

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

State Forests seek voluntary redundancies ahead of restructure

10 August 2004

Expressions of interest for voluntary redundancies across NSW will hold the key to a possible loss of jobs in Walcha as a result of a State Forests restructure, Member for Tamworth Peter Draper said today.

Mr Draper is urging the community not to panic over the proposed administration restructure, as rumours have been circulating that up to seven administration and three forest jobs could be lost in Walcha.

Mr Draper met with a senior advisor of the NSW Department of Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald yesterday to discuss State Forests' plans to restructure the administration of its softwood division.

"In reality, at this stage the Department is only looking for expressions of interest in voluntary redundancy, and it may be the case that the restructure can be achieved through that process alone," Mr Draper said.

"Having said that, I am already knocking on doors of the relevant contacts to ensure that jobs in Walcha are not gutted by this restructure. Expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy close on August 14, 2004 and I will be liaising closely with the Department in relation to the results."

Mr Draper said Walcha's workforce was in with a fighting chance due to the fact the shire council heavily promoted an \$80,000 strategy to develop softwood plantations in the area.

"Walcha has a clear plan to grow this industry, and I have asked Walcha council to express concerns to the Minister. I will work closely with Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay to take Walcha's case to the Government," Mr Draper said.

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“The community is understandably concerned but I want those in the industry to know the prospect of job losses at this stage is very much the result of speculation,” he said.

“Once the position is clear, we will seek a meeting with the Minister to reaffirm Walcha’s commitment to the industry at a local level, and ask that the Government recognises that commitment in any decision regarding local jobs,” he said.

End Release

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