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# WE'LL STAND FIRM

## Groups maintain pension pressure

SENIORS' groups will maintain pressure on the Federal Government to keep its sights set on the long-term goal of a fair go for pensioners following the release of the Harmer Review into pensions.

Members of the Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition will meet with Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin, and will seek a meeting with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, on March 16 to discuss the review findings, which were due to be released on February 28.

The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association will gather its membership and represen-

tatives of other groups at a public meeting in Sydney on March 11 to kick start its campaign for an \$80 per week means-tested increase for single pensioners with no additional income.

Despite comments made by Shadow Community Services Minister Tony Abbott that a \$35 per week single age pension increase was financially irresponsible, COTA Over-50s executive director Dr Geoffrey Bird has called for calm.

"We should not allow the current financial crisis to deflect us from the reform agenda," Dr Bird said.

"Ministers have repeatedly said the Harmer and Henry reviews are about

getting it right for the long term.

"It is disturbing to read, from what appear to be well-placed and official sources, reports of a \$35 increase in the single pension.

"COTAs have long advocated a substantial increase in the pension so that single pensioners receive a minimum \$746.60 per fortnight and couples receive a minimum \$1125.90 per fortnight.

"A call for a \$35 per week increase is inadequate and does not consider the multitude of research undertaken into the real cost of living in retirement."

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# Pensioners to keep up pressure

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NSW Alliance of Retired Trade Unionists president Morrie Mifsud said Mr Abbott's comments showed he was ignorant of the hardships of life on the current pension rate.

Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association policy coordinator Charmaine Crowe said Mr Abbott's comments that a \$35 per week increase to the single age pension would cost \$6 billion were inaccurate, with the figure more like \$2.2 billion annually.

However Ms Crowe said her organisation would campaign for a targeted \$80 per week means-tested increase.

"We understand the government doesn't have an endless pool of money to draw from in the upcoming budget," she said.

"This and speculation about the sustainability of pension reform only reiterate the need for increases to be well-targeted.

"CPSA is calling for a supplement for all pensioners whose sole source of income is the pension.

"This measure would ensure that no pensioner is living in poverty, and cost \$3.2 billion annually."

■ The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association public meeting will be held at the NSW Teachers Federation Conference Centre, 23 Mary St, Surry Hills, from 11am on March 11.

Details on 1800-451-488.