



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

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### **Leap Day Babies First To Celebrate Anniversary Of The Family- Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs**

Babies born on Leap Day 29th February 2004 will be the first to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

Mary Coughlan Minister for Social and Family Affairs will commence the Government funded celebrations by giving these new special babies a once off bounty payment of €100.

"The 10th Anniversary of the United Nations Year of the Family is an important event that we will be marking in Dublin later this year. As part of our celebration I intend establishing a celebratory fund which family groups around the country will be invited to apply for monies to celebrate the family".

"I will be announcing details of this scheme shortly. However, to launch this scheme, I will be making a once off payment available to parents of babies born on February 29th from that fund to mark this great event. Instead of inviting groups to jump at the opportunity, I will be inviting them to leap!" said Minister Coughlan.

"It is hard to predict how many babies will be born throughout the country on any one particular day – but based on figures from the Central Statistics Office as many as 165 Leap Day babies may be born this year".

"Leap Years are special, and babies born on the 29th will effectively have to wait for another four years for their birthday. I felt they should be given a special welcome this year as it is the 10th Anniversary of the Year of the Family".

"It is my responsibility, as Minister for Family Affairs, to ensure that the well being of all individuals, especially children, are safeguarded within the family and that all families irrespective of the form they take, receive appropriate state support in meeting their caring responsibilities", said Minister Coughlan.

Arrangements will be made through maternity hospitals for the Leap Day payments to be made, and mothers who give birth at home are invited to apply directly to the Minister at the Department of Social and Family Affairs, AMD Store Street, Dublin 1.

Ends February 22nd 2004

Note: CSO figures show a total of 60,500 babies born in 2002 – giving an average daily birth rate of 165.

#### For further information:

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