

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Child Protection in NSW Schools

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Independent Member for Tamworth Peter Draper has highlighted some of the difficulties faced by teachers in NSW schools under current child protection legislation in the NSW Parliament. The NSW Government recently announced a review of the child protection code.

"I spoke in the House some time ago on the paltry salary increase offered to our teachers. On that occasion I was unable to expand on another issue due to time constraints, but today I return to the subject of child protection legislation, fulfilling a promise I made to the teachers of my electorate," Mr Draper told the Parliament.

"I have received some 100 emails from the Teachers Federation on behalf of teachers from around my electorate, expressing their concern at flaws in this legislation. Effectively, it means teachers cannot carry out what were once everyday functions or actions."

"The House would be aware that the Government recently announced a review of the child protection code for teachers. To assist in this review, I want to inform the House about the everyday impacts of the current code. I relate the story of one teacher, which clearly shows the frustration caused by this legislation."

The teachers letter read, *"this (the current) act has had this serious consequence. I can no longer have the room open for only one or even a few students. I have made it obligatory that there be at least three or four students, usually of mixed gender before I will permit its use. I am guarding my career and my reputation!"*

"A quiet, private and confidential interview with a student—the old 'quiet word'—is now under clear and obvious threat. So much for the fostering of care and trusting relationships that lead to better educational results!"

"It is stories like these that the Government needs to hear and listen to. At a time when we are trying to encourage more males into the profession, especially in primary schools, teachers feel they are putting themselves and their career at risk."

"Of course, we must balance the need for child protection with the ability of teachers to carry out their profession."

"I am pleased to hear that the Government is now looking at these concerns."

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