

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

Draper slams Minister's decision to keep charging camps for troubled youth

July 12 2004

Member for Tamworth Peter Draper has described a decision by NSW Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation Sandra Nori to continue charging fees for Youth Insearch Camps at Lake Keepit as being out of touch with community needs.

Mr Draper asked Ms Nori to consider waiving the fees for hiring the Lake Keepit Recreation Centre after discussing the future of the program in the region with Tamworth Local Court Magistrate Malcolm MacPherson.

The statewide program, which began at Lake Keepit in May 2000, targets children referred mainly from schools, DOCS, PCYC's and the Department of Juvenile Justice who are yet to go before a court but are likely to do so should nothing be done to address behaviour or attitude issues.

Some 538 children have attended the Lake Keepit camp with Magistrate MacPherson attributing it to being directly responsible for saving the lives of three young local girls.

Each camp caters for 50 children and 11 adult supporters and attracts fees of about \$5000 charged by the Department of Sport and Recreation. Local Rotary Clubs have supported the program through fundraising.

Data gathered at the local Youth Insearch Camps revealed that 66 per cent of children were already committing crime with 90 per cent of those stopping after just one camp. The overall success rate of children attending Youth Insearch camps and ceasing to offend afterwards is approaching 80 per cent across the state.

The cost to the Government of incarcerating a child for one year is about \$85,000 compared to \$5000 for 50 children to attend one Youth Insearch Camp.

"The good done at these camps for such a small cost in Government terms, as opposed to the cost of incarceration, should have resulted in a commonsense decision to waive the fees," Mr Draper said.

www.peterdraper.com.au

Media Contacts: Peter Draper 0417 290 376
Donna Hurley 0419 409 538

Electorate Office ph. 6766 1422
Parliament House ph. 9230 2341

PETER DRAPER

INDEPENDENT MEMBER FOR TAMWORTH

MEDIA RELEASE

“The decision by Minister Nori to retain the fee is cold and callous,” he said.

“In trying to justify this stance by saying the cost structure is consistent with other social justice groups and that it is cognisant of the user’s capacity to pay, the Minister is ignoring the fact that the user does not pay – the costs are being met by local Rotarians through fundraising.”

Mr Draper said he now faced the ridiculous situation of appealing to another Minister to secure funds for the next camp.

“Apart from the time and effort involved, to have to get funding from one Government Department to pay charges levied on disadvantaged children by another Government Department is truly absurd.”

“No wonder country people have lost faith in the political process when decisions completely lacking in common sense are made,” Mr Draper said.

End Release

www.peterdraper.com.au

Media Contacts: Peter Draper 0417 290 376 Electorate Office ph. 6766 1422
Donna Hurley 0419 409 538 Parliament House ph. 9230 2341