



**MINISTER COUGHLAN LAUNCHES
PENSIONS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2002**

Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, today launched the twelfth annual report of the Pensions Board.

“This report shows that the year 2002 saw many changes to the pensions landscape in Ireland. The passing of the Pensions Amendment Act 2002 and the start of PRSAs in November marked significant milestones,” Minister Coughlan said.

The Pensions Board and the Revenue Commissioners are responsible for the approval of PRSA products. To date 52 products □ 19 standard PRSAs and 33 non□standard PRSAs have been approved.

“Two critical elements of the PRSA framework and supports have yet to be put in place – first, mandatory employer access and secondly, the National Pensions Awareness campaign which is timed to support the employer requirement,” the Minister added.

The National Pensions Awareness Campaign will include information initiatives, advertising and information booklets the first of which was launched last week and describes employers’ legal obligations in relation to PRSAs.

Minister Coughlan also said: “Following extensive consultation and discussion the Board recommended a change to the legislation to allow it to respond, on a case by case basis, to schemes that find themselves in funding difficulties on foot of the downturn in the equities market.

Discussions in this regard are still ongoing between the Board and the Society of Actuaries in Ireland and I would hope that these would be concluded as soon as possible.”

“I am aware that the approach of the Pensions Board is to balance the requirements of member protection while avoiding over-regulation and excessive complexity as this could have an inhibiting effect on pension provision.”

“I am aware also of work being undertaken by the Society of Actuaries in Ireland and by the Irish Association of Pension Funds about the underfunding by employees and employers of Defined Contribution arrangements. This must be addressed in the DC, and the PRSA context going forward. I will be seeking reports from the Board on this in the future,” Minister Coughlan said.

“The Pensions Board should be proud of its progress to date and, in an ever-changing pensions environment, I am confident of the Board’s ability to navigate the regulatory and policy road ahead,” the Minister concluded.



ENDS July 9th 2003