



**Social Affairs Minister Tells Anti-Poverty Forum That Funds  
Must Be Targeted At Those Most In Need**

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today (Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2005) attended the second meeting of the National Anti-Poverty Strategy's Social Inclusion Forum in the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham.

The Forum provides those who are not directly involved with the social partnership process with an opportunity to contribute their views on, and experiences of, the implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy. More than 250 people were expected to attend, representing a wide range of community and voluntary organizations and groups, both national and local, and individuals who are themselves affected by poverty.

Speaking at the Forum, Minister Brennan said: "Today I have come primarily to listen to the views and experiences of those people who are working on the ground to alleviate poverty and to give a voice and an improved status to those who feel marginalized or excluded. The views and ideas that emerge from a gathering like this will be a valuable contribution to the development of the policies designed to tackle poverty and social exclusion, including the shaping of Ireland's next anti-poverty National Action Plan in 2006".

Minister Brennan said that we must confront the fact that the rising tide of economic progress in Ireland has not lifted all boats. "Our society will rightly be judged on how, at a time of unprecedented economic growth, it reached down and lifted up those less well off and marginalised. I am determined that we will intensify our efforts to eliminate poverty from our society. This Government is committed to improving the situation of those most at risk. The recent budget saw social welfare payments increase by three times the expected rate of inflation. Between 2001 and 2005 the lowest rates of social welfare payments have increased by 40%, against an increase in the rate of inflation of 13%. Each week more than 970,000 welfare support payments are sent out by my Department that in total benefit more than 1.5 million of our population."

The Minister agreed with views expressed at the Forum that poverty is a multi-dimensional problem requiring multi-dimensional solutions: "The Government strategy includes actions in relation to employment, social welfare, education, health, housing, equality and so on.



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

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The strategic approach in the National Action Plan means that these actions are being co-ordinated in an integrated 'joined-up' way by the Office for Social Inclusion which is located in my Department," he said.

"Eradicating poverty and social inclusion in our society is a significant challenge but one which we must face up to with determination. I am convinced, however, that increased efforts to target policies at those who are most in need, will ultimately bear fruit," he added.

ENDS 26<sup>th</sup> January 2005.