



Aged bonus anger

By **FRANCESCA BELPERIO**

AGED pensioners are in desperate need of further financial help as their \$1400 December payments run dry, the Council on the Ageing says.

COTA SA chief executive **Ian Yates** said many pensioners had already spent their one-off Federal Government bonuses on debts, or home maintenance, and were still struggling to make ends meet.

"I think pensioners overall are having as much trouble coping as they were late last year before the bonus," Mr Yates said. "They have to keep making daily and weekly decisions on food, housing costs, transport, medical costs and things like their grandchildren, which are decisions they shouldn't have to be making in this day and age.

"We've just been through our second longest heatwave and many (pensioners) were not using their air-conditioning because they couldn't afford it." Mr Yates said COTA had received calls from pensioners frustrated by missing out on the \$42 billion Federal Government stimulus plan, which will give one-off payments of up to \$900 to families and low and middle income earners.



FRUSTRATED: Yvonne Goodall (front), with fellow members of Modbury YMCA's over 50s exercise class.

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He said if pensioners did not receive an increase in their fortnightly payments, they would be left "in an appalling position".

A Messenger Community Newspapers survey of nearly 1200 pensioners in October revealed many were isolated and struggling financially. Mr Yates said COTA would continue its

campaign to raise the aged pension by \$100 a week, to \$381, with increases staggered over the next "couple of years".

He hoped the increases would be announced as part of the government's May Budget Review.

Yvonne Goodall, 65, who is a member of an over 50s exercise class at Modbury's YMCA, said most of her friends had spent last year's bonus payments.

"(The last grant) didn't really go anywhere, they need to increase the pension and make health care more affordable," the Tea Tree Gully resident said.