



B.N. WHIP

10-2-08.

SENATOR GARY FENLON
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
CANBERRA.

DEAR SENATOR

I HAVE BEEN READING WITH INTEREST THE ARTICLE IN BRIS. COURIER MAIL WHICH I HAVE ENCLOSED. THE EMPHASIS SEEMS TO DEAL WITH INCREASING SINGLE PENSIONS. (NOW \$537-70/FORTNIGHT)

WHAT ABOUT THE SCENARIO OF ONE PARTNER ONLY ELIGIBLE AT \$449-10/FORTNIGHT WITH THE OTHER PARTNER NOT OR UNABLE TO WORK. WE HAVE THE SAME COSTS IN UTILITIES ETC AS A SINGLE. THERE IS MORE OUTLAY ON FOOD, MEDICAL, DENTAL ETC THAN A SINGLE.

MY THOUGHTS ARE THAT THE ONE ELIGIBLE PARTNER SHOULD BE ON THE SINGLE RATE UNTIL THE OTHER PARTNER BECOMES OF AGE AND THEN THE COUPLE THEN REVERTS TO THE "BOTH PARTNERS ELIGIBLE RATE".

DOES THE INQUIRY INTEND TO ADDRESS THIS MATTER!!

YOURS SINCERELY



Bryan. N. WHIP

Pensioners, this is Gary from Canberra.

He's here to help

John McCarthy

A SENATE inquiry is likely to push for an increase in the single pension and the introduction of Medicare benefits for dental services for the aged.

The inquiry into The Cost of Living Pressures for Older Australians is also likely to push for better rental assistance and changes in the way pension increases are linked to the consumer price index.

At its Brisbane hearings yesterday the inquiry heard that a significant number of people up to the age of 80 were homeless or "couch surfing".

Queensland Shelter's Tracey Douglas said the number of elderly on waiting lists was growing.

Interest rate rises would be "catastrophic" in terms of the homeless she said.

Inquiry chairman Senator Gary Humphries, pictured, said the official linking of pension increases to the consumer price index would have to be reviewed.

He said the CPI, which includes a basket of goods including education, understated the impact of price rises to the elderly.

The problem with the CPI link was backed up by a submission from Paul Henman, a senior lecturer in social policy at the University of Queensland.

He said the CPI had not gauged the real impact of food price increases, bank fees, mobile-phone charges, internet access and the

reduction in bulk billing. A St Vincent de Paul Society submission showed that food, communication and utility cost increases had a big impact on pensioners.

"Older Australians who feel the CPI is not reflective of the cost pressures they are experiencing day-in, day-out are probably right," the society's submission said.

"Any increase in utility prices severely disadvantages the aged pensioners."

The inquiry heard several submissions that single pensioners were distinctly disadvantaged compared with married pensioners.

The current single pension is \$3770 a fortnight — 60 per cent of the couples' payment of \$4490 each, but international standards

suggest it should be as much as 67 per cent.

Dr Henman also submitted that the Government introduce a pensioner savings accounts into which the Federal Government would pay \$10 a week. This could be used to help pay the costs such as replacing expensive white goods.

He also said an increase in the superannuation guarantee to 15 per cent from its current 9 per cent would help reduce the burden for pensioners and Government.

Queensland's Senator Sue Boyce said it was likely an increase in the single-aged pension would be recommended by the Coalition Government.

