



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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### **Check Up On Your Elderly Neighbour On International Day Of Older Persons Call By Mary Coughlan Social And Family Affairs Minister**

Make a special effort to check up on your elderly neighbour, Social and Family Affairs Minister Mary Coughlan urged today as a positive means of marking the International Day of Older Persons.

"Many old people live alone and with limited social contact. This week we celebrate positive ageing week and today (Wednesday) the International Day of Older Persons," said Minister Coughlan.

"To mark the contribution of our older people to our society we should take time to check up on our elderly neighbour's well being, reinforce the spirit of community and brighten up everyone's day with a friendly call".

"We have all heard much of the phrase and Government policy of social inclusion - today I'd ask everyone to socially include your elderly neighbours in your life for even just a few minutes".

"This is also a good time to consider your own future and your private/occupational pension coverage. In the marketplace women and lower paid workers in particular have the least pension cover -and nationally I'd like to see that figure rise from 50 to 70 per cent".

"Consequently I will shortly be announcing details of Pensions Awareness Week promoted by the National Pensions Board later this month which will aim to increase awareness, debate and hopefully pension cover," said Minister Coughlan.

"Last year over 2,296million was paid out in state pensions to over 287,390 people. I am committed to ensuring that the needs of older people are prioritised as I believe in ensuring that older people live in the dignity their immense contribution to our country deserves."

"I remain committed to further increasing the state pension and ensuring that we make sure those increased pensions can be paid to growing numbers of older people in future years."

"This Government has worked hard to improve the lot of our hitherto forgotten generations, by improving pension rates by 59 per cent since 1997, by removing thousands from the tax net, by extending medical cards to everyone over 70 years of age and increasing the availability of a range of household benefits like fuel and phone allowances to more older people."

"Today is a day to remember what our older people have done for us in laying the foundations of this prosperous young country - and by returning that favour and sacrifice with a friendly hello," said Minister Coughlan.

**Ends**

**30th September 2003**