



HOUSEHOLD FINANCES

Pension rise worry

By Nina Bertok

ELDERLY pensioners in the northern suburbs say the weekly boost in their payments in the 2009 Federal Budget last week is not enough money.

Aged pensioners contacted by the *News Review Messenger* said the rise of up to \$32.49 for singles and \$10.14 for couples probably would not make a significant difference to their living standards. Single pensioner **Eveline Friend**, 75, of Elizabeth Downs, said the increase "stinks". "I think we should be getting at least \$70 to \$80 a week," she said.

"I have my son living with me to help me out because I live on such a tight budget.

"By the time you pay rates, land taxes, electricity, phone and water, you don't have much money left over."

Single pensioner **Doreen Holmes**, 80, of Salisbury, said the increase was welcome but other prices were going up. "I'm worried as soon as we get a pay increase the rent (Housing Trust) will go up," she said. "It would be nice to be able to have a treat as I am hoping to go to Melbourne for a holiday."

Another single pensioner planning a holiday is **Sofia Muculj**, 67, of Craigmore.



CONCERNED: Single pensioner Doreen Holmes says that, while the increase is welcome, other costs are likely to go up.



"I'm just surviving right now," she said. "I think the increase could help, I might try to save for a holiday at least. Pensioners are just used to being ignored."

A Messenger Community News Survey of nearly 1200 pensioners last October revealed many were isolated and struggling financially.

Nearly half were eating fewer than three meals a day and 90 per cent were spending less than \$25 a week on entertainment or activities.

Council on the Ageing chief executive **Ian Yates** vowed to fight for further aged pension increases when the economic climate improves.

He said a raise in the pension age from 65 to 67 between 2017 and 2023 was an "understandable move". "Sixty-five years was set about 100 years ago and we now live a lot longer, so we're in retirement a lot longer and it makes sense that we will now have to work longer too."