



# Every little bit helps

## Pension rise to pay for basics

By **JULIA PROSPERI-PORTA**

HILLS aged pensioners are a little better off following the weekly boost of \$32.49 for singles announced in last week's Federal Budget.

The increase will go to covering basics such as food and bills, they say.

**Beverley Thorne**, of Aberfoyle Park, says her money is earmarked for such expenses as house insurance, car registration and electricity.

"The price of everything is going up, it will all help – I'm very happy about it," she said.

**Gretta Oxley**, of Happy Valley, says it will help cover living expenses including food and petrol.

"It will be in the bank and we'll use it as it goes – every little bit helps," she said.

A Messenger Community News survey of nearly 1200 pensioners last October revealed many were isolated and struggling financially, with nearly half eating fewer than three meals a day and 90 per cent spending less than \$25 a week on entertainment or activities.

The Council on the Ageing (COTA) said the pension increase was a welcome commitment.

"But we will continue to fight for higher increases in the future, particularly when the economy comes out of recession," COTA chief executive **Ian Yates** said.

He conceded many pensioner

couples would be "legitimately disappointed" with their extra \$10.14 per week.

**Mia Esvelt**, of Flagstaff Hill, said such a small rise was a "joke".

"We just had a big laugh – we're a couple and for \$10 a week, we thought it was quite joke," she said. Mr Yates said a rise in the pension age from 65 to 67, between 2017 and 2023, was an "understandable move" by the government to pay for the pension increases.

"Sixty-five years was set about 100 years ago (as the pension age) and we now live a lot longer," he said. "So we're in retirement a lot longer and it makes sense that we will now have to work longer too."



**A WELCOME BOOST:** Aberfoyle Park pensioner Beverley Thorne says the extra money will help her pay her house insurance, car registration and electricity.  
Picture: Helen Orr