the LEEP and to ensure that an interim but leading-practice governance structure was established to help guide the work of LEEP until the establishment of the State Government’s Central West Jobs and Investment Authority. The interim governance structure is aligned with the recommendations of LEEP and establishes a shared accountability framework which includes all levels of government, industry, workforce unions and knowledge providers.

A copy of the Interim LEEP Action Plan can also be found at the LEEP Portal on Council’s website: <https://www.leep.lithgow.com/transition-plan/>

Some of the themes we heard during consultation

'We need to find enough employment for people to really stay here.'

'We will also want to reinforce education and TAFE, maybe expand those opportunities for our education base.'

'We don't have available housing. That's concerning because we talk a lot about bringing jobs and industry, but we haven't got any vacant houses. So where are we going to put these people when they arrive?'

'The goal is to make the city more skilled.'

'What can we do to keep people in Lithgow and engaged within the community?'

'Economic transition opportunities for diversification. Different types of businesses here so we can get skilled labour.'

'Retaining our youth, not just the workplace but placemaking. Placemaking is part of it as well.'

'Upskilling the community to achieve a smarter, more resilient city.'

'The biggest risk for us as a community, is that as coal diminishes, where are those 300, 600, 800 jobs, that were there, that have tapered away? We're not ready for that. We need to diversify early.'

2.0 Engagement is core to LEEP

At the core of LEEP and any successful economic transitions management is collaboration. Although the State Government has primary responsibility for structural economic adjustments, it requires participation from actors and resources that reach beyond it, including:

- impacted businesses and unions working collaboratively on whole-of-family support and adjustment programs, and worker transfer schemes,
- schools, the VET sector, universities, industry and government collaborating on building the regional workforce's adaptive capacity, re-skilling and redeployment,
- government, at all levels, supporting new industry growth with well-planned and sequenced infrastructure, and
- industry, knowledge providers and government collaboratively building a region-wide culture of innovation, investment, business acceleration and scaling.

LEEP requires broad 'buy-in' from local actors who share its ownership and ensure that sufficient resources, capabilities, and skills are coming together to undertake shared actions. In the words of an often-quoted editorial about a town's future prosperity, it comes down to leadership:

'It's up to me' ... you do not have to be elected to be a leader. You have to care to decide to do something and to enlist like-minded people in the doing ... a spark of leadership by committed local people ...¹

Engagement is critical to LEEP because we want to enlist like-minded people and organisations to help shape a healthy, prosperous and sustainable future for Lithgow.

¹James Gannon (Ed.) (1989), *Des Moines Register*.

3.0 Our engagement principles

The guiding principles for LEEP engagement are set out in the following table.

Guiding Principles	
Timeliness	We will work to ensure that stakeholders are engaged at the earliest possible stage. We will keep stakeholders informed and involved throughout the process. Sufficient time will be provided for participation by interested or affected stakeholders.
Respect	We will foster an environment of respect for ideas and commentary by contributors. We will facilitate a constructive civil dialogue that seeks to understand stakeholders’ issues and aspirations, explore if and how differences can be addressed and needs met, and if this is not possible, clearly explain why.
Transparency	We will be honest and transparent in engagement processes. We will be clear on how inputs from the community will be considered and communicate how contributions have influenced decision-making.
Inclusiveness	We will seek to engage with the broadest section of those interested in or affected by the economic transition. We will adopt strategies to encourage and facilitate engagement with members of communities for whom barriers to participation exist (e.g. children, young people, Aboriginal people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, older people, etc).
Continual Improvement	We will undertake regular assessment of the effectiveness of the engagement and identify strengths and weaknesses in how efficiently and effectively the LEEP is being delivered. The outcomes of this assessment will then be used to refine the engagement plan to better serve stakeholders and the community.

4.0 Identifying stakeholders

Our engagement is focused on:

- ensuring that those directly and indirectly impacted by the Lithgow economic transition have a fair opportunity to engage and shape the LEEP process, and
- maximising collaboration with people and organisations who have interest and capacity to contribute to the LEEP tasks.

The economic transition over the next 10 to 15 years in the Lithgow region is likely to have a significant impact on everyone in our community. It is recognised, therefore, that everyone and every business in our community is a LEEP stakeholder.

We also know that transitions management is likely to be more successful where there is close cooperation between all levels of government, impacted industry and workforces, and knowledge providers.

4.1 Stakeholders by potential impact

Whilst all people and businesses in the Lithgow region are likely to be impacted by the transitions management process, individual impacts will differ.

Some stakeholders will be on the front line of impact. This includes both Centennial Coal and Energy Australia which are presently very closely aligned in the mining and use of thermal coal for power generation within the region. The Mining and Energy Union predominantly represents the directly impacted workers in these two industry sectors. These industries and the associated workforce union have an enormous stake in the outcome of transitions management.

Other businesses and workforces and emerging businesses and workforces will be impacted. These secondary impacts include supply chain businesses and workforces. Other businesses will also be directly impacted by the de-carbonisation of the economy. These impacts may be very significant for the

individual business but are unlikely to be of the same scale as the impact on the mines and power station and their workforces. There will be a need to work closely and collaboratively with these businesses and workforces but, typically, at a more technical and project delivery level.

Finally, there are those businesses and workers who will be impacted principally by the overall changes in regional demand and other tertiary impacts.

Those tertiary impacts will extend across the broader economy and community as patterns of education, healthcare, transport, housing and a range of other more distributed impacts and disruptions occur over time.

4.2 Stakeholders by resources and capacity

There are some organisations such as the Commonwealth and State governments, and Lithgow City Council which bring critical land-use planning, regulatory, financial, and other necessary resources to the transitions management task. Each of the Commonwealth and State governments and Lithgow City Council have committed to bring resources to the regional transition effort. These resources include the Net Zero Economy Authority (presently the Net Zero Economy Agency), the Central West Jobs and Investment Authority, and Interim Lithgow Jobs and Investment Committee each with their own levels of funding contribution. Other organisations, such as Western Sydney University, bring distinct and necessary research, access to research funding, and technical knowledge without which a leading practice transition is unlikely to occur. Western Sydney University, for example, is a recognised global leader in the impact it makes in the communities in which it operates.

Whilst Centennial Coal, Energy Australia and the Mining and Energy Union have already been identified as having a high degree of impact, it is also noted that, typically, these organisations bring enormous resources to the transitions as well. This includes very practical things, like joint commitments to no forced redundancies, worker transfer schemes, integrated family support, and other essential services which can vastly reduce the immediate incidence and impact of large-scale closures. Additionally, they typically hold valuable and

transferable resources such as water, land, and infrastructure some of which can be re-deployed in advance of being idled by closure.

There are a substantial number of secondary resources and capabilities which the transitions management task will need to draw upon. More typically, these are focused on individual tasks or aspects of the transitions management process rather than intersecting at every part of the process. This includes educators at every level and stage of learning. It includes other economic actors and workforces (including businesses not yet in the region), land developers, utility and infrastructure providers and others who will be relied upon in the regenerative and economic development aspects of the transitions management planning.

Finally, there will be, at every level, individuals and organisations working towards achieving the best possible outcome for the Lithgow region. Some of these people and organisations will be contributing simply by continuing to do what they do well and evolving and changing in response to market conditions.

5.0 Maximising LEEP engagement within our resource constraints

The LEEP implementation is in its early stages and not all critical LEEP actors are fully engaged at present in the transitions management task. Part of the engagement plan is focused on the early recruitment of LEEP actors and swiftly building the shared resources necessary for action. For this reason, our presently available resources are constrained.

We have considered the IAP2 Community Engagement Framework to assist us with best maximising resources to achieve LEEP engagement outcomes within those resource constraints.

In order to maximise stakeholder engagement, we are proposing the following interim stakeholder categories.



6.0 Our Engagement

We considered a range of engagement activities for each category. Particularly, we considered the nature of the transitions management impact on each category and the potential resources, capabilities and outcomes hoped to be achieved from people and organisations within each category.

6.1 LEEP Delivery Partners



Participants: Commonwealth Government (Net Zero Economy Agency)
State Government (DRNSW)
Lithgow City Council
Western Sydney University
The Mining and Energy Union
Centennial Coal
Energy Australia

Engagement: Empower

Co-design of activities and shared accountability for LEEP delivery outcomes. The form of the engagement is proposed to be monthly collaborative meetings and agreed protocols for swift consideration and ratification of agreed actions by the governing bodies of each delivery partner.

Additionally, it is anticipated that these stakeholders will engage in activities at a technical and project level.

Capacity support: Support may be offered to participants with recognised transitions management training – Graduate Certificate or higher.

6.2 LEEP Key Collaborators



Participants:	First Nations organisations DEWR DPIE TfNSW Other NSW Government Departments (project basis) Other workforce unions (project basis) Thales Ferrero Greenspot APA Foundations Portland business chambers individual businesses (project basis) economic progress or community associations (project basis) Notre Dame University Charles Sturt University (project basis) Other universities (project basis) NSW TAFE Mitchell Conservatorium of Music (project basis) Other VET providers (project basis) high schools primary schools (project basis) Lithgow Community Private Hospital
Engagement:	Collaborate Co-design of projects and programs. Shared accountability for delivery of projects and programs. Resource sharing.

It is anticipated that working groups will be established to 'cover-the-field' of shared LEEP activities ensuring that the design of projects and programs is sufficiently place-based and apt. Participants engaged on a project basis would help co-design those projects or programs in which they are involved but may not necessarily help constitute the membership of broader subject-matter LEEP working groups.

Until 30 June 2024, six such working groups are proposed:

- Workforce Planning
- STEAM and Innovation
- Hydrogen and Rail Fleet Renewable Electrification (Sunset)
- Metrics, Engagement and Communication
- Land-use Planning and Precincts

It is also intended to establish a mechanism for engagement with First Peoples, but the precise method of engagement will be the subject of significant co-design.

Proposed functions for three of the working groups have been set out in the [Schedule](#).

Capacity support: Support may be offered to participants with recognised transitions management short-course training – certificate or higher from a recognised university provider.

6.3 LEEP Actors



Participants: It is proposed that there are two streams to this engagement category: Self assessed and randomly identified.

The first stream is intended to encourage and recruit from the LEEP community, LEEP actors who either feel impacted and want to know something more about the transition management activities or who want to be more involved or engaged in the LEEP process itself. These may be any individual or organisation from across the community.

The second stream is to ensure that LEEP engages with the broadest section of those interested or affected by the economic transition as possible. This is to encourage and facilitate members from communities where barriers to participation exists (e.g. children, young people, Aboriginal people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, older people, etc). It is intended that this group be selected randomly and be representative of the broader demographic.

Engagement: Consult/Involve/Collaborate

It is intended, that the second stream of participants, form a community panel with the panel having access to the necessary LEEP facts and information to provide advice or recommendations to LEEP Delivery Partners, their governing bodies, or to the working groups or to participants in other aspects of the LEEP process.

It is intended that networking functions will be held each alternate month at which participants will hear from the LEEP team about their activities and proposed forward activities with an opportunity to provide feedback, help shape programs, and become even more involved.

Capacity support: Support may be offered to participants with recognised transitions management short-course training – day courses from a recognised university provider.

6.4 The LEEP Community



Participants: Everyone and every business in the region.

Engagement: Inform/Consult

This engagement Plan has been designed to allow anyone who feels impacted or wishes to learn more or become more involved the opportunity to become a LEEP Actor.

Nonetheless, there will be people in the community who do not wish to become involved. That may be because they do not feel that they will be impacted or feel that they do not have sufficient resources (including time) to be able to contribute to LEEP. Impact and interest may also change over time.

Nonetheless, it is likely that everyone in the community will be impacted by LEEP and we have a duty to keep them informed and provide to them an opportunity to give feedback.

It is intended to do this in several ways.

- A website information portal,
- Regular electronic newsletters,
- Social media posts,
- Annual reports,
- Initial information campaign (first six months only), and
- Periodic surveys.

It is likely that the wider community will also become further informed by aspects of the LEEP by the participation of

business, workforce unions, community groups, education providers and others in LEEP activities.

Capacity support: Information across multi-media environments will be factual and accessible and designed to build awareness of the transitions management task across the community.

7.0 Review and continual improvement

This Interim Engagement Plan will be reviewed following establishment of the Interim Governance Vehicle and each 12 months thereafter. The review will assess the effectiveness of the engagement with outcomes used to refine the engagement plan to better serve stakeholders and the community.

8.0 Schedule

The following is a list of the functions and proposed membership of Working groups.

PLANNING AND PRECINCTS WORKING GROUP

Membership

Council – Director of People and Places

Council – Director Infrastructure and Economy

Council – Strategic Land Use Planner

Council – Economics Specialist

WSU: Institute Society and Culture – Chair in Society and Culture

DPIE – Central West Regional Director

DRNSW, Mining and Geoscience – Director Industry Reform

Functions

The Working Group has the following functions.

1. To make recommendations for the prioritisation of initiatives which support alternative land uses of coal mining and coal- fired power generation sites in the Lithgow LGA.
2. To make recommendations in relation to land use planning, precinct planning, industry clusters and associated infrastructure and services which may contribute to the successful transition of the Lithgow LGA.
3. To collaborate to advance those actions in the LEEP and the LEEP Annual Action Plan tasked to the Working Group by the Lithgow Jobs and Investment Committee and, for 2023 – 2024, actions 9(c), 19, 20 and 21.

HYDROGEN AND RAIL RENEWABLE ELECTRIFICATION

Membership

Council – Director of Infrastructure and Economy

Council – Emerging Economy Coordinator

Council – Economics Specialist

WSU: School of Engineering, Design and Built Environment – Distinguished Professor

UTS – Senior Lecturer

Energy Australia – Strategy

Centennial Coal, -- Executive General Manager, Projects and Strategy

Greenspot – Development Manager

APA – Strategy

TfNSW

Functions

The Working Group has the following functions.

1. To collaborate to advance, where possible, a Lithgow hydrogen and rail fleet renewable electrification hub together with any attendant or associated alternative land use of a coal mining or coal-fired power generation site.
2. To collaborate to advance those actions in the LEEP Annual Action Plan tasked to the Working Group by the Lithgow Jobs and Investment Committee and, for 2023 – 2024, action 12.

STEAM AND INNOVATION

Membership

Council – Emerging Economy Coordinator
Council – Economics Specialist
DEWR – Regional Employment Facilitator
WSU – Campus Manager
Notre Dame – Campus Manager
TAFE – Lithgow Campus manager
Lithgow High School – Principal
La Salle Academy – Principal
Mitchell Conservatorium of Music – Lithgow-based Deputy Director

Others by recommendation of the Committee.

Functions

The Working Group has the following functions.

1. To make recommendations for the prioritisation of initiatives which support the re-deployment, re-skilling, and adaptive capacity of the workforce in the Lithgow LGA.
2. To collaborate to advance those actions in the LEEP Annual Action Plan tasked to the Working Group by the Lithgow Jobs and Investment Committee and, for 2023 – 2024, actions 14, 17, and 18.



Lithgow
CITY COUNCIL

Lithgow City Council

PO Box 19
Lithgow NSW 2790

Email

council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au

council.lithgow.com