

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Praise for Walcha softwood strategy in Parliament

6th November 2003

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper has applauded Walcha Council on its softwood plantation initiative that will improve the future for its residents and become a significant contributor to the electorate as a whole. Mr Draper spoke on Walcha Shires Softwood Plantation Strategy in the NSW Parliament last week.

“Walcha Council has been quick to recognise the potential for regional growth in developing a softwood plantation development strategy,” Mr Draper said.

Mr Draper said the strategy is designed to provide a secure future for local residents through encouraging investment, leading to growth and more local jobs. Currently there are some 13,000 hectares of pine planted in the area, with the strategy aiming to increase this to 40,000 hectares.

“This strategy maps the future direction for softwood plantations in the local area, a move that would create new jobs in a climate of limited opportunities,” Mr Draper said.

“The proposal is based on a detailed study that has examined the potential for the industry in the area, the suitability of the area to grow these plantations and the potential for wood-based manufacturing industries if such plantations were established.”

Mr Draper has visited local saw milling operations and has applauded their sustainable use of resources.

“Recently I met with Mr Greg Carter of Fenning Timbers, where 34 people are employed locally at the timber mill in Walcha. I toured the operation and saw first hand the potential for the industry in the region. There is absolutely no waste from this plant. Woodchips are shipped overseas and even the sawdust is trucked to Liddell Power Station to produce electricity,” Mr Draper said.

The Federal and State Governments provided some \$20,000 to assist in the development of the softwood strategy, and Mr Draper has pledged to provide any assistance he can, as this industry could have immense potential for the area.

“There are few softwood plantations in the north of the State. The electorate of Tamworth has an opportunity to get ahead of the game and set up an industry that is second to none. That is the aim of Walcha Council, and I will do all I can to help.”

“I encourage the New South Wales Government to continue working with the shire to secure this industry. At a time when we hear a great deal about the decline in regional New South Wales, this project is a great opportunity that we cannot afford to miss,” Mr Draper said.

A copy of Mr Draper’s speech to the Parliament follows.

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