P E T E R D R A P E R

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

M E D I A R E L E A S E

MINISTERS IN CONFLICT OVER BENDEMEER DROUGHT – DRAPER

11th March 2004

In Parliament yesterday Member for Tamworth Peter Draper called on the Minister for Energy and Utilities to advise when the residents of Bendemeer could expect to have a safe, healthy, drinkable water supply. Minister Sartor in his reply advised that he had approved $185,000 in funding to allow Parry Shire Council to install a new filtration plant and to install a roof over the new facility.

In announcing the funding, Minister Sartor publicly recognised that Bendemeer had been heavily impacted by the drought, and even though there was a moratorium on the program to upgrade water supplies, the NSW Government would make an exception for Bendemeer.

In his answer to Mr Draper's question, Minister Sartor said:

"Bendemeer has been particularly badly affected by the drought cycle in terms of its water supply…."

The Minister went on to say:

"Even though the program is currently the subject of a moratorium, there are exceptions made for drought emergency works and in exceptional circumstances. Because of the very poor quality of the water and the public health problems faced by the residents of Bendemeer an exception can be made in this case."

When welcoming the commitment by the Government to contribute funding to the Bendemeer works, Mr Draper pointed out the stark contrast in attitudes between Ministers Sartor and Refshauge.

"Here we have a small community that has suffered badly under the ravages of a devastating drought. The impact of the drought on Bendemeer affected the water supply so significantly that Minister Sartor invoked exceptional circumstances funding to fix the problem," Mr Draper said.

"Mr Sartor showed great sensitivity in recognising the needs of the community, which contrasts glaringly with the intransigence of Minister Refshauge. The Minister for Education and Training is still desperately searching for reasons to justify forcing one of Bendemeer Public Schools two teachers to move to another school," Mr Draper continued.

"Minister Refshauge is still blindly believing misinformation from his bureaucrats that Bendemeer has not been affected by the drought. With two senior Ministers having directly conflicting views about Bendemeer, it is rapidly reaching a stage where Mr Carr may need to intervene," Mr Draper concluded.

End Release.

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