

# PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Cautious optimism over \$5 million investment proposed for Tamworth Agricultural Institute**

*22 July 2004*

A Department of Primary Industries proposal to invest \$5 million in the Tamworth Agricultural Institute as part of a strategy to reinvest in the state's agricultural research sector has been welcomed with cautious optimism by the Member for Tamworth Peter Draper.

The NSW Minister for the Department of Primary Industries Ian Macdonald officially announced the \$25 million plus plan called 'Towards 2020 - Growing Our Future' during an address at the NSW Farmers Association's annual conference in Sydney today.

Mr Draper said the Minister made clear the \$25 million investment, which would deliver multi million dollar injections to centres in Wagga Wagga, Camden, Cronulla, Wollongbar and Tamworth, was dependent on the sale of land assets belonging to the Department.

"The plan at this stage is very much just that, it's a proposal and while I welcome the Minister's intention to invest a generous portion of the land sales revenue in Tamworth, it will very much depend on the successful disposal of certain parcels of land," Mr Draper said.

"It's my understanding that the land earmarked for sale has historically been used by the DPI for commercial farming at locations including Griffith, Wollongbar, Trangie, Lidcombe, Duck Creek, Ballina and The Entrance."

"I am, however, delighted to see the hard work undertaken by the Tamworth centre's staff being recognised, and that the institute itself has been acknowledged as being well placed for future growth."

"Importantly, a positive spin off from a boost to infrastructure at the Calala site would be the inevitable flow of increased employment opportunities and research investment. Much of the equipment used at the Institute is ageing, and in need of a substantial upgrade to keep pace with innovations in worldwide agricultural practices."

Mr Draper said the department was prepared to invest the \$5 million in the Tamworth Agricultural Institute to develop new soil and plant processing facilities, new diagnostic and biotechnology laboratories, glasshouses and storage sheds.

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Mr Draper also welcomed the Minister's decision to place a moratorium on any decision to sell Research Centres at other sites in NSW, although it had been conceded that Manilla would unfortunately lose its agronomist through a transfer to Tamworth.

"The Minister stressed the investment in the Institute at Tamworth would not be at the expense of research facilities, advisory stations, office buildings or storage sheds at other centres, with the resources solely gleaned through the sale of "surplus land".

*End Release*

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