

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Progress on safety concerns at Westdale Public School

17 September 2004

A number of short and long term solutions to road safety concerns at Westdale Public School in Tamworth have been identified following a recent meeting of school, community and civic leaders.

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper was pleased to report the long term goal was to establish a new car parking area on a vacant block adjacent to the school while short term solutions included restricted parking zones and a school crossing in Marathon St.

Unanimous agreement on required action was reached at the meeting which was attended by Mr Draper, the school's principal, occupational health and safety committee and P&C association representatives plus the Tamworth Regional Council Local Traffic Committee, local police; and parents.

Mr Draper and school principal Ruythe Dufty convened the meeting in response to heightened safety concerns in Marathon St which lies adjacent to the school and is used by parents for student drop off and collection. Safety concerns came to a head on August 18 when 8-year-old student Tim Moffat collided with a car in Marathon St losing his foot and lower leg as a consequence.

Speaking at the meeting Tamworth Regional Council acting technical services director Wilton Boyd said the ideal scenario was to separate cars and children in Marathon St which is extremely busy during drop off and collection times due to a convergence of cars, pedestrians and turning buses.

Mrs Dufty pointed out the road would only get busier as the school was already outgrowing its capacity of 370 students and 190 new homes were planned for construction in neighbouring suburbs over the next five years.

Mr Draper said he would investigate the possibility of the NSW Department of Education and Training acquiring land upon which to construct a car park for parents and staff thereby separating traffic from pedestrians in Marathon St.

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“In the short term the Tamworth Regional Council Local Traffic Committee will carry forward recommendations at the meeting which included restricting parking in Marathon St, establishing a school crossing pending the results of a count to determine the number of students who would use it; and improved signage to alert motorists to the 40km/h zone,” Mr Draper said.

Mr Draper raised the issue in Parliament this week highlighting the fact that the school had lobbied the local school community and council’s traffic committee for five years to address safety concerns in Marathon St.

“Of no comfort to the Moffat family is the fact the school repeatedly warned that a serious accident was likely to take place,” Mr Draper said.

Mr Draper has also written to every school in the electorate requesting information on road safety concerns.

He said the Department needed to have greater flexibility and be prepared to adapt facilities at growing schools in a more timely manner.

“It concerns me that programs which address road safety at schools such as Westdale Public School are not being implemented when requested, nor do such programs keep pace with the rapid development of schools,” he said.

A Hansard copy of Mr Draper’s speech on Westdale Public School is attached.

End Release

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