

1 March 2019

IPART

PO Box K35

HAYMARKET NSW 1240



### Port Stephens Council SRV Application

I am both disappointed and distressed in relation to the lodgement of the Special Rate Variation application by Port Stephens Council.

My disappointment is caused by the actions of the Council in this matter. It has operated outside the regulations of the NSW Local Government Act. Some of the regulations it has ignored are:

7 (e) to provide for a system of local government that is accountable to the community and that is sustainable, flexible and effective.

8A (2) (c) Councils should consider the long term and cumulative effects of actions on future generations.

#### 226 **Role of mayor**

(f) to ensure the meetings of the council are conducted efficiently, effectively and in accordance with this Act.

232 (d) to represent the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community.

If I were younger and/or in better health I would not hesitate to investigate the penalties which apply to Councils blatantly disdainful of their 'job descriptions'.

My distress is due to my own circumstances (I may have to sell my home if this application is approved), and to the effect on the many people in Port Stephens who will be further disadvantaged by the rate increase which will need to be funded from wallets already under great stress from the ever-increasing cost of living; other burdens are stagnant wages, and the unlikely future extravagant increases to the aged pension and welfare payments.

Using the 2016 census figures, Port Stephens Over 65 residents equal 22.9% of the population. Compare this to Over 65 in NSW, 16.2%, and Over 65 in Australia, 15.8%. It is fair to assume that the majority of that Port Stephens 22.9% are aged pensioners. Although the Mayor has been reported as saying that there will be new assistance for people such as pensioners, nothing concrete has been stated. As the Rates Rebate for pensioners has not been increased for a long time, possibly decades, I do not believe there will be any substantial relief from that quarter. There is much chatter by residents over their cereal and sausages regarding some of the big ticket items our rates will be used for: \$1,500,000 for cycle paths, \$3,473,669 for holiday parks, and \$2,164,912 for fleet replacements.

Based on a current rates bill of \$1,000.00 (after the pensioner rebate has been deducted), an increase of \$75 in one year would be bad enough. Over a period of 7 years with an annual increase of 7.5% would make that rates bill \$1660.00. Again referring to the 2016 Census figures, the median weekly household income in Port Stephens is 20% LESS than for NSW. Our Mayor's cohorts and sycophants may not have any trouble in meeting the proposed SRV increases but I am sure that the majority of the Port Stephens population will. The Mayor must realise this local government area is not Woollahra or Vaucluse, nor is much of Port Stephens Nelson Bay.

There has been a fair amount of discussion and written opinions from the many discontented Port Stephens residents/ratepayers. A poll by Port Stephens News of the Area which has been running for three weeks is today 91% against the proposed SRV. I cannot recall seeing anything in print from the minority in favour of the proposed SRV; except of course from the Mayor, and a councillor who has stated that the Council has a clear mandate to proceed.

Attached are copies of some of the residents' and ratepayers' opinions from our local newspapers and from other publications. Please peruse these which I believe will give you an insight into the depth of feelings of Port Stephens residents and ratepayers regarding the proposed SRV.

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Meader



Further signatories to the letter to IPART of Elizabeth Meader dated 1 March 2019, all being in agreement with the contents of her letter.

[REDACTED]

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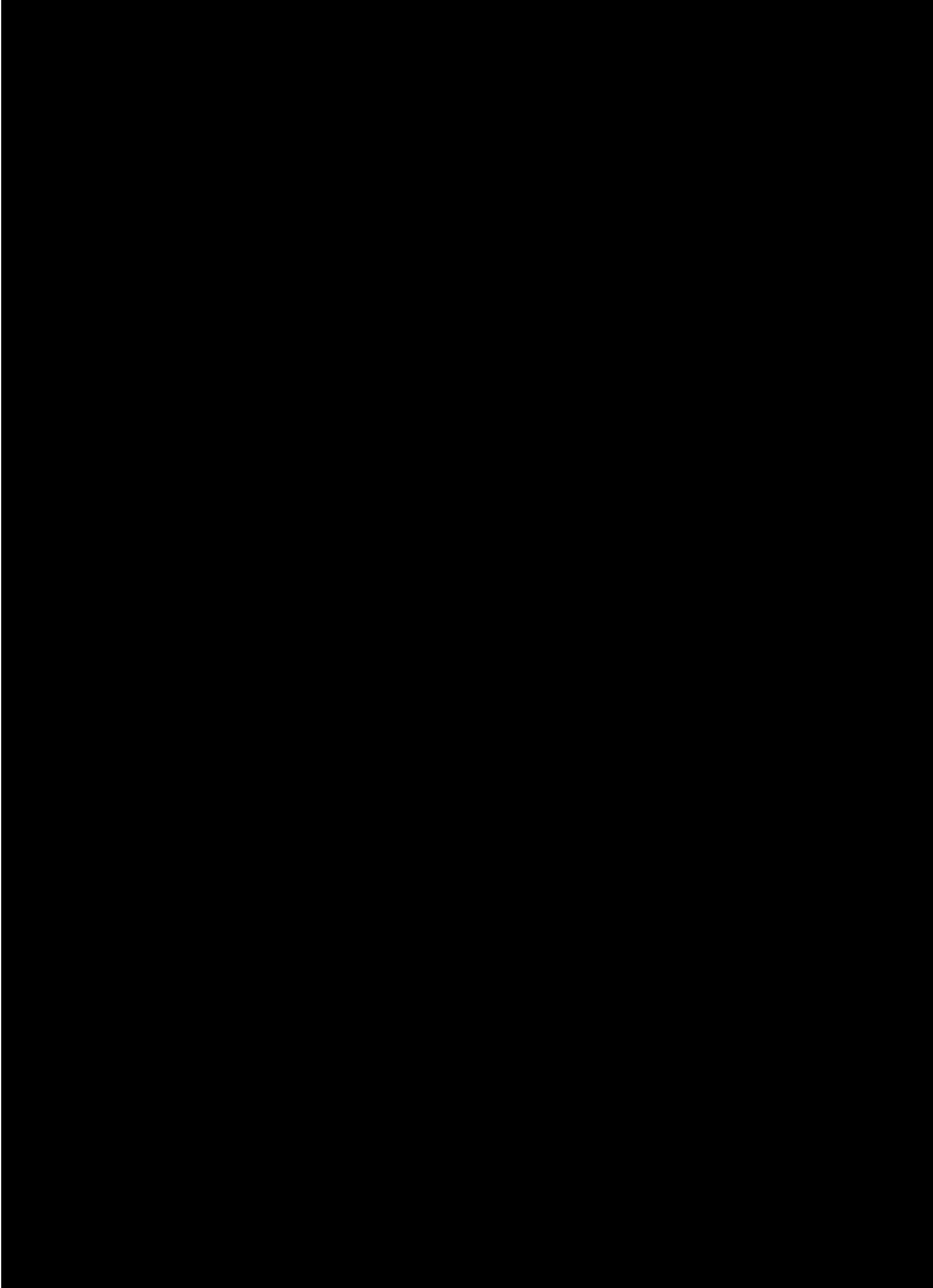
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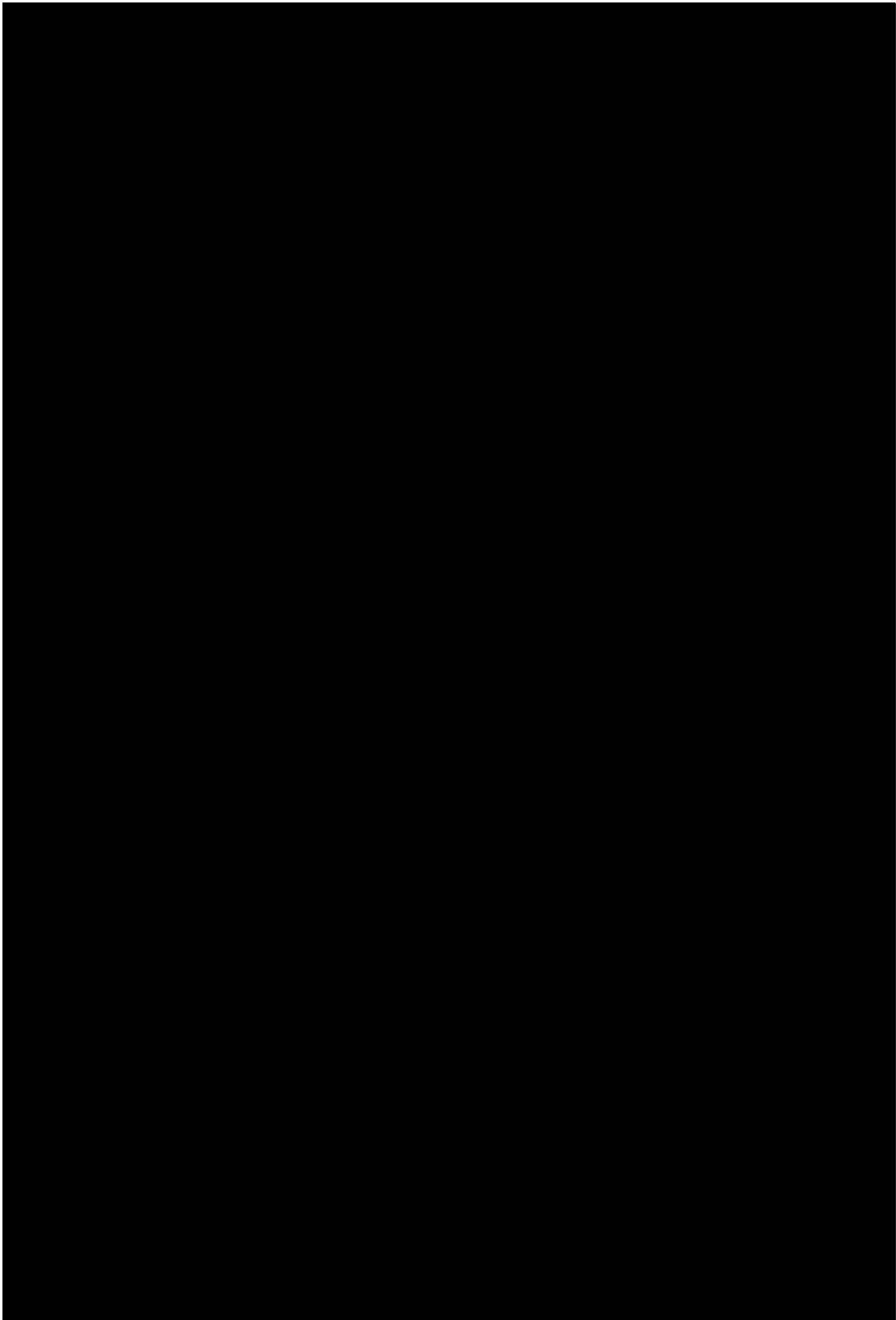
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[The following text is a dense, handwritten manuscript, likely a letter or a journal entry. It is written in a cursive script and covers the majority of the page. Due to the image quality and the nature of the handwriting, the specific words and sentences are largely illegible. The text appears to be organized into several paragraphs, with some lines indented. There are also some markings that could be initials or small diagrams interspersed within the text.]





