



NEWS RELEASE

12 February 2008

Minister Cullen introduces the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2008

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Martin Cullen TD this afternoon (**12 February 2008**) introduced the **Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2008** which is the second of two Bills which will implement the social welfare Budget 2008 package of €900 million announced last December. Social welfare improvements in the Bill include increases in Child Benefit and the Early Childcare Supplement (to come into effect in April), and in the Respite Care Grant (in June).

Introducing the Bill in the Dáil, Minister Martin Cullen TD said: "From April 2008 the lower and higher Child Benefit rates will increase by €6 and €8 respectively bringing the new monthly payments to €166 for each of the first two children and to €203 for the third and subsequent children. These increases will benefit more than 570,000 families in respect of approximately 1.1 million children."

Minister Cullen added: "On behalf of the Minister for Children, the Bill also provides for an increase of €100 in the annual rate of the Early Childcare Supplement, bringing the rate to €1,100 per year in respect of each child under six years of age. This is a quarterly payment with the first €275 payment to issue to parents and guardians on 14 April next. This increase will benefit up to 430,000 children by the end of 2008."

Minister Cullen continued: "The social welfare Budget package set aside €194 million when the Early Childcare Supplement is included, to improve the range of supports provided for children. Budget 2008 provides for increases of 6% or above in overall child income support through a combination of Child Benefit,



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Qualified Child increases, Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance and the Early Childcare Supplement.”

In relation to the Respite Care Grant, first introduced in June 1999 in recognition of the importance of respite to carers, Minister Martin Cullen TD said: “Recognition of and support for carers has been a priority for this Government and it has been reinforced in the national partnership agreement “Towards 2016”. In recognition of the valuable work of carers, this Bill makes provision for increasing the rate of the annual Respite Care Grant by €200 to €1,700 for each care recipient from June 2008. This measure will benefit approximately 48,200 carers this summer.”

The Bill also allows for a €25 per week increase in the upper earnings limit for qualification for the One-Parent Family Payment to €425 - improving on the 2007 €400 limit. The One-Parent Family Payment is a means-tested payment for men and women who are bringing up a child without the support of a partner.

The Bill also contains the statutory basis for the administration of the Blind Welfare Allowance and the Domiciliary Care Allowance by the Department of Social and Family Affairs. These schemes are currently administered by the Department of Health and Children and their transfer is part of the Government’s health service reform programme.

Minister Cullen added: “The transfer of these payments within mainstream income support legislation is appropriate and one which will provide a more streamlined, customer-oriented service to recipients of both Domiciliary Care Allowance and Blind Welfare Allowance; most recipients of these allowances are already customers of the Department of Social and Family Affairs and the transfer



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across of these two payments will allow for their needs to be dealt with in one Department.”

The full text of the *Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2008* is available on www.oireachtas.ie

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