

# PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

## MEDIA RELEASE

### PLANNING REVIEW: AN OPPORTUNITY TO ATTRACT PEOPLE TO COUNTRY

30 September 2004

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper has welcomed a proposal by the NSW Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Craig Knowles to overhaul the planning system in NSW.

The proposal will reduce the number of planning definitions from 1700 to 250, reduces the number of zoning categories from 3,100 to less than 25, reduces the number of Local Environment Plans from 5,500 to 152, and reduces the number of planning decisions Councils currently refer to Government Departments by up to 70%.

“Cutting the red tape will result in greater efficiencies from local councils, and should result in a dramatic reduction in the time taken to process development applications,” Mr Draper said.

While welcoming the new initiative, Mr Draper is critical of the Department of Planning’s apparent acceptance that Sydney will continue to grow at over 40,000 people per year for the next 25 to 30 years, with some 23,500 new dwellings needed each year just to keep pace.

“Massive population increases in Sydney such as the Department is planning to cater for will put enormous pressure on infrastructure such as transport, health and education, which are already struggling to cope with current numbers,” Mr Draper said.

“As the peak planning authority in the State, surely there should be a greater emphasis on encouraging people to relocate to regional areas instead of merely accepting that Sydney’s population will continue to balloon,” he said.

“A regional centre such as Tamworth offer terrific education, sporting and cultural opportunities, and the local Division of General Practice is moving rapidly to address health access concerns in the region.”

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“Given the relatively low cost comparative of living and working in a city like Tamworth, the Department should be developing strategies to encourage businesses and individuals to relocate to the country,” he said.

“For the cost of the annual lease on a business premises in Sydney, a premises can be purchased in many regional centres. Wages, insurances, distribution and many other costs are lower, so through incentives such as reduced payroll tax the Government could foster the growth of regional areas while reducing the pressures on Sydney’s infrastructure.”

“I call on the Government to be proactive throughout the whole planning process and not simply accept that massive growth in Sydney is inevitable,” he concluded.

**End Release**

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