



It spruced up its gritty industrial sites to create interactive living museums

fare can still get their steak, schnitty and bangers 'n' mash fix in other areas of the club.

Up the road, long-time resident Tania Aussel is luring tourists off the highway to Salud, located in The Lithgow Tin Shed, with free-range regional food. She has plans to further refine the menu and open a produce market out back. Lithgow is unavoidable, says Tania, because it sits at the confluence of five major highways - the Bells Line of Road from the Hawkesbury, the Great Western Highway from the Blue Mountains, the Mid Western Highway from Canberra, the Great Western Highway from Bathurst and the Castlereagh Highway from Mudgee.

Another newbie is Blue Mountains Herbal Co, offering trendy foodie options including organic sourdough and kombucha fermented tea. Both eateries have kids' menus featuring simplified versions of adult meals - so don't expect to find chicken nuggets and fries there.

Lithgow isn't turning its back on its grungy past; it's giving it a spit polish and embracing it. Even the Visitor Information Centre has undergone a makeover, with carefully-selected historic items sourced as furniture and decorations.

Lithgow Valley's first European settlers arrived in 1824, followed by the western railway line in 1869. Vast coal reserves were unlocked and industries grew around it: steel, copper smelting, breweries, brickworks, pipe and pottery works, woollen mills, meat refrigeration, shale mining and power plants. As those industries wound down, Lithgow faced a looming employment and economic crisis and was at a crossroads in its sense of place and identity.

With council spearheading, business support and community encouragement, Lithgow began building a tourism industry on the foundations of its industrial heritage and the natural magnificence that surrounds it, which can be viewed best from vantage points like Hassans Walls and Pearsons lookouts.

Firstly, it spruced up its gritty industrial sites to create interactive living museums. Visitors today can picnic on the lawns around the carcass of Australia's first inland heavy