

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Liquor Outlet Concerns Confirmed By Carr

10th December 2003

Following a PACT meeting held in October this year, Member for Tamworth Peter Draper raised concerns over reports that the National Competition Council proposed withholding approximately \$15 million in NSW state funding unless the state increases competition in the liquor industry.

NSW Premier Bob Carr yesterday confirmed that the Commonwealth had withheld more than \$50 million to penalise NSW for not deregulating liquor and other industries.

The penalty is forcing the NSW Government to consider re-regulating the liquor industry and chemist ownership regulations among others, with the Premier confirming Mr Draper's concerns that the number of liquor outlets could increase dramatically if the directions were adopted. The requirement to be a qualified Chemist in order to own a Chemist shop is also under threat.

"The thought of unlicensed people operating Chemist shops simply as a money making venture is very disturbing," Mr Draper said "Health needs could be badly compromised in the quest to improve profits."

Mr Draper also pointed out that the current system of having to establish a "need" for additional licensed premises appeared to be working well, and that current community needs were in the main serviced well.

"For the Federal Government to be contemplating forcing NSW into massively expanding the number of liquor outlets in the state is a scandal," said Mr Draper.

"Given the findings of the recent NSW Alcohol Summit, I find it hard to believe that the state would be forced into allowing alcohol to be sold from service stations and corner stores."

"In the Summit findings document under the section entitled "Preventing Abuse and Harm", the report clearly identifies that by controlling the economic and physical availability of alcohol, it is an effective tool in preventing alcohol misuse and harm."

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“ The President of the Victorian Liquor Stores Association, Peter Wilkinson, was quoted as saying that if NSW was to deregulate in a similar way to Victoria, some 6,000 additional licences would be needed.”

“ The Premier has pointed out that the issue was broader than just the liquor industry,” Mr Draper said. “ He indicated that the proposed reforms would affect farmers, pharmacists, dentists, optometrists and taxi drivers as well as those already in the liquor industry.”

“ There needs to be some semblance of common sense brought to the discussion. To deregulate industries and increase competition just because the NCC think it is a good idea does not consider the possible impacts on the community.”

“The Federal Government is completely out of touch with community expectations if it believes NSW needs another 6,000 liquor outlets,” Mr Draper said.

“The Coalition should reject this push by the National Competition Council to deregulate the liquor and other industries, and stop penalising NSW financially to force change.”

End Release.