



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Announces Schedule Of Payment Of €157m Christmas Welfare Bonus Payment To Over 1.2m Customers And Dependents

Seamus Brennan - "Bonus Is A Financial Lifeline For Hundreds Of Thousands At A Particularly Stressful Time Of Year"

The Minister for Social Affairs, Seamus Brennan T.D., today gave full details of the Christmas bonus payments schedule that will directly benefit over 1.2 million welfare customers and their dependents.

Minister Brennan said that the bonus, which was recently approved by the Cabinet, will benefit over 855,000 welfare recipients and an estimated 394,000 dependents at a total cost of EUR157million. The bonus is equivalent to 100% of the normal weekly payment and this means a double payment of entitlements - the bonus and the normal weekly entitlement - for all who qualify.

Minister Brennan said he was now in a position to confirm that the bonus is paid on the following dates:

28 November 2006 in respect of	Jobseekers Allowance (long-term) Farm Assist Pre-Retirement Allowance
29 November 2006 in respect of	Disability Allowance
30 November 2006 in respect of	Carer's Benefit Carer's Allowance State Pension (Transition) Invalidity Pension
1 December 2006 in respect of	One-Parent Family Payment Disablement Pension Death Benefit State Pension Widow's/Widower's Guardian's Payment Blind Pension



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Minister Brennan said: "This bonus payment is relied on by hundreds of thousands of people, and is a lifeline at this time of year as spending pressures increase. This extra social welfare payment at the full 100 per cent rate will now be paid for seven years in a row and is a sign of our commitment to social welfare recipients and to supporting those who most need help, recognition and an extra financial boost, particularly at this time of year. For example, many social welfare pensioners and long-term unemployed people would in general rely entirely on their social welfare payments for financial support and that is why maintaining the bonus at 100 per cent is so important.

"This Government is harnessing the fruits of economic success and channelling much of it to help those who are struggling and feel marginalised. This year alone my Department is spending nearly €14 billion - or almost €1 for every €3 of taxpayers money that the State will spend - on entitlements, supports and services. That is double what was being spent no more than four years ago."

The bonus is also paid to certain participants of FÁS, VTOS, Job Initiative and CE schemes, in addition to those in receipt of payments under the Rural Social Scheme and certain income maintenance schemes operated by the Department of Health and Children.

The total cost of the Christmas Bonus - estimated to be €156.48m - breaks down as follows:

- €148.2m for social welfare customers;
- €6.06m for certain participants of FÁS, VTOS, Job Initiative and CE schemes;
- €1.55 for certain income maintenance schemes provided by the Department of Health and Children;
- €670,000 for participants in the Rural Social Scheme operated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Ends