

KELVIN THOMSON MP
Federal Member for Wills

***Speech to the Moreland Seniors Action Group Annual General
Public Meeting***

November 22, 2008

- The Federal Labor Government has recognised the need to strengthen the Australian economy during this time of global economic uncertainty by announcing in October an Economic Security Strategy of \$10.4 billion.
- This has included a \$4.8 billion down payment on long term pension reform that entails \$1400 to single pensioners and \$2100 for couples.
- Carers, disability support pensioners and veterans will also benefit.
- This is about delivering real and immediate support to people who need it most while also responding to challenging economic times.
- These pension payments will be made from the 8 December 2008 and are intended to provide additional support in the 9 months between now and when long-term reforms are introduced from the beginning of the next financial year.
- The design of these long-term reforms is being examined by the Treasury Secretary Ken Henry who is preparing a report on how we can confront the long-term interrelated challenges of our tax, welfare and retirement systems, which will include a review of age pensions. It is due in February 2009.
- I welcome the fact that both the Prime Minister and the Treasurer have acknowledged that pensioners are struggling.
- Organisations like the Moreland Seniors Action Group have contributed significantly to raising the awareness of the public and the government about the pressures facing seniors.
- I am acutely aware of the pressures confronting pensioners and have taken action in the Parliament in raising these issues. In my Budget reply speech I expressed the view that pensioners need more support than they are getting within a cost of living environment that has seen significant increases in the cost of food, electricity and particularly petrol. The pension is not keeping pace with these inflationary pressures.
- I have also delivered a speech in Parliament on June 18 concerning a petition I received from the Moreland Seniors Action Group that was presented to my office, and concerned the situation facing pensioners and called for an increase in pension payments. The 1800 signatures that make up the petition outline the difficulties facing pensioners in meeting the increasing electricity, gas, pharmaceuticals, food and petrol prices. The petition was presented to the Parliament on June 23.
- I think that it is invaluable that people are pursuing these issues through petitions and other processes, and I commend the work of the

Moreland Seniors Action Group in calling for reform to assist struggling seniors.

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