



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

---

### **Early Arrival Of Christmas Putting Families Under Pressure Social Welfare Christmas Bonus Will Be Paid First Week Of December - Mary Coughlan Family Affairs Minister**

The recent arrival of Christmas in shops is putting families under pressure- especially those with young children, said Family Affairs Minister Mary Coughlan.

"The creeping commercialisation of Christmas makes it more expensive as shoppers yield to advertising and peer pressure," said Family Affairs Minister Mary Coughlan.

"Families with young children in particular are being hit by adverts, dressed shop windows and glitzy displays before Hallowe'en has even taken place.~

"Christmas is no longer the great event that is anticipated from the 8<sup>th</sup> December, the traditional first day of shopping, and the season of Advent. It is now a marketing dream as it starts in mid October – well before the arrival of the ghosts and pumpkins of Hallowe'en.

"I have written to the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland asking them to consider asking their members in the spirit of the season to impose a voluntary embargo on Christmas advertising and promotions until December as a gesture of goodwill.

"For poorer families in particular and especially those with young children, the constant advertising and the marketing is hardly a reminder of the joy of Christmas but more the stress of trying to cope with an increasingly expensive celebration.

"Despite the tougher economic times nationally, for my part, I have secured the agreement of Cabinet to pay an extra week's social welfare payment for recipients in the run up to Christmas to help people in need over this period.

"There had been rumours that the bonus would be axed or trimmed back this year, however I want to again confirm that the full 100 per cent payment will be made again this year. The double social welfare payment will be paid in the first week of December and will benefit some 805,000 recipients and an estimated 421,000 dependents.

The total cost of the Christmas Bonus this year is estimated to be €115.6m, €110m for social welfare customers and €5.6m for certain participants of FAS, VTOS, Job Initiative and CE schemes and certain income maintenance schemes operated by the Department of Health and Children. The Bonus, which will be paid during the first week of December, will be equivalent to 100% of the normal weekly payment subject to a minimum payment of €30.

The people to benefit from the Christmas Bonus include those getting an Old Age, Retirement, Invalidity, Widow's, Widower's and Orphans pensions, recipients of One Parent Family Payment, Deserted Wife's Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Pre-Retirement Allowance, Disability Allowance, Farm Assist, long-term Unemployment Assistance, Employment Support payments (e.g. Back to Work Allowance) and certain occupational injuries benefits.

#### Examples of Christmas Bonus payments

- A person on an Old Age Contributory Pension getting €157.30 personal rate and an increase of €121.50 for an adult dependant a week will receive an extra €278.80.



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

---

- A person on an Old Age Non-Contributory Pension living alone will receive an extra €151.70.
- A single parent with two child dependants will receive an extra €163.40.
- A carer getting Carer's Allowance will receive €129.60 extra.
- A person who is long-term unemployed or on Disability Allowance with a dependent adult and two dependent children will receive €241.20 extra.

(All payments are calculated at maximum rates.)

### **Ends**

**26<sup>th</sup> October 2003**

Further Information : Eddie Walsh, Ph. 01-7043184 or 087-2549683