

Pension increase praised

SENIORS are calling the Government's long-awaited pension increases a good start.

"Of course we'd like more, but we're realistic in the current economic climate and this is a good foundation looking ahead," National Seniors CEO Michael O'Neill said.

Announcing the increase yesterday, Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin described them as fair, long overdue and sustainable.

The changes, which took effect yesterday, will deliver Australia's 3.3 million age pensioners the biggest increase in more than a decade.

They will also apply to carers, wife and widow pensioners and veteran income support recipients, as well as the disabled receiving pensions.

Single pensioners on the maximum rate will get an extra \$70.83 each fortnight, which boosts their total payment to \$671.90.

Couples will receive \$29.93 extra a fortnight, making their total payment \$1013.

Other benefits include the introduction of the new Work Bonus, which increases the

Peter Familari

amount of money they can retain through part-time work.

The Work Bonus replaces the Pension Bonus Scheme, which closed yesterday.

The Government also flagged changes to the pensioner income test that will see an increase in the withdrawal rate from 40 to 50 cents.

The Government will combine utilities, telephone, pharmacy and GST allowances in a new pension supplement allowance.

"These changes are a good foundation and it's good the Government is biting the bullet on single pensions," Mr O'Neill said.

While Ms Macklin called the changes the most significant in 100 years, Opposition spokesman Tony Abbot said pensioners should thank former Opposition leader Brendan Nelson for the increases.

But Mr O'Neill said that was "total nonsense".

"I was at the forefront of the previous debate on increases and the Liberals didn't contribute one bit to that debate. They were missing in action."



Snow domes: young cancer crusaders Lachie Barr, Luke Tindley-Cox and his cousin Sam Tindley-Roe. Picture: PAUL TREZISE

Shortcuts to fighting cancer

WHILE their mates planned school holiday fun, this brave bunch gave up their pride and joy.

After being touched by cancer, they lopped their luxurious locks to raise thousands of dollars for research into the disease.

Luke Tindley-Cox, 12, lost his mother, Megan Tindley, 43, to breast cancer last month.

Ben White, 11, is helping mum Sally fight a brain tumour, and Ben Savage, 11, lost an aunt to breast cancer.

Fellow Wonga Park

Cheryl Critchley

students Pat Howes, 12, and Lachie Barr, 11, also wanted to help. They were joined by Luke's cousin, Sam Tindley-Roe, 14.

The would-be chrome domes had already raised an impressive \$4000-plus for the National Breast Cancer Foundation when they took the plunge in front of the whole school on Friday.

"My mum, almost a month ago, she passed away from breast cancer that went to her liver," Luke said.

"I just want to help not make any more families go through what I'm going through and what we've had to go through so far."

Pat also had people in his life affected by the disease.

"I would like to limit the number of people who die every year of breast cancer," he said.

To donate visit www.nbcf.org.au and from the "donate" menu select "give in memory", click on "find a memorial" then search for "Megan Tindley" as a page or event name.

Dictator's horse cup ban call

A "BLOOD-soaked" dictator must be stopped from running a horse in the Melbourne Cup, the Greens say.

Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov aims to run his gelding Mourilyan in the Melbourne Cup, outraging activists who object to his human rights record.

Australian Greens leader Bob Brown called on Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to ban Mr Kadyrov — and his horses — from the country.

Mr Kadyrov was a brutal dictator who oversaw the torture of his opponents, Senator Brown said.

"Can you imagine the appalling prospect of Governor-General Quentin Bryce being asked to hand a Melbourne Cup to the blood-soaked hands of Mr Kadyrov?" Senator Brown said.

Mourilyan is trained in England by Gary Moore.

Mr Kadyrov has another horse in preparation for the spring carnival; stallion Bankable is set for the Mackinnon Stakes.

Victoria Racing Club chairman Rod Fitzroy said it was up to RVL, and not the VRC, to determine who could and could not own horses competing at its carnival.

"RVL has seen fit not to penalise the horse and it's really their jurisdiction, not ours," Mr Fitzroy said.

RVL integrity services head Terry Bailey said because Mr Kadyrov had no convictions, he was unable to be prevented from racing horses here.

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