



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Payments To Phantom Patients And Pensioners To End – Mary Coughlan Minister For Social And Family Affairs

State payments to phantom patients and pensioners will cease with the implementation of a new computerised registration of deaths, Mary Coughlan Minister for Social and Family Affairs said today.

Minister Coughlan will introduce the Civil Registration Bill in the Dáil this week bringing significant changes to registration procedures for life events, such as births, deaths and marriages.

The electronic registering of death certificates will result in an automatic cut off of payments after death.

Last year it was revealed that health boards made payments to doctors for treatments for over 30,000 patients – who had already died.

"The electronic registration and the availability of electronic records of births, marriages and deaths is central to eGovernment strategy as without it the present outmoded system of paper certificates would continue. Currently some 500,000 certificates are produced manually every year – or almost 10,000 a week," said Minister Coughlan.

"Better service, faster service and a more efficient delivery of benefits will result from sharing this data with relevant Government Departments and Agencies. For example the sharing of data will support the automatic processing of approximately 60,000 new Child Benefit Claims each year. The sharing of data such as this will also lead to increased controls over expenditure of the public purse."

"Modern computer technology will make this system more accessible, faster, and more customer-focused."

"Civil registration touches each and every one of us, beginning with the registration of our births to the registration of our deaths," said Minister Coughlan.

"In between our births and deaths, civil registration affects us all during our lives, both directly, as in the case of getting married, or indirectly, when certificates are required for many of the services available in society such as enrolling a child in school, taking up a job, or getting a passport," said Minister Coughlan.

The present system for civil registration was set down 150 years ago. While the registration procedures have remained largely unchanged since first introduced, there have been significant changes in society, developments in technology and in people's expectations in their dealings with the public services.

Ends

26th January 2004