

Car victim of petrol prices

Christine Antoniou

LOW-INCOME Manningham families have had to sell their cars because of soaring petrol prices cutting into their budgets.

Doncare financial counsellor Ann Clarke blamed increasing petrol prices and bills for a 20 per cent rise in demand for financial help endured by the service in the past six months.

Ms Clarke said the impact was not just financial, but had also eroded the "fabric of

society", she said. "Petrol prices have been impacting on people in the past year, but in the past three to six months they have been impacting incredibly," Ms Clarke said.

"People are saying everything has become very expensive and when they do a budget where they might have been allocating \$30 for petrol, now (they) need \$60.

"We are seeing more and more people having to get rid of their cars altogether because of petrol prices because they can't afford a large percentage of their budget

going into petrol and repairs. And the problem is only going to get worse and eventually people on benefits just won't be able to afford a car or it might only be used for emergencies if petrol keeps going up."

As winter approached, Ms Clarke said more families would have trouble paying heating bills and putting food on the table.

"The combination of petrol and utility bills really stretch the budget, especially at this time of the year," she said.

"And the flow-on effect is that people are

telling me they are only spending what money is left on food and that leads to things like health problems. "One person told me they were tired of living on noodles. It is incredibly difficult for people and a constant juggling act." Ms Clarke said families did not just suffer financially, but emotionally and socially, too.

■ Have fuel prices affected your budget?
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