

# PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Draper takes cleaners to the Carr Government**

*2 September 2004*

A promise Member for Tamworth Peter Draper made to the region's cleaners to take concerns to the Premier Bob Carr over proposed changes to Government cleaning contracts has been fulfilled with a speech delivered in the NSW Parliament.

The cleaners converged on Mr Draper's electorate office earlier this month and asked him to relay a strong message that proposed changes would result in job losses, reduced hours and conditions, and unacceptable levels of cleanliness in places such as schools, police stations and Government buildings.

Mr Draper also received numerous letters from cleaners across the New England north west detailing how the changes stood to impact on their livelihoods and work places.

The general consensus was that detrimental consequences of the changes including reduced hours for staff resulting in lower cleaning standards and threats to continuing employment would far outweigh the benefits.

"Many cleaners of schools believe students will be left vulnerable to unhygienic conditions should conditions and the time allocated be cut to a basic standard of cleaning," Mr Draper said.

"I asked the Government whether it was aware that it was already physically impossible for cleaners to achieve a reasonable standard of cleaning with the existing hours and staff numbers."

Mr Draper also highlighted the fact that the NSW WorkCover Authority had commissioned a study to assess the repetitive manual tasks of cleaners. The study came about, in part, in response to a recommendation arising from the 2002 NSW Workplace Safety Summit and is due for completion in December, 2004.

The recommendation highlighted that significant causes of musculoskeletal and occupational overuse injuries in cleaners were due to "high expectations in limited time frames and product savings."

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“It strikes me as being somewhat hypocritical of Government that while one Department seeks to reduce cleaning hours and impose limited time frames, another Department acknowledges that high expectations of cleaners in limited time are linked to an injured cleaning workforce,” he said.

Mr Draper asked the Department to take cleaners concerns on board, provide an offer of employment from all new incoming contractors and to maintain hours of work.

Mr Draper has also been liaising with Upper House Democrat Dr Arthur Chesterfield-Evans who has agreed to question NSW Commerce Minister John Della Bosca on the issue in the Upper House this week.

“Dr Chesterfield-Evans will ask the Minister if he will listen to cleaners concerns and give a reassurance that existing staff will maintain their jobs, their hours and their conditions. He will also ask the Minister to reject proposals that school cleaning duties fall to parents instead of paid cleaners,” he said.

“Cleaners clearly have a support on this issue from the Democrats and I take this opportunity to thank those in my electorate for bringing this issue to my attention.

“I can assure cleaners I will continue to lobby the Department of Commerce to ensure that the changes which are due to come into effect in October next year do not adversely effect the cleaning workforce,” he said.

*The Hansard transcript of Mr Draper’s speech delivered on Wednesday September 1 is attached.*

**End Release**

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