



Maria Ciavarella teaches classes on keeping backyard chooks.

Pictures: MARTIN REDDY N17D7204

Egged along to backyard basketfuls

THE number of Manningham residents chasing chooks is growing. Maria Ciavarella, who runs classes on keeping backyard chooks at Bulleen Art and Garden, said the egg-laying pet's popularity was soaring.

Ms Ciavarella said people were getting hens for practical reasons, but ended up having a lot of fun with them as well.

"The No.1 reason is for the eggs: they're beautiful, fresh eggs, and you know what's in them," Ms Ciavarella said.

"Then you get plenty of manure and chooks have a lovely nature -



Chooks are crowing in Manningham.

when they're pecking around, it's a lovely sight. A lot of mums and dads are buying them - you can

keep them in the back yard, they don't need to be walked and they're productive."

Macclesfield supplier Abundant Layers said staff had been run off their feet with requests for hens, and, at \$20 each, with a lifespan of three years, they were a great investment.

Generally four hens are allowed in suburban back yards in Manningham. Bulleen Art and Garden's classes give potential owners tips on sheltering their hens safely from rats and foxes and counteracting illness. For more information, phone 9850 5155.

Pensioners seek more than a oncer

Danielle Crowe

NOT all pensioners are joyous about the Federal Government's \$1400 pre-Christmas cash bonus.

The Government announced last week it would give a \$1400 lump sum to single pensioners and \$2100 to couples by December 8 to stimulate the economy.

Although Manningham's pensioners welcomed the cash bonus, they said a regular fortnightly pension increase would give struggling people more comfort.

Doncaster Senior Citizens Club president Peggy Cresp said: "A regular increase would be preferable as the \$1400 will be gone before you know it."

Welfare agency Doncare's emergency relief manager Angela O'Brien said the Government's cash bonus was misguided.

While it was "timely and positive", a lump sum payment failed to tackle "serious hardship" now faced by people on Centrelink benefits. "Sadly, the cheer it brings will be short-lived," Ms O'Brien said.

Templestowe Central Probus

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Emergency relief manager Angela O'Brien

Club member Betty Laidlaw said any financial bonus would ease the financial burden temporarily, but would not be the end of the constant financial struggle and uncertainty for Manningham's retirees.

"The extra \$1400 will allow me to keep my private health insurance, which I was considering dropping, for at least another 18 months but then it's gone," Ms Laidlaw said.

Ms O'Brien said many of Manningham's pensioners were "sinking fast". "We know that a Centrelink income is inadequate in Australia today to meet basic daily living needs," she said.

A single age pensioner receives \$290.70 a week, while a member of a couple receives \$242.85 - less than quarter of the average Manningham weekly wage.