

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Pork import decision set to decimate Tamworth electorate's pork industry

May 14 2004

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper today asked the NSW Government to leave no stone unturned in finding a way to fight Biosecurity Australia's decision to reject pork industry appeals and allow foreign countries to import pork meat.

In Parliament today, Mr Draper told the Primary Industries Minister the rejection of six appeals against a controversial pigmeat import risk analysis was a devastating blow for the Tamworth electorate's 95 pork producers with wider ramifications for the country's \$2.5 billion pork industry.

"This decision will not only allow countries that subsidise their pork producers to undercut Australian producers already hamstrung by drought and high feed prices, it could well expose Australia's stock to exotic disease," Mr Draper told Parliament.

Mr Draper highlighted one case in the Tamworth electorate where a large scale producer with an annual turnover of \$7 million was in the process of exiting the industry due to the bleak outlook.

"The opening of Australia's doors to internationally grown pork has slammed the lid on production for Tamworth producer Rod Hands," he said.

Mr Hands alone employs 15 workers on his three properties and sub contracts several families in Walcha, Bingara and Gunnedah to grow out his stock.

"The enterprise's demise will impact financially on numerous families and the region will suffer the loss of a multi-million dollar business," he said.

Mr Draper said Australia was geographically protected from exotic pork disease but had received market access requests from the US, EU, Mexico, South Africa, Korea, Hungary, Taiwan, Chile and Brazil.

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“The biggest worry for local producers is the risk of post weaning multisystemic wasting syndrome which an independent CSIRO report revealed had a 90 to 95 per cent risk of breaking out in ten years through imported product,” Mr Draper said.

“Biosecurity Australia has made this decision with absolutely no consideration for the livelihood of producers and the communities they support,” Mr Draper said.

He said on a national scale the impact would be significant but its resonance would be most keenly felt in country communities.

“It’s a case of the pork industry being completely sold out,” he said.

Mr Draper has asked the Minister to strongly support a bid by the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs Committee, which held an inquiry into the pigmeat import risk analysis, to have the decision overturned.

End Release

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