



News Release

14th November 2007

Minister Cullen announces €180 million Christmas Bonus payment to benefit 1.3 million social welfare customers

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, **Martin Cullen TD**, today (14 November 2007) announced details of the **Christmas bonus double payment** that will directly benefit 1.3 million social welfare customers and their dependents at an estimated cost of almost **€180 million**. The bonus will be paid during the first week of December.

The Christmas bonus is equivalent to 100% of the normal weekly payment and this means a double payment of entitlements - the normal weekly payment and the bonus - for all who qualify. Some 1.3 million social welfare customers (almost 892,000 recipients and an estimated 400,000 dependents) will benefit from the bonus.

Minister Martin Cullen TD said: "This will be the eighth year in which the Government has provided a 100% Christmas bonus. Christmas is one of the most expensive times of the year and the payment of the bonus will go some way to assist in meeting household Christmas costs."

Weekly social welfare payments eligible for the Christmas bonus include State Pension (Contributory, Non-Contributory and Transition), Widow's and Widower's (Contributory and Non Contributory Pension), Guardian's Payment (Contributory and Non-Contributory), Invalidity Pension, Blind Pension, Deserted Wife's Benefit, Carer's Allowance and Benefit, Disability Allowance, Farm Assist, long-term Jobseeker's Allowance and a number of other employment support payments.



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Some typical weekly social welfare rates (maximum) include; State Pension (Contributory) (€209.30) State Pension (Non-Contributory) (€200); Carer's Allowance (€200); Jobseeker's Allowance (€185.80); and Farm Assist (€185.80).

The Christmas Bonus is also paid to certain participants of FÁS, Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS), Job Initiative and Community Employment schemes and certain income maintenance schemes operated by the Department of Health and Children. In addition, those in receipt of payments under the Rural Social Scheme will also benefit.

In relation to the issue of financial pressure on families and individuals at this time of the year, **Minister Cullen** said: "I am very concerned about the problem of debt in some low income families. MABS (the Money Advice and Budgeting Service), with its 53 offices around the country is there to provide advice to people who are over indebted and in need of support. I would encourage people who are anxious about the issue of debt in the run up to Christmas to get advice from their local MABS office or contact the MABS lo-call telephone number **1890 283438**." The Minister added: "The aim of this national Helpline is to provide greater ease of access to MABS support for those experiencing financial worries and the number offers confidential support in conjunction with existing MABS services."

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