

# tamworth and district NEWS

a Newsletter from **PETER DRAPER MP**

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Independent Member for Tamworth



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

## Road upgrades improve



Minister for Roads Carl Scully (right) and Peter Draper with Nundle Shire Councillors Herb Wood and Jann Hahn at Peel River Bridge.

A grant of \$212,000 from the State Government has ensured the widening of the eastern side of Manilla Road and provided dedicated right wing bays into O'Connell and Bligh Streets.

I have put a submission to Roads Minister Carl Scully along with a petition from almost 300 road users for an upgrade of Manilla Road. This has been strongly supported by Tamworth City Council. The Minister has inspected the road and saw for himself the need for this work and I am confident we will have a successful outcome.

The state of the 13km gravel stretch on Topdale Road is also a concern which I have raised with Minister Scully. Walcha Shire Council, McPherson's Bus Company and members of the community have made strong representations to have this road upgraded and I have invited Mr Scully to come to our area for an inspection tour and to meet with Council and concerned community businesses and individuals.

A further \$250,000 was allocated by the State Government for the reconstruction of the roundabout at the intersection of the Oxley and Kamilaroi Highways at Gunnedah, a notorious black spot which has been welcomed by the Gunnedah community and road users.

During his visit in May the Minister also inspected the Peel River Bridge at Nundle which is in a very poor state and needs to be replaced before the McVicar Softwood Processing Facility starts operating in Quirindi. By having this bridge replaced we can boost local employment and create economic benefits for the region.

It was good news that 14 timber bridges in the Tamworth, Parry, Walcha and Nundle Council regions will be replaced as part of the \$210 million Regional Roads Timber Bridge Program. Work is expected to start next year. Our road network is of vital importance to the local community and it is invaluable to have had a visit from the Minister to see for himself the work that needs to be addressed in both the short and long term. ■

## Funding for Lake Keepit

During her visit to Tamworth last month, Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier Cherie Burton announced a grant of \$189,000 for Lake Keepit. This grant will go a long way towards maintaining the area and rehabilitating it after the devastation of the drought. Congratulations to the Park staff, President Barbara Hyslop and members of the Lake Keepit State Park Trust and the local community for their work on this important project. ■

Firstly I would like to thank the people of the Tamworth electorate for their support for me as their new Independent member. As I pledged in my maiden speech I am working hard at putting our region back onto the government agenda after a period of negligible representation. The increasing number of visits we have received from Ministers and the meeting of the Cabinet in Tamworth is witness to the success of this strategy.

I have a strong bond with fellow country Independents Richard Torbay, Tony McGrane and Rob Oakeshott and we meet regularly during parliamentary sessions on issues of common interest. I am also working closely with Federal Independent Tony Windsor, who has a great depth of knowledge about local issues. Our Independent network with government ministers and senior advisors is excellent and through this I have been able to put representations of the people of Tamworth and district to the open door which has been established.

We have already seen success in increased road funding, police resources and support for a new regional airline service connecting Gunnedah to Sydney, and in record funding for the New England Area Health Service in this year's budget.

There has been a change of heart on issues such as water sharing, native vegetation and farmers property rights. I am pleased to see that Minister Craig Knowles at the head of the new super ministry is committed to meaningful consultation with landholders.

The number of representations to my office has rapidly increased. I welcome these and am working very hard to ensure Tamworth and district receive the attention they deserve from government. ■

Peter Draper

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## Focus on Education



School captains James Fisher and Jasmine Patterson and Werris Creek Public School Principal Ian Lobsey welcome Peter Draper to the school.

I am pleased that the Government responded so swiftly to concerns I raised on behalf of the P&C over the need for improvements to the Tamworth West Public School. The School has been in

limbo during the long Shopping World negotiations and the need to replace a sagging verandah, install additional power points in classrooms and the office, treatment of white ant infestation and

providing heaters in classrooms are all good short term measures. However, I am working closely with the Minister for Education Andrew Refshauge and the school community to ensure that long term plans for an upgrade of the school are progressed.

I am also negotiating closely with the Government on the need for outdoor and water heating facilities for Niangala School and for improved maintenance work in many other excellent public schools in our region. School visits are always enjoyable and I appreciate the warm welcome I received at Oxley Vale and Werris Creek Schools. The opportunity to welcome school captains from our region to Parliament House and to participate in Book Week at the William Cowper Anglican School have also been highlights for me this year.

As a strong supporter of our education system I have lobbied on behalf of teachers for a well deserved salary increase and for reconsideration of the current child protection legislation which is over bureaucratic and is not achieving good outcomes for teachers or students. ■

## Alcohol Summit

All who contributed to the Alcohol Summit in State Parliament are hoping that it will achieve greater awareness of the extent of alcohol abuse and the need for effective programs to reduce it, particularly in young people.

The statistics from the submission I presented to the Summit from New England Area Health, Gunnedah Shire Council, Alcoholics Anonymous, AlAnon Family Groups, the Minister's Fraternal, Tamworth services clubs, liquor licensees and local residents were sobering indeed.

This report highlights the extent of underage drinking and attitudes which display a lack of awareness of the harm which comes from irresponsible alcohol consumption. Many useful programs were discussed at the Summit to reduce the problem and the submission from our region has given all the groups concerned very useful information on which to base their strategies. ■



Brigadier Philip McNamara with Peter Draper at the commissioning of a new SES rescue vehicle for Walcha.

## Walcha SES

The essential work carried out by the Walcha State Emergency Service received a boost with the commissioning of a new \$90,000 vehicle by Brigadier Philip McNamara in July.

The vehicle is equipped with the latest technology to assist the hard working volunteers at Walcha with their essential work in rescue operations and fighting floods and bushfires.

Minister for Emergency Services Tony Kelly announced \$4000 in funding to provide essential technology to the Tamworth's SES Unit Headquarters and the Oxley Rural Fire Service during his recent tour of the facilities. The funding has secured two hand held radios and a new electronic whiteboard and printer which will assist in rescue operation.

It is pleasing to see that these dedicated groups of volunteers are properly equipped for their dangerous work on behalf of the community. ■

# Independent spirit

At the Independents Forum which I hosted in Tamworth we discussed ways we can work closely together on regional issues such as better health services, the education restructure, insurance premiums, higher education funding, land and water management and regional development.

It gave the State Independents Richard Torbay (Northern Tablelands) Tony McGrane (Dubbo) Rob Oakeshott (Port Macquarie) and myself the opportunity to raise Federal matters with Tony Windsor (New England).

The Independents have earned respect in Parliament for their persistence in representing their communities and their ability to work with the government of the day to negotiate outcomes. We meet regularly over issues of mutual concern to our communities. ■



Tony Windsor, Robert Oakeshott, Peter Draper, Richard Torbay and Tony McGrane at the Independents Forum in Tamworth.

# ACE system should not be threatened

With Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay I addressed a rally on behalf of the Adult and Community Education (ACE) network in our region which could lose funding and its autonomy as part of the current education review.

ACE does splendid work in providing adult literacy and numeracy, workplace training and upgrading skills programs and providing computer facilities particularly in smaller communities.

Students pay for the courses and tutors and the government should continue to



Aboriginal Liaison Officer Trish Kearton, Coledale Community Centre co-ordinator Barbara Daly and Peter Draper welcome NSW Governor Marie Bashir.

# Governor visits Coledale

It was a pleasure to host the visit of NSW Governor Marie Bashir to the Coledale Community Centre where she met members of staff and the community. Her Excellency commented on the great sense of pride in the community she observed during her visit and was impressed with both the facilities and the enthusiasm of the people she met.

I have been working closely with the Coledale Centre community and recently presented a cheque for \$1,883 from the State Government to conduct art

workshops and murals. It will give young people in particular the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills through a very positive program.

The Centre also participated in NAIDOC Week in our region which celebrates the contribution of the indigenous community. I spoke in State Parliament about the impressive events which had been organised in our region including the flag raising ceremonies, the photographic exhibition, street parade and fun day. ■

# Speaking for Gunnedah youth

Gunnedah teenager Adam Marshall was one of the 50 young people who attended the Australian National Youth Roundtable in Canberra last month. After the Roundtable met for the first time this year, Adam undertook two research projects on mental health issues to present to Federal Minister's at the September meeting.

Many young people in rural areas suffer from depression and anxiety and it is most encouraging to see that their concerns can be taken directly to Canberra by one of their peers. Congratulations to Adam for his fine contribution. ■



Richard Torbay MP, Prue Prince and Jan Hatton (ACE Walcha) and Peter Draper at the rally in Tamworth.

## Air service returns to Gunnedah



*Gunnedah Mayor Cr Gae Swain, Peter Draper, Richard Torbay, Minister Michael Costa and Inverell Mayor Cr Barry Johnston.*

The protracted negotiations to establish a daily air service from Inverell and Gunnedah to Sydney have been successful. Earlier this year the Gunnedah Mayor Gae Swain, General Manager Max Kershaw and I travelled to Armidale for a meeting with Transport Minister Michael Costa to argue in favour of this new air service, along with Inverell Mayor Barry Johnston.

I would urge the local community to make use of this air service to retain its viability. There is no doubt that we need

## Concerns over GM Canola

Many people in our area have expressed their concerns to me over the commercial release by the Commonwealth Government of Bayer's hybrid canola.

The Commonwealth has been too hasty in making this decision as we do not know the full impact this release will have. More than 200 local farmers are worried about the impact it will have on traditional crops and the potential adverse affect it will have on producers.

Scientists are still divided about genetically modified crops and I support the concept of a three year moratorium to give more time for assessment. Rushing in like this could create untold damage which it would be very difficult to reverse.■

more competition on local air routes to bring ticket prices down and make air travel accessible to more people. Dubbo currently has three airlines competing on their route to Sydney and the community is reaping the benefit. I am working with local community leaders to encourage more airlines to operate from Tamworth in the future.■

## Pokies tax

I have joined my fellow Independents in strongly opposing the proposed increase in Poker Machine tax which is in reality a tax on the social infrastructure in the regions.

I spoke at the recent rally at Inverell on behalf of registered clubs in the northern part of the State which highlighted the enormous extent of the sponsorship to local sporting, social and community groups which would be at risk if this iniquitous tax were imposed.

The club movement has been a success in regional areas because the clubs are community owned and operated and provide jobs and contracts for local suppliers as well as reasonably priced facilities and entertainment for the community.

Through this new tax many clubs which are on the edge would go to the wall and others would have to drastically reduce their sponsorship of community organisations.

It is an ill advised impost and should not go ahead.■



*Peter Draper with Target District Manager Tanya Addison and Mark Edmonds, General Manager - visual merchandising and development.*

## Target store opens for business

Tamworth suffered a blow with the closure of Grace Bros after 50 years of local trading. Despite a strong campaign in which I was involved it was impossible to persuade Coles Myer to keep the doors open. However, the opening of the new

Target store last month after a \$5million upgrade has provided jobs for 136 employees and a strong retail service for the Tamworth community. I wish the new Target Manager Graeme Collett and his staff well at the beginning of this new operation.■

## Help for problem gamblers

Centacare New England North West has been allocated \$215,133 over three years to assist people with gambling problems. The funding from the Casino Benefit fund

will provide assessment strategies and therapeutic services for problem gamblers and their families.■