• a world-class tourism and conservation reserve on Lithgow’s doorstep
• a win for workers, community and environment

Introduction to the Economic Report
Establishing Destination Pagoda is the ideal way to celebrate a return to normal after recent COVID-19 disruptions to travel, permitting travellers from Sydney to engage with nature that is bouncing back from last summer's fires.

Destination Pagoda, the visitor management plan for a 39,000 hectare Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, can attract 155,000 visitors in the first year, growing to 420,000 in ten years.

By then, a new reserve will generate an estimated $24.3 million per year for the Lithgow economy in dining, accommodation, retail and transport expenditure, and a total of $40.3 million through direct, industry and consumption effects, contributing to 258 local FTE jobs.

Lithgow, being on the edge the Gardens of Stone region and just 140 kilometres from Sydney, is ideally situated to benefit from promotion of this new reserve.

The economic analysis by Destination Research reveals that the area's iconic pagoda rock formations, Aboriginal rock art and unique flora...
has strong potential to attract an increasingly large segment of nature-based tourists to the Lithgow region. This benefit depends on the area being given effective protection and management as a State Conservation Area to optimise the visitor experience.

The Blue Mountains has seen a 76% increase in visitation in the past 10 years, putting pressures on local towns and communities. New iconic natural attractions with well-designed facilities near Lithgow, catering for a mix of different visitors, would add to existing day and overnight itineraries for this expanding, nature-based visitor market.

For full benefit to flow to the Lithgow Region, suitable facilities need to be in place to meet the requirements of defined visitor groups. These include roads, shelters, toilets, walking tracks, lookouts, signage and promotion.

Important Aboriginal heritage and historic features can also be protected and celebrated.
Investing in Lithgow’s future

Developing Destination Pagoda requires moderate government investment of an estimated $31.6 million over the first 10 years ($22.2 million in present value terms, assuming a 7% discount rate), and $800,000 annually for ongoing management.

This can be funded from a combination of sources:

- Centennial Coal’s swamp offset funds of up to $14 million currently (earmarked for conservation);
- transfer of state forest expenditures to NPWS;
- Commonwealth and NSW government funds to strengthen Lithgow’s regional economy.

“Turning Lithgow into a hub for visitors to the Blue Mountains region, bringing more people to the area that stay for longer periods of time.”

(Lithgow Community Plan 2030)