

MP Faces Corruption Charges For Exposing Porno Viewing GM

While Margaret Cunneen ultimately emerged victorious over ICAC in the High Court, the investigatory body has many more targets in its sights.

The latest subject of corruption charges is the former Mayor of Ryde, Liberal MP Ivan Petch.

Mr Petch was a councillor for 37 years but resigned in 2014, after a series of bitter disputes with fellow councillors and an ICAC investigation.

On 29 July, he was served with a court attendance notice and is set to join the thousands of people every year who appear at the [Downing Centre Courthouse in the Sydney CBD](#).

Petch will face the Downing Centre Local Court on 3 September, when the matter is first listed in court.

Porn on council laptops

Petch was in a [heated debate with other councillors over the new Ryde Civic Precinct redevelopment proposal](#).

He did not want the project to go ahead – and allegedly turned to underhanded methods of trying to get his way.

Petch allegedly threatened then-General Manager John Neish that his job would be unsafe after the 2012 election unless he took steps to delay the development, but Neish refused.

Petch then allegedly leaked information about Neish looking up pornography on a council-supplied laptop while at home – which was discovered by an IT worker who was trying to fix a virus that had attacked the computer.

During the ICAC inquiry, recorded phone conversations were played of Petch threatening to destroy Neish.

Threatening other councillors

Petch's threats did not just stop at Neish. It is also alleged that he threatened the acting replacement of Neish, Ms Danielle Dickson, after Neish quit.

It is further alleged that Petch threatened to withdraw support from Dickson if she did not decide in favour of Petch and other councillors in a costs dispute.

Petch is one of four men who will be facing court in September following the ICAC inquiry.

What are the charges?

Petch has been charged under [section 87 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 \(NSW\)](#) with 6 counts of giving false and misleading evidence during a 2013 ICAC investigation.

A person is guilty of this offence if they "knowingly provides false or misleading evidence during an ICAC investigation". The maximum penalty is five years imprisonment and/or a \$22,000 fine.

He is also charged with blackmail under section 249K of the Crimes Act 1900 (NSW), which comes with a maximum penalty of ten years imprisonment. Blackmail is defined as making any unwarranted demand with menaces, with the intention of obtaining a gain or of causing a loss, or influencing the exercise of a public duty.

Petch is facing an additional charge of misconduct in public office, which [is a 'common law' offence and has no maximum penalty.](#)

ICAC is also considering whether there is enough evidence to

recommend further charges involving breaches of electoral funding law.

Petch questions ICAC's authority

Petch maintains that the motivation behind his investigation has more to do with revenge and politics than substance.

He believes that fellow councillors targeted him for opposing the Ryde civic precinct plan, stating ["in relation to the accusations levelled at me, I'll happily be answering those in court – a real court."](#)

Petch appears unfazed by the proceedings, stating: "ICAC's feeble and desperate efforts to destroy one of the state's top prosecutors, Margaret Cunneen, clearly demonstrated its willingness to be used as a vehicle for payback."

But whether he will emerge victorious like Cunneen is an entirely different matter.

While the Cunneen investigation was concerned with something that happened outside her capacity as a public official, the same cannot be said for Petch.