



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Coughlan And Ahern Introduce Lifetime Free Television Licence

Dermot Ahern TD, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources and Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today announced significant improvements in the arrangements for issuing free television licences to persons eligible under the Department of Social and Family Affairs' Household Benefits Package Scheme.

From the first of August, a person who newly qualifies for the Household Benefits Package will receive an award notification, from the Department of Social and Family Affairs, incorporating their free television licence. This will serve as a "lifetime" licence for as long as the person remains entitled to the Benefits Package Scheme. For customers already in receipt of a free television licence, a lifetime licence will issue to them once their current licence falls due for renewal.

Under current arrangements, a person who qualifies for the Household Benefits Package must present their award notification at a post office in order to obtain their first free television licence. Thereafter, An Post issues the licence by post to the qualifying person, on an annual basis.

Minister Ahern stated "Since I became Minister, many initiatives have been introduced to increase the efficiency of the licence fee collection. This initiative being announced today will cut the cost of the administration of the free licence scheme with benefits for my Department, the DSFA, An Post and RTÉ".

Minister Coughlan said: "This initiative will benefit 300,000 existing social welfare customers, with a further 40,000 people benefiting each year. It is an excellent example of Government agencies co-operating to provide better services to their customers."

The Household Benefits Package, comprising the Telephone Allowance, Electricity/Natural Gas Allowance and Free TV Licence, is available to people living in the State aged 66 years or over who are in receipt of a social welfare type payment or who satisfy a means test. It is also available to carers and people with disabilities under the age of 66 who are in receipt of certain welfare type payments and to all people aged 70 years and over, regardless of their income or household composition.

Ends - August 1st 2004