

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Police Numbers up to Scratch for Festival – Draper

18th December 2003

Following concerns he raised with Police Minister John Watkins, Member for Tamworth Peter Draper has welcomed advice that the 2004 Telstra Country Music Festival will be policed at the same levels as 2003.

“I met today with Inspector Mark Minehan who is the Staff Officer for Western Region Commander Assistant Commissioner Morris West. Inspector Minehan brought me up to speed regarding the numbers of police scheduled to work over the Festival period, the number of shifts that will be worked, and he detailed the additional resources that will be brought into Tamworth to bolster the police presence,” Mr Draper said

Following a PACT meeting in Tamworth, Mr Draper wrote to Police Minister John Watkins expressing concern that the funding to be provided by the NSW Government would be insufficient to meet projected needs to police the 2004 Festival. Mr Draper spoke to Minister Watkins during the last sitting of Parliament, and has held a number of discussions with the Ministers staff since, in an attempt to address this issue.

“It was pleasing that Inspector Minehan came to Tamworth to provide this update,” Mr Draper said. “Following the 2003 Festival the Oxley LAC conducted a comprehensive risk assessment of all venues in and around Tamworth.”

“As a result, the OAG (Operational Support Group) presence will be increased from 2 to 3 teams, each comprising 6 highly trained officers. These officers are specialists in crowd control, and are they experts in many other areas including bomb detection.”

“They will operate in full teams of 6, they are highly visible, and their presence will be a strong deterrent should people be thinking of causing trouble.”

Highway Patrol Officers from Mudgee, Canobalis (Orange), Northern Tablelands, Barwon, and Chifley (Bathurst), will join with local officers to ensure a saturation police presence on the roads surrounding Tamworth during the 2004 Festival. Operation Westroads will be in action during this period, so the clear message to motorists is obey the rules or be caught.

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Inspector Minehan advised Mr Draper that Assistant Commissioner West will be in Tamworth during the Festival and will meet with Mr Draper to provide information regarding the Festival operation during his visit.

“I welcome the fact that the Western Region Commander will be in Tamworth to see first hand how well our local officers work with their colleagues from other commands. Together they will provide a safe and welcoming environment for the many visitors expected in Tamworth and surrounds during January, and I look forward to his advice,” Mr Draper concluded.

End Release.