

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Regional development to suffer under centralisation of small business services

June 8 2004

The NSW Government's plan to centralise the region's business enterprise centres in Armidale is an unworkable arrangement that will hinder small business development across the New England and North West according to Member for Tamworth Peter Draper.

In a bid "to concentrate funds in high-powered super centres" the Government will cut \$300,000 in annual funding to business enterprise centres in Glen Innes, Inverell, Moree and Tamworth and replace them with a single BEC centre in Armidale.

"This so called super centre will run on \$135,000 annual funding and employ at least one full-time business advisor who I suggest will need to be a superman or woman if the Government expects them to provide decent advice to aspiring business operators across the entire region," Mr Draper said.

"The fact the Government believes an advisor in Armidale could give comprehensive advice about business prospects in Moree demonstrates a complete ignorance on their behalf of emerging business needs in rural and regional areas," he said.

Mr Draper said putting the blame on Federal Government funding cuts was a convenient excuse wheeled out for each and every rationalisation.

"I find it disturbing the BEC's whose contracts will not be renewed are expected to make do with sideline services when the core of their work is to provide small business advice.

"The Government is effectively washing its hands of BEC's it has supported in stating the withdrawal of funding will not cause their closure.

Mr Draper met with Tamworth BEC manager John Skillen today to discuss the impact of the cuts.

"Every month Mr Skillen travels to Quirindi, Gunnedah, Manilla, Barraba and Nundle to provide face to face contact with clients in outreach centres. This would be impossible to maintain by an advisor based in Armidale," Mr Draper said.

www.peterdraper.com.au

Media Contacts: Peter Draper 0417 290 376
Donna Hurley 0419 409 538

Electorate Office ph. 6766 1422
Parliament House ph. 9230 2341

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Mr Skillen pointed out that in the 2002/2003 financial year the Tamworth BEC helped create 99 new full time and 57 part time jobs through assisting business development.

“Mr Skillen provides a vital service to community and business which the Government believes Tamworth can afford to lose.

“The NSW Regional Development Minister David Campbell should be renamed the NSW Minister for Regional Destruction,” Mr Draper said.

End Release

www.peterdraper.com.au

Media Contacts: Peter Draper 0417 290 376
Donna Hurley 0419 409 538

Electorate Office ph. 6766 1422
Parliament House ph. 9230 2341