

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

HEALTH SERVICE MERGER HEATS UP

July 6 2004

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper expects a decision on the merger of the New England Area Health Service with the Hunter Area Health Service after a Cabinet meeting of the NSW Government in Sydney next week.

Mr Draper said he was confident that continued lobbying, and a list presented to the Minister by Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay and himself seeking guarantees regarding health service delivery, job retention and infrastructure investment, would stand the New England north-west in good stead if agreed.

"I have no doubt the Minister has listened to the concerns raised by Richard Torbay and myself on behalf of the community. The key issues of job retention, service delivery and access and equity to medical specialists were continually raised and although it has been a process lacking community consultation, Minister Iemma has been obligated to take that feedback on board while determining his decision," he said.

Mr Draper said if agreed, the list of guarantees he and Independent MP Richard Torbay presented to Mr Iemma would not only secure and enhance health services in the region, it would see a complete re-development of the Tamworth Base Hospital, funding for new hospitals at Armidale, Glen Innes, Narrabri and Moree, new Multi Purpose Services for Werris Creek, Tingha, Manilla and Tenterfield and the streamlining of progress toward MPS's at centres such as Walcha, Wyallda and Bingara.

"I am aware of particular concerns over the loss of an agreement to fully integrate an MPS at Manilla with aged care services through the New England Area Health Service's purchase of Manellae Lodge."

"I have singled out this issue with the Minister, asking that this community-endorsed commitment to establish an MPS integrating health, community and aged care services at the existing site in Manilla be guaranteed," he said.

Mr Draper said local doctors were among the various stakeholders to raise merger concerns directly with the Minister with the focus on the need to retain both Pathology New England and radiology services in Tamworth.

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

“It has been suggested pathology services in the NEAHS, Hunter, Royal North Shore and North Coast all be combined, with samples being taken in Tamworth but processed and analysed at a central location.”

Mr Draper said Pathology New England currently offered highly specialised as well as basic biochemistry and haematology services including specialist haematology, pathology support for fine needle biopsy, histopathology (biopsy of changes in tissue on site), marrow aspirations (extraction of bone marrow samples), micro urine cultures, hook biopsy used in breast surgery and frozen section which is used in a number of surgeries including breast.

“Pathology New England offers a specialist pathologist on site who is available for face to face consultation. With rationalisation, it is feared patients and doctors would not have the same level of access to specialist advice,” Mr Draper said.

“Doctors have also raised concerns over potential losses or delays in results due to analysis taking place off site.”

“With life threatening conditions, an early diagnosis relies on timely results. Pathology and radiology services are vital to medical professionals in the region, so I have called on Minister Iemma not to dilute and de-skill, but to strengthen these services.”

Mr Draper said that if the list of demands was met, a possible merger could well be a win/win situation for the region.

The Minister has indicated the principles of the merger included channelling savings achieved through administration streamlining into front line medical services, enhancing health services in the region, rotating medical staff from hospitals in the Hunter to fill work force gaps in the NEAHS particularly in the mental health field, retaining local advisory bodies and retaining an administrative office in Tamworth.

“These principles combined with the list of guarantees Mr Torbay and I have asked of the Minister would deliver comprehensive health services to the region, so there could be an opportunity for very positive outcomes should the Minister agree,” Mr Draper said.

End Release

www.peterdraper.com.au

Media Contacts: Peter Draper 0417 290 376 Electorate Office ph. 6766 1422
Donna Hurley 0419 409 538 Parliament House ph. 9230 2341