



RODDA TO STAND FOR ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF TAMWORTH

CONSERVATIVE INDEPENDENT FOR THE MARCH 2019 STATE ELECTION

30 November 2018

Tamworth Regional Councillor Mark Rodda will nominate to contest next year's NSW General Election for the Electoral District of Tamworth. Rodda, a second term Tamworth region Councillor and father of six young kids has been urged to stand to provide the people of his electorate with a genuine community voice in our Parliament. ***"The last 8 years has demonstrated that although you may have an MP under the banner of party control, with a seat at the table of government, it doesn't mean you have a vocal community advocate willing to stand up for the people of your electorate"***.

Rodda was previously a long-term member of The Nationals and became disillusioned over a number of policy mistakes harmful to our rural communities.

PRIVATISATION OF PUBLICLY OWNED ASSETS AND COST OF LIVING - In making his decision to stand Rodda believes that the role of government is to make people's lives easier and less complicated, "here we have a government that has embarked on a massive privatisation drive, selling everything important to the people of NSW including revenue producing monopoly utilities such as electricity, driving up the cost of energy bills to households, pensioners and businesses. Tamworth has the unenviable title of having the most expensive electricity prices in the State thanks to the Government's privatisation agenda, and people everywhere are struggling. We need a representative that has some empathy for the people of our rural communities, not an MP that won't take ownership for his Government's financially harmful decisions", Rodda said.

When the Government sold our electricity generators rural NSW was meant to receive a massive dividend of \$6 billion dollars, how many rural electorates have seen a portion of that funding. Then more recently the Government announced the sale of the Snowy-Hydro for \$4.15 billion with every cent to be spent in regional NSW. So rural and coastal NSW should

see the proceeds of up to \$10.1 billion, where are those funds? Rodda, asked.

Then in other misdirected priorities the Government has sold off the States former Land Titles Office driving up the costs of purchasing and selling properties, registering plans and transferring title with some fees increasing 1,900% all for the benefit of Sydney Stadiums. ***“If you want some insight into why we have extended delays on health or road upgrades you need only look at the decision of the Sydney Liberals and Nationals directing billions to Sydney projects. Rural people miss out because our party based MP’s won’t go into bat for us”.***

TAFE AND RISING COST OF EDUCATION - Worried about the future of our State’s kids, Rodda said one of the worst decisions made by the NSW Government was to cut TAFE education and training funding, all but privatising NSW TAFE. Rodda said ***“this is a vital educational institution to the people of NSW, our kids, people with disabilities and those that want to be retrained for a different career. Course fees previously were manageable and measured in the hundreds, now you won’t get a TAFE qualification without spending thousands, it is gross inequity perpetrated on rural kids and our rural communities’.*** You can imagine the future of rural NSW and associated social issues with an uneducated, unemployed, underclass of kids,” Rodda said.

HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH, DRUG AND ALCOHOL ADDICTION - We see neglect in areas of health with a very long 8 year delay in seeing any upgrade to our vital mental health facilities such as Banksia Acute Mental Health Unit which will face a significant delay of three years or more because the Government dropped the ball on provision of this vital infrastructure. ***“We need first-world infrastructure as those people living in metropolitan areas enjoy. We also need more trained health professionals providing the very best of care for our patients. We know we have serious drug addiction issues around rural NSW, this should be addressed with a dedicated drug and alcohol facility in Tamworth as called for by Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Tamworth candidate Jeff Bacon’,*** Rodda said.

“If you are unlucky to have to attend the local hospital emergency unit the facility is clearly understaffed and you could wait up to four hours for even simple procedures or even longer before you are seen by a health professional. It’s not the staff’s fault the Government’s budget doesn’t stretch to adequately staff our rural health facilities, they do a great job under trying circumstances. We see that the Manilla MPS is in dire need of additional staff with the issue raised at a public rally last Saturday”.

POLICE AND LAW AND ORDER - Our local police force is also understaffed and officers are unable to cope with massive backlogs of investigations, thanks to Government understaffing and neglect. ***“The NSW Police Association believe they need around 25 extra police simply to keep up to their work loads. Currently a city like Tamworth has to draw staff from the smaller communities to get the job done, putting at risk the safety of those smaller communities, this is not nearly good enough”,*** Rodda said.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE - As for the Government’s lackluster efforts to drought assistance, ***“many of our State’s farmers are ineligible for assistance because their partners have meagre off-farm incomes so the belated assistance announced in late July 2018 has not come close to mitigating the effects of the drought in rural NSW”,*** Rodda said.

COAL MINING AND FARMING - The Government has missed a great opportunity to further support our farming communities in the region by cancelling Shenhua Watermark Coal's Exploration License EL7223. *"They handed over \$261 million taxpayer dollars in July 2017 that should have been the end of the project. The risks of harm to aquifers and farmland are too great to allow a mine in that area. I intend to campaign against the mine proposal to provide our local farmers with some assurance that after almost a decade there is someone on their side"*, Rodda said.

ROADS FUNDING - As for roads funding Rodda said *"we've seen some projects funded like the Oxley Highway, Manilla Road and Gunnedah Overpass but then the section of Goonoo Goonoo Road/New England Highway between Calala Lane and Jack Smyth Drive gets nothing. Then we see roads such as Port Stephens Cutting – unfunded, Werris Creek Road – unfunded, Rangari Road between Manilla and Boggabri also unfunded. Where has the State's money gone for projects like that, it's being spent in Sydney on an unnecessary Powerhouse museum relocation and Sydney stadium rebuilds."*

"With polls showing the NSW Liberal and National Government neck and neck with Labor now is the time for the electorate to consider switching to a genuine conservative independent and community champion, someone who will stand up for the people of the Electorate of Tamworth, someone who won't put the needs of the party, party donors, lobbyists or vested interests ahead of the welfare of the people of rural NSW".

"Democracy flourishes when there is political competition and political competition delivers results and voters want alternative options. I believe in community first and over the next few months I will be busy door knocking and meeting as many people as possible, our electorate needs a clearer alternative to the Sydney-centric government we currently suffer", Rodda concluded.

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For further information please contact Mark Rodda on 0448 750 302.