

Sent: Monday, 25 February 2019 8:34 PM

To: Local Government Mailbox <localgovernment@ipart.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: Port Stephens Council, Special Variation Application

To Whom it May Concern

The Port Stephens council special variation application is not is overwhelmingly opposed by the majority of Port Stephens ratepayers.

Survey after survey, run by Port Stephens council, has produced results showing that at least 60% of the respondents are against the SRV application. Council have admitted as much via official statements in local newspapers.

Council claim they have consulted with the community and are acting on feedback from this consultation. The evidence of the surveys, letters to the editor in local newspapers and comments on councils own website indicate they are not acting on the wishes of the majority residents who live in Port Stephens. If they were then they would not have proceeded with this application to IPART.

Residents in Port Stephens are not wealthy, and at least 50% of the residents are retirees living on fixed income.

Councils rate application, if approved, will increase rates by 66% over 7 years. Future rates will then be levied on this higher base, as the SRV is to remain included in the base once the 7 years are up. Residents are already struggling financially with higher power, food, insurance and other cost of living increases. An unnecessary rate increase will add to the financial burden of all households in the Port Stephens area.

No mention of applying for an SRV was made by any councilor during the last council elections. For Councillors to now claim that one is needed is disingenuous. If this is what the Councillors believe Port Stephens needs then they should take this to the next council elections and seek a mandate from the ratepayers. This would provide a clear indication of support or lack of support for such a proposal. Port Stephens council was also pronounced Fit for the Future not so long ago when the NSW state government examined local councils and their finances, so why would an SRV be required now?

I am asking that this request for a special rate variation by Port Stephens council be denied.