



PRESS RELEASE

09/10/09

Hanafin hears Budget views directly from concerned groups

Vital that supports are targeted at most vulnerable

“The Government is spending over €58 million each and every day in 2009, on Social Welfare, an increase of almost €10 million per day over what was spent last year” said Mary Hanafin T.D., Minister for Social & Family Affairs. The Minister said, **“this shows the scale of the increase in numbers of people accessing support. It also shows the enormous pressure that Social Welfare expenditure has put on the public finances over the past year.”**

Representatives of over 30 voluntary and advocacy groups made pre-Budget submissions relating to social welfare schemes at a special session in St Andrews Resource Centre in Dublin’s Pearse Street today.

Minister Hanafin said the Pre-Budget Forum is a very important date in her calendar, as it gives organisations representing everyone from the youngest child to the oldest pensioner a chance to voice issues of concern to them as the Government sets about preparing the Budget.

“Each of the groups here represents men, women and children from all over the country. Many families and individuals are struggling with changed circumstances, having lost employment or perhaps have been



put on reduced working hours. We know that families are facing tough times, and tough decisions. The Government too is faced with unprecedented financial circumstances, where we have to continue to provide services and supports for all of society, but particular focus has to be on vulnerable people dependent on social welfare.

As we face into the Budget, I will be looking to minimise the impact of any changes to the greatest possible degree, however the current economic reality means that some areas of expenditure will have to be reduced.

Since last years pre-Budget Forum, there has been a decrease in the numbers in employment, consumer confidence has dropped and growth in the economy has declined. On the flip-side of this, prices have also fallen which is good for consumers experiencing reduced levels of income. "

Over 1.3 million people receive a weekly payment from the Department, including those getting a jobseekers payment, on pensions, as a carer or for illness and disability. Some 600,000 families also receive the monthly Child Benefit payment as well, which this year is expected to cost €2.5billion.

Minister Hanafin said **"I would like to stress that at this stage no decisions have been made in relation to social welfare measures for the next Budget. We have to be very conscious, in the upcoming deliberations, of the cumulative impact on individuals and families of all of the measures across Departments.**



The voice and on-the-ground experience of all of the groups present here at this forum is an important element of the budgetary process and I will carry back their views and concerns to the Cabinet table.”

ENDS

9th October 2009

List of organisations invited to Pre-Budget Forum

1. Threshold
2. Marriage and Relationship Counselling Service (MRCS)
3. Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA)
4. Trustus
5. Saint Vincent de Paul
6. Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
7. TREOIR
8. Carers Association
9. Congress Centres Network (ICTU)
10. Age Action Ireland
11. National Women’s Council of Ireland
12. Pavee Point
13. National Association of Widows in Ireland
14. Barnardos
15. Retired Workers Committee
16. Vincentian Partnership for Justice
17. One Family
18. People with Disabilities in Ireland (PWDI)
19. Care Alliance Ireland
20. Inclusion Ireland (National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability)
21. Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE)
22. ACCORD (Catholic Marriage Counselling Service)
23. Unmarried and Separated Fathers of Ireland
24. One Parent Exchange and Network (OPEN)
25. Children’s Rights Alliance
26. Cúram
27. Family Solidarity
28. National Federation of Pensioners’ Associations



Department of Social and Family Affairs

29. Social Justice Ireland
30. CROSSCARE (Catholic Social Service Conference)
31. Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)