

## **Minister Coughlan Attends 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Sligo Pension Services Office**

Mary Coughlan, T.D., Minister for Social and Family Affairs today attended the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Pension Services Office (PSO) in Sligo. The Minister hailed the PSO as an excellent example of successful decentralisation and looked forward to the further relocation of 100 jobs from her Department's Headquarters in Dublin to Sligo.

"The establishment of the Pension Services Office in Sligo, fifteen years ago, was one of the first major decentralisation of a Government Department. The obvious success of this earlier relocation bodes well for the new Government decentralisation programme, which will see a further 100 jobs from my Department coming to Sligo," said Minister Coughlan.

"At the time, the move provided an opportunity for people to relocate to a rural location, to join the Civil Service and, for many, it was a chance to come home. For others the move resulted in promotion to a higher grade, all of which served to give an upbeat approach to what was then a major undertaking," added Minister Coughlan.

The PSO administers 26 social welfare schemes and allowances, including; Old Age Pensions, Retirement Pension, Widow's and Widower's Pensions, Free Travel and the Household Benefits package. There are over 2 million claims in payment from the office, with a total yearly expenditure of nearly €5 billion. The staff of more than 500 deals with 800,000 telephone calls each year.

"I'd like to pay tribute to the PSO staff for the way they have managed the increasing workload since 1989 and for organising these 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. There are many things to look forward to including, the opening of the newly completed public service crèche, the planned extension of the existing building and not least the further decentralisation of 100 jobs," said Minister Coughlan.

**ENDS**

**July 23rd 2004**

**See Note for News Editor**

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### **Pension Services Office (PSO), Sligo**

A new public service crèche has recently been completed at the PSO, College Road, Sligo and will commence operating this year. The crèche will be privately run and will offer child-minding facilities to PSO staff and to the wider public service in Sligo. It is expected that the crèche will facilitate up to 40 children. Plans for a new extension to the PSO are at an advanced stage and the work is expected to go to tender shortly. The extension will be disability friendly and will provide working space for at least 170 people.