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\$1.50 including GST

The decision stands

By LOUISE THROWER

GOULBURN MP Pru Goward says it's disappointing the city's regional development office is shutting, but is standing by the outcome of a statewide review into the closure.

Yesterday she told the *Post* she was "hammering" Regional Development Minister Andrew

Stoner about the June 30 closure.

She would also be speaking to Small Business Minister Katrina Hodgkinson about at least striking some compromise for Goulburn.

"I'm very disappointed for the four people employed at the local (Trade and Investment) office because they do a great job," Ms Goward said.

"But this is the recommendation

of the NSW Small Business Commissioner. She wants to do it this way and we will be monitoring it very closely. If it falls off the perch we need to come back and say it's not working and look for other options."

The Trade and Investment director general announced closure of five offices – Parramatta, Broken Hill, Tweed Heads, Coffs

Harbour and Goulburn last Friday. It was part of a "small business advisory service" restructure and emerged from a review by Commissioner Yasmin King.

Ms Hodgkinson ordered the review earlier this year.

As the local office delivered this service, along with regional development advice, it was in the firing line. The area will now be serv-

iced from Wollongong.

In addition, Ms Hodgkinson's office is rolling out a \$5 million Small Biz Connect program, with more emphasis on online services. Ms Goward recognised that the four fulltime employees in Goulburn, all aged over 55, would be distressed by the decision.

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DUCKING IN:

Croaking frogs, diving ducks and birds of all varieties are making a merry noise over at Goulburn wetlands.

The Eastgrove Mulwaree Ponds

project is teaming with wildlife, and Goulburn Wetlands Working Group member Rod Falconer (pictured) says recent rain will only add to the plentiful array of bird and plant species.

LOUISE THROWER reports page 3.

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