

I would like to register my support for the listing of the former Small Arms Factory in Lithgow as an item of State Significance.

This is the oldest munitions factory in Australia commencing operations in 1912 and served our nation through both World Wars.

Recently Lithgow City Council had to close public access to the former gun emplacements at Bowenfels (constructed during WW2 to protect the Small Arms Factory) due to safety concerns. This caused considerable distress within the community, however if the culturally significant elements of the Small Arms Factory are not retained – retention of these site cannot be justified.

Lithgow Council voted 6 – 3 against supporting the heritage listing of this site amid concerns that this would result in the loss of jobs. Nor is this first time that Lithgow Council has voted against heritage listing because of a perceived loss of jobs (October 2006).

It is not a perception that jobs could be lost but statements from the company itself: “The impact of heritage listing would most likely necessitate the consideration of sites other than Lithgow for the sovereign small arms capability,”

I note that the Conservation Management Plan submitted in 2002 has not been adopted. The site requires a CMP to identify culturally significant elements and to make recommendations on what items are to be retained and what can be demolished.

Without having this level of planning, it is difficult to understand the constraints on the adaptive reuse of the site. Claims by Thales that they won't be able to use the site or the cost of adaptive reuse are too high without detailed proposals is a blatant attempt to derail heritage listing process.

Given the management of the site, it appears unlikely that Thales will expand their operations at this site but are interested in developing it as a brown site for advanced manufacturing by others. However, to achieve this Thales would have to deal with significant site contamination issues. The site of the Thales workforce continues to hover around 150 employees regardless of the level of investment:

Lithgow Mercury - August 8, 2012 - **150** people employed

Lithgow Mercury - August 6, 2015 - \$100 million for new rifles for the armed forces. 10 new jobs to be added to the existing **130 jobs**.

Lithgow Mercury - May 3, 2018 – Employs more than **150** people a 35% increase over the past three years

Lithgow Mercury - September 4, 2023 - 150 employees

Lithgow Mercury - October 4, 2023 – Thales invest \$6.5 million at Lithgow

Lithgow Mercury - October 5, 2023 – **10** new staff working on Boxer 8 x 8 Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles

Lithgow Mercury - October 6, 2023 – Thales soon to have 56 full time jobs from a co-contribution of \$1,120,000 in state government funding. 140 jobs on site and the opportunity to create up to 56 additional full time.

I would also like to note that Lithgow LGA will be one of the first communities adversely impacted by the closure of coal mines and thermal power production. The Lithgow Emerging Economy Plan references the importance of the Thales site for advanced manufacturing in the defence sector. This plan was written with little to nil community engagement or alternate uses proposed for the site.

The community is already upset with truck movements with business established in former Small Arms Factory Buildings. No consultation has occurred to determine if the community are in support of the use of this site for advanced defence manufacturing. It is assumed by those promoting this concept that the community will accept whatever jobs are offered because of the changes that are coming. However, Lithgow has an aging community and needs younger individuals and families to relocate if the new jobs are to be filled. The listing of this site needs to be determined purely on its heritage significance and not on a commercial return for the owners.