

Minister Mary Coughlan urges Irish Dental Association to reconsider their position

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Coughlan TD has urged the Irish Dental Association (IDA) to reconsider their rejection of her offer to set up an independent review to end the current dispute.

The Minister said: I have previously offered to set up an independent review or go to independent arbitration in a bid to end this dispute –however that has been rejected by the Irish Dental Association.

“I would ask them to reconsider this offer. I am determined to end this dispute and if the IDA continue to refuse to participate in reaching an agreed settlement I will be obliged to give further consideration to appointing a review group made up of experts and will act on their conclusions.

”I am concerned that members of the public have been inconvenienced by the withdrawal of members of the IDA from the dental scheme.

”I would pay tribute to those dentists who are still honouring their contracts with the Department of Social and Family Affairs, and members of the public can be put in contact with a dentist operating the scheme locally by ringing my Department’s local number 1890 400 400 extension 4480.

“The same amount of PRSI funding has been paid into the scheme last year as the previous year, and no “saving” or cut back has been made as a result of this dispute. The 1.2 per cent of the total PRSI funding which represents dental expenditure cannot be repaid to contributors as it is being used to fund those hundreds of dentists who continue to operate the scheme.

”I am determined to bring a resolution to this dispute. The apparent objective of the IDA is to change the nature of the dental scheme which would result in full private fees becoming the norm under the scheme.

”On behalf of the consumer, the PRSI payer, I cannot allow the dental scheme to be undermined and would appeal to the IDA to reconsider their position and join with me in working to resolve this unnecessary dispute,” said Minister Coughlan.

”Officials at my Department are always willing to meet with the IDA to resolve this situation, and I would consider meeting with the IDA to discuss their agreement to the establishment of an independent review, “ said Minister Coughlan.

ENDS

21st January 2003