

# PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Population planning a key issue for the future of rural representation

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The redistribution of the State's electoral boundaries based on population growth raises serious questions about the future representation of country people Member for Tamworth Peter Draper said today.

Mr Draper said the current formula which was introduced by the Greiner/Murray government meant the state electoral office would continue to adjust boundaries at the expense of country seats to accommodate the population growth in Sydney and greater metropolitan areas.

"The boundaries of country electorates will be pushed ever outwards to make way for those on the coast and in Sydney rendering the task of rural representation difficult simply due to size and distance.

"The coalition's legislation saw a reduction in the number of seats to 93 and the only way to increase that number now is by way of a referendum. This system is flawed as obviously people aren't going to vote for more politicians.

"There needs to be more flexibility in the system to ensure that rural and regional areas are protected against population explosions on the coast and in the city areas. If it doesn't change a country seat will go every time there is a redistribution of electoral boundaries," he said.

Mr Draper said the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources had put in motion a plan to cater for Sydney's population growth over the next 50 years which appeared to focus on accommodating a projected growth of 40 per cent.

DIPNR has predicted the population of inland NSW will increase from 768,000 in 2003 to 797,100 from in 2031 which is an increase of 4 per cent over the 2001 population.

"As a planning body, DIPNR should be decentralising government offices and formulating a strategy to encourage population growth in rural and regional areas," he said.

**End release**

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