



**Fine Gael gets it wrong
as school shoes and clothing package increased not cut
– Mary Coughlan Minister for Social and Family
Affairs**

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance has been increased by ten percent –and is not being cut as Fine Gael claimed today, said Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Coughlan.

”I am surprised at the claim made by Fine Gael’s social and family affairs spokesman Michael Ring today. He claims he has concerns that the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance is being cut this year. That is not so –and were he to refer to a Parliamentary Question that I answered for him on 26th June last, he would know that the fund for this important scheme has in fact been increased this year.”

” I have increased the total fund this year by ten per cent to €16.8 million – and not cut it back this year as claimed by Fine Gael.”

“Earlier this month his opposition colleagues in Labour launched a policy document calling for an expansion of the school meals programme which also aims to tackle disadvantage.”

” In this instance the Labour party were unaware that the scheme had been reviewed by a working group- and that as a result of their review, I doubled funding for the scheme, which has consequently been extended to all areas of the country and to second level schools.

”Mr Ring, for Fine Gael has expressed serious concerns about a review, but again I told him about this review earlier in the year in the Dáil. The Labour party was concerned that there wasn’t a review of the school meals programme.

”Reviews in my experience are beneficial – and I would point particularly to the thousands of extra children who will now get a school meal as a result of the review and my progressive action. I would be concerned that the opposition parties are unaware of what is going on in the real world and are out of touch with the concerns of parents and schoolchildren,” said Minister Coughlan.

ENDS August 19th 2003