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MEDIA RELEASE

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Pensioners slam Local Government Minister Hickey's falsehoods on council rate REBATES

“It’s disappointing and worrying that the Minister for Local Government in NSW apparently does not understand the legislation he is administering”, said CPSA Policy Coordinator, Paul Versteegen today.

“NSW Local Government Minister, Kerry Hickey said on ABC South East this morning that it was up to local councils to increase the pensioner rebate on council rates.

“The Local Government Act 1993 sets a maximum \$250 rebate on ordinary rates and waste charges and a maximum rebate of \$87.50 each on water supply rates or charges and sewerage rates or charges. Councils are reimbursed by the NSW Government for 50 per cent and by the Commonwealth for 5 per cent of the revenue they forego in this way.

“In metropolitan areas, rebates on water and sewerage charges levied by Sydney Water and Hunter Water are set at 50%. Pensioners in the country miss out on that.

“CPSA calls on Minister Hickey to clarify whether he is trying to mislead the public or, in fact, doesn’t know what he is talking about.

“Minister Hickey is also wide off the mark when he says that the Commonwealth will reduce its puny contribution of 5% if the NSW Government increases its contribution to pensioner rebates on council rates. It just doesn’t work that way.

Page 1 of 2

“Increases in council rates announced recently of around 10 per cent are hard for all home owners, but especially so for pensioners who must make ends meet on less than \$500 a fortnight.

“Every year for the last thirteen years, council rates have gone up. This coming year they will go up dramatically.

“But the council rate rebates for pensioners have never been increased to keep pace.

“Council rate rebates for pensioners were set in 1993 and have not been adjusted since.

“Councils may have been subject to 30 years of rate-capping, but at least they got regular increases. Pensioners got nothing for 13 years to keep up with annual increases in council rates.

“CPSA calls on the NSW Government to amend the Local Government Act 1993 and grant the pensioners of New South Wales an immediate increase in their council rate rebate to 50% of actual rates and annual indexation in line with rate rises after that.

“CPSA also suggests that Local Government try to achieve an increased cut of the Federal Budget surplus to fund its operations.”

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