

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

DRAPER ASKS MINISTER TO ACT ON BENDEMEER TEACHER CRISIS

24th February 2004

In the NSW Parliament today, Member for Tamworth Peter Draper called on the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Training Dr Andrew Refshauge to overturn the decision to reduce the teacher numbers at the Bendemeer Public School from two to one.

Bendemeer Public School, like many schools in rural NSW, has been significantly impacted by the ongoing drought. Student numbers have dropped from the requisite 26 to retain two teachers, and currently stand at 23. However, the school community has been advised of two new families moving to the district in Term 2, and the additional students will bring numbers back over 26.

The Ministers office advised Mr Draper that the application had been rejected because Bendemeer was "no longer drought declared."

"I asked the Minister to re-examine the situation facing Bendemeer Public School," Mr Draper said today.

"Despite the green tinge around Bendemeer, this community is definitely still affected by drought."

"As the Minister for Utilities would verify, Parry Shire Council has lodged an application for assistance to provide Bendemeer with a reliable water supply made uncertain due to the ongoing impact of the drought," Mr Draper continued.

Mr Draper pointed out that other schools in the district had successfully applied for an exemption because of the drought, including Niangala, Curlewis, Currabubula, Barraba, Duri, Spring Ridge, Mullaley and Walhallow Public Schools.

"What have the students and parents of Bendemeer Public done wrong to warrant this decision, when eight other local schools were given an exemption to keep their extra teacher?" Mr Draper asked.

"The Minister should recognise the difficulties facing small communities and act immediately to overturn this poor decision."

"The people of Bendemeer deserve the same opportunity as their surrounding schools, and I hope that the Minister can intervene to ensure this happens," Mr Draper concluded.

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