

# Electorate News

incorporating Gunnedah,  
Liverpool Plains and Walcha Shire  
plus Tamworth Regional Council

A Newsletter from **PETER DRAPER MP**

Independent Member for Tamworth



JUNE 2004

13 FITZROY STREET - PO BOX 1740 TAMWORTH NSW 2340 • PHONE: (02) 6766 1422 • FAX: (02) 6766 6765 • EMAIL: tamworth@parliament.nsw.gov.au

## Finding the Balance

The NSW super ministry for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources held the promise of a new deal for landholders and country business people.

Issues such as the Native Vegetation Act (NVA) and the assessment of the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion are of enormous concern in our communities.

I have called on the Minister, Craig Knowles, to fast track the assessment of the Bioregion as it is putting local industry and jobs at risk. There needs to be a guarantee of supply of white cypress from the Pilliga to ensure that operations such as Gunnedah Timbers and Bingara Cypress Pine can continue to provide jobs for more than 50 people in the region.

Brian Tomalin, a member of the NSW Farmers and I also held talks with the Minister's senior advisors regarding some of the more contentious issues in the new NVA regulations. There needs to be some compromise between the farmers need to make a living and sensible environmental outcomes for this bill to succeed. ■



NSW Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Craig Knowles and Peter Draper discuss the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion assessment.

## Breakthrough for Bendemeer



Peter Draper with parents and students. Back row: Jo Osborne, Debbie Mathews, Annah Barlow, Michelle Barlow, Nathan Barlow. Front row: Joshua Mathews, Courtney Barlow, Danile Barlow, Felicity Mathews, Emily Reid, Aaron Barlow.

It was a great result for Bendemeer to retain its two teachers at the Public School and also to receive a further \$185,000 towards improving the town's water supply.

I raised these issues several times with the Ministers concerned in Parliament and welcome this very positive outcome.

There is still too little understanding in Macquarie Street about the impact of drought and the way it affects country communities.

Losing students at the local school because their parents have to seek temporary work elsewhere and the lack of a safe, healthy, drinkable water supply can be testing elements of the drought scenario.

But to see communities penalised at such a difficult time is wrong and I am pleased to see that the government has responded to community pressure by

contributing the funds for a new water filtration plant and to have a roof installed over the new facility.

The Bendemeer School has a reprieve and will keep its two teachers until the end of the year. I would hope that by that time the promised review of the school staffing formula, which gained bi-partisan support in Parliament, will recommend a more flexible system than the current "magic numbers" scheme which disadvantages smaller communities. ■

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Topdale Road Inspection
- Health Service merger must not proceed
- Walcha MPS Commitment

# Minister inspects Topdale Road



*Peter Draper and NSW Roads Minister Carl Scully hear about the condition of Topdale Road from local resident Vicki Reynolds.*

NSW Roads Minister Carl Scully made a special trip to our region to inspect Topdale Road near Niangala, which has been the site of four rollover accidents this year.

The road is not only a traffic hazard to the school bus, logging transport drivers and motorists, it poses a significant dust nuisance to residents. I invited Mr Scully to experience first hand the choking dust and poor visibility along a 11km section which is the

only portion between Tamworth and Gloucester which remains unsealed.

Having accepted a 930-signature petition, Mr Scully said it was obvious that the Government needed to assist Walcha Shire Council in providing funds to fix the road. It was an encouraging result and I shall maintain the pressure to make sure the project goes ahead as soon as possible. ■

## Progress on Equine Centre

The announcement of a 12-member board for the Australian Equine and Livestock Centre in April was a welcome development toward the realisation of this project.

As a board member, I'm looking forward to working with the well placed group of industry, business and community leaders to carry the \$9 million centre to the next stage. NSW Premier Bob Carr travelled to Tamworth to announce the board and confirm the State Government's pledge of \$3.35 million regardless of a Federal Government contribution.

The Tamworth Regional Council has backed the project through in-kind donations valued at \$1.6 million and three major horse associations have pledged to contribute an initial \$750,000. The challenge now is for the board to ensure this exciting project becomes a reality. ■



*NSW Premier Bob Carr and Peter Draper*

# New strategies put to Police Minister

Provision of a mobile police station in Tamworth would greatly assist police to respond more quickly to incidents of riotous and anti-social behaviour such as that which occurred in Garden Street earlier in the year.

I raised this issue with the Minister for Police, John Watkins when he visited the area as well as the provision of improved working conditions for police in Gunnedah and support for the Giyaali Community Group (GCG).

Oxley Local Area Commander, Spt Tony Jefferson is keen to see the mobile police station in Tamworth and he is the main force driving the GCG initiative.



*Tamworth PCYC president Ron Carr, Peter Draper, Minister John Watkins and Police Senior Constable Dale Duncan.*

When Spt Jefferson was stationed in Walgett a similar group was formed and achieved successful outcomes. The group consisting of community members

including police, teachers, doctors and other health professionals, Aboriginal elders and other respected representatives.

Although the Gunnedah Police Station has had a most welcome \$500,000 upgrade there is still much more to be done to bring it up to the standard required for 24 hour policing. Numbers of officers will increase from 21 to 28 and this will put enormous pressure on the current facilities.

The upgrade of the custody management area in the station is complete, however, the focus must now be on the customer service area which needs an equivalent injection of funding to bring it to an acceptable standard. ■

## GRANT FUNDING

Recent grants include

- \$20,000 for Gunnedah's Cultural Precinct.
- \$125,000 towards the fit out of the new Tamworth City Gallery and Library.
- \$5,000 for the Country Music Association of Australia towards the Post Graduate College of Country Music in Tamworth.
- \$15,000 to upgrade Bendemeer Hall's stage facilities.
- \$23,000 to eleven local primary and high schools to purchase musical instruments.
- \$193,181 to eight local primary and high schools to boost numeracy and literacy programs.
- \$5,000 to employ a supervisor at the Werris Creek Road crossing at Hillvue School.
- Flashing lights at the Hillvue, Oxley Vale and Westdale public school zones.
- \$10,000 to renovate Hanging Rock Hall.
- \$5,000 for Dungowan Rural Fire Service equipment.
- \$21,000 for Tamworth Meals on Wheels.
- \$16,112 to Curlewis Water Supply.
- \$50,000 for the Redbank Rest Area Gunnedah.
- \$48,210 for Sport and Recreation projects in Gunnedah, Attunga & Tamworth.
- 12 athletes share \$10,400 under the 2004 Country Athletes Scheme.



Photo courtesy of the Northern Daily Leader.

Peter Draper reveals how the Gunnedah Ambulance Station should have looked after the NSW Government commissioned an architect to draw up plans in 1974.

## Gunnedah Ambulance Station

The deplorable state of Gunnedah's Ambulance Station was revealed during a tour of the facility with Gunnedah Mayor Gae Swain and General Manager Max Kershaw.

I was astounded to see two \$100,000 Mercedes Benz Ambulance vans parked out in the weather due to the station's garage clearance being too low.

The building itself is dated and in a poor state of repair, and there is inadequate heating and cooling for the seven full time Ambulance officers who use the building as a work space.

I raised the issue in Parliament and have called on the NSW Health Minister Morris Iemma to commit funding to either build a new station on the Gunnedah Hospital grounds or significantly upgrade the building.

I am critical of the fact the Government allowed the station to fall into such a state of disrepair with the most recent plans for a new facility commissioned back in 1974.

The Minister has agreed to undertake a detailed investigation of the station's condition and will report the outcome in due course. ■

## Health Service merger must not proceed

Tamworth and the north and north west region would be severely disadvantaged through any merger of the New England and Hunter Area Health Services. I am working with Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay to oppose this plan. It would result in a loss of local autonomy as the Tamworth Health Service would inevitably lose staff and resources.

There is no reason why existing strategic alliances between the two areas should not continue and be expanded. But a full on amalgamation is not in our interests and many of our communities would suffer as a result.

Tamworth Base Hospital is building up its services and was assisted by a grant of \$6 million from the State Government earlier this year. The funding provided for a Cardiac Catheterisation Laboratory (CCL), extensions and upgrades to the Banksia Mental Health Unit, Medical Staff Accommodation and the refurbishment of the Clinical Facility.

The CCL is the first outside a metropolitan area and has already saved many patients from having to travel to Sydney or Newcastle for procedures. This illustrates the need for us to have more local services, not less. ■



## Award for Kimberly

I recently presented Oxley High School student Kimberly Resch with a NSW Government Representative Certificate for representing the state in high jump at the National Athletic Championships in Darwin. Well done Kimberly. ■

After serving for 12 months as Member for Tamworth, it's pleasing to see our community's issues are again being taken seriously in Macquarie Street. I have focussed on working with the community to raise its concerns, issues and representations directly with the government through the relevant Ministers and their departments and we are achieving some positive results.

As an Independent with no political party affiliations I find Minister's doors are open to me and many have made it their business to either come personally to our region or send their advisors to see for themselves what needs to be done. This is invaluable and the results speak for themselves. However, there is always a long list of projects and priorities in our region which need to be addressed.

One of the highlights of the year was the visit by the Premier, Bob Carr to confirm untied financial support and to announce the management Board for the National Equine and Livestock Centre. He also announced grants for the Tamworth softball complex and Meals on Wheels. Roads Minister, Carl Scully has inspected trouble spots on Manilla Road in Tamworth and Topdale Road near Niangala and as a result I am now much more confident that we will receive good results on both of those important projects.

Recently the Regional Development Minister David Campbell was in Tamworth to open the \$5million Blue Stripe Meats Plant and to announce financial backing for two Tamworth companies in their bids to expand.

I was pleased to work with the Walcha Council and the local community to press the government for increased funding and a guaranteed completion date for the Walcha Multi Purpose Service. Other strong results for the region have been the completion of the first \$500,000 phase of the Gunnedah Police Station renovation and the resolution of Bendemeer's teacher and water supply crises.

I'd like to thank the community for its support in bringing these issues to the fore. Although we have achieved some good results there is much more to be done. Improving conditions for small to medium business through WorkCover reform, retaining administration in Tamworth for the New England Area Health Service and working to retrieve Werris Creek from the amalgamation abyss is just the beginning. I look forward to taking these and other issues directly to the government and the relevant Ministers.

*Peter Draper*

## Boost for local business

I was pleased to see NSW Minister for Regional Development David Campbell in Tamworth recently to officially open the \$5 million Blue Stripe Meats plant in Taminda.

This innovative beef fabricating and packaging facility, which will eventually create 60 jobs, is a credit to the vision and business acumen of Peter Howarth and his business partners Greg Chappell and Toby Scales.



*Tamworth Regional Council Administrator James Treloar, Blue Stripe Meats managing director Peter Howarth, NSW Minister for Regional Development David Campbell and Peter Draper MP at the official opening of Blue Stripe Meats in Taminda.*

Blue Stripe Meats is one of several local businesses getting a head start through the State Government's Regional Business Development Scheme.

Paving company Australian Pavement Management Systems which is undertaking a \$2.1 million expansion to create 30 new jobs and the \$2.5 million pasta manufacturing plant Bellata Gold were also given assistance under the scheme. ■

## Walcha MPS

NSW Health Minister Morris Iemma has given the Walcha community a guarantee its long awaited Multi Purpose Service will be constructed by the end of 2006.

I arranged a delegation from Walcha Shire Council including Mayor, Cr Bill Heazlett, General Manager Jack O'Hara and Environmental Services Director Gerry Moran, to discuss the issue with the Minister. Mr Iemma not only committed to getting the project up and running as soon as possible, he agreed to contribute an additional \$900,000 toward the \$8.9million construction cost.

It was a fantastic result and I look forward to inviting the Minister to open the new facility which will house eight acute beds, one special care, 18 aged care beds, an emergency department, pathology, physiotherapy, imaging and x-ray and dental health facilities. ■

## Education is a major priority

One of the big problems facing our community is the looming shortage of teachers and the continual restructuring of the public education system. There are real concerns that these so called reforms will lead to further cuts down the track.

We cannot expect to attract and retain teachers if their workload keeps being increased as general support staff numbers diminish. The recently announced results of the TAFE restructure in our region is an example of the government's lack of commitment to this important sector.

In my view the government should be expanding vocational education and training in regional areas to build up the skills base and to provide young people with the opportunity to find jobs. ■

**If you need help on any State matter please phone my office on (02) 6766 1422 or email [tamworth@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:tamworth@parliament.nsw.gov.au)**