



Minister Cullen – more than 300,000 social welfare recipients to get once-off payments this week reflecting Budget Pension increases

Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs today (Thursday 14 February 2008) announced that more than 300,000 of the country's pensioners who receive their weekly payment in Post Offices will receive a once-off lump sum payment this week in addition to their regular weekly payment.

The once-off payments are being issued today Thursday **14 February** in respect of the **State Pension (Transition)** and the **Invalidity Pension** and tomorrow Friday **15 February** in respect of the **State Pension (Contributory and Non-Contributory)** and the **Widow's and Widower's (Contributory and Non-Contributory) Pension**.

The payments to these 300,000 social welfare customers are being made on foot of Budget 2008 pension increases which form part of the Government's 2008 social welfare Budget package of €900 million. For the year ahead, the Department of Social and Family Affairs overall total welfare spend will be a record €17 billion.

The payments to State Pensioners (Contributory, Non-Contributory and Transition) will cover a 12-week period from the 3 and 4 of January - when the Budget 2008 increases in these payments began - right to the end of March when these pensioners' new payable order books (or pension books) showing the increased value of their pensions will be printed and issued.*

In relation to these 12-week lump sum payments, Minister Martin Cullen TD said: "In Budget 2008, the State Pension (Contributory and Transition) were increased by €14 to €223.30 per week while the maximum weekly rate of the State Pension (Non-Contributory) went up by €12 per week to €212. This means that a person for example, in receipt of a personal rate State Pension (Contributory) will tomorrow Friday, receive a €168 lump sum payment representing the period from 4 January to 27 March 2008, meaning they will receive an overall payment this week of €377.30. The weekly increase of €14 will be included in their new payable order books from the 28 March."



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Invalidity Pensioners are also to receive a once-off payment this week reflecting the period from 3 January to date. Their new increase will be included in their newly-printed payable order books available from today. Therefore recipients of the Invalidity Pension aged for example 65 years or over and in receipt of the personal rate of €223.30 will receive an additional sum of €98 together with their improved weekly payment. Invalidity Pensioners who are also in receipt of a payment for their spouse or partner age 66 years or over, will receive a total payment of up to €287.

Widow's and Widower's (Contributory and Non-Contributory) Pensioners will also receive a payment dating from 4 January to date - with their new increases also included in their newly-printed payable order books available from 15 February. The Budget increased the Widow's and Widower's (Contributory) Pension by €14 per week to €223.30 for those aged 66 years and over. The Widows and Widowers (Non-Contributory) Pension maximum rate was increased from €185.80 to €197.80.

Minister Martin Cullen TD said: "This Government has always prioritised improvements in the standard of living and quality of life of the country's pensioners. Continual pension increases have had a marked impact on the living standards, particularly of older people, enabling them to face the future with a greater sense of security. The Budget 2008 increases in pensions serve to make significant progress towards achieving the Government's target on social welfare pension levels - which is to increase the State pension to at least €300 per week by 2012 - while the positions of the spouse or partner of contributory pensioners who receive the qualified adult allowance have also significantly improved." The Minister concluded: "Budget 2008 increases mean that the real value of all social welfare payments have been maintained and safeguarded."

Editor's note:

- *The lump sum once-off payment is being issued this week in respect of the State Pension (Contributory, Non-Contributory and Transition) - as has been the case in previous years - because of the lead-in time involved in the production of Personal Payable Orders (or Pension Books).
- Some 120,000 pensioners who opt to be paid directly into their post office/bank/building society account have been receiving



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- their Budget 2008 pension increase weekly since January and therefore do not require back pay or advance payment.
- The Department is implementing a three-year strategy to change paper based payments to swipe card payments at post offices and financial institutions. The programme is being implemented on a phased basis. A range of measures are underway to inform customers of the change in payment methods and to allay concerns which they may have regarding the use of swipe cards to collect their payment at post offices. It should be noted that the use of cards will be possible at *all* post offices. It should also be noted that where a customer makes use of an 'agent' to collect their payment, their existing book payment system will remain.
 - Recipients of Disability Allowance also received a once-off payment yesterday (13 February).
 - Details of the 2008 increases are available from www.welfare.ie or the Department of Social and Family Affairs on 1890 66 22 44 (LoCall) from 9:am – 5:pm Monday to Friday. Note: The rates charged for the use of 1890 (LoCall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

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