

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Draper calls for support of volunteers Standing Together Against Crimes of Sexual Assault

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Member for Tamworth Peter Draper has called on the NSW Minister for Commerce to support a group of volunteers in Gunnedah dedicated to helping families heal from the emotional trauma of having a child sexually abused.

Mr Draper met with Standing Together Against Crimes of Sexual Assault group members Julie Scott and Ros White in Gunnedah recently to discuss the group's need for office space to conduct meetings and co-ordinate activities.

In a speech to the NSW Parliament, Mr Draper said STACSA formed in 2002 due to a lack of emotional support groups in Gunnedah, and indeed the region, for parents and siblings of children who had been subject to sexual assault or abuse. A STACSA branch has since opened in Orange with moves underway for another in Armidale.

"I was deeply impressed by the genuine concern which drives the group and was only too willing to work toward securing subsidised office space. Members currently use private homes as a base to provide support, organise forums and liaise with Government agencies," Mr Draper said.

Mr Draper described sex crimes against children as a silent epidemic in today's society with over 4000 sexual assault incidents involving children reported to authorities in NSW in 2003.

According to the Tamworth-based Police Joint Investigation Response Team, which services a broad area from Singleton to Guyra, an average of 240 notifications have been reported each year in the past six years to the NSW Department of Community Services Help Line.

"These notifications related to children as victims of sexual assault or serious physical assault but tragically the majority relate to sexual assault" Mr Draper said.

"I sincerely hope the NSW Government is prepared to lend unqualified support to this visionary group of volunteers who are prepared to confront this hidden blight," he said.

End Release

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