



**Hanafin says Christmas bonus will be paid to 1.3 million
social welfare recipients**

Some 1.3 million social welfare customers are set to get a double payment to help with Christmas costs, the Minister for Social and Family Affairs Mary Hanafin T.D., confirmed today (*27th October 2008*). **"This bonus payment directly helps a wide range of people including widows and widowers, pensioners, one parent families and long term unemployed who rely largely on their social welfare payments for financial support."**

Minister Hanafin said that she recently received Cabinet support for the payment of over €200 million to cover the additional payment for customers in early December, in order to allow them to plan their finances over the Christmas period. The bonus is equivalent to 100% of the normal weekly payment.

"Even with the challenging budgetary situation, the payment of this additional money to social welfare customers is a clear sign that helping those most in need of support remains the key priority for the Government. We all recognise that there are significant pressures for families and individuals around Christmas time, and this funding will go some way towards meeting their needs. This will be the ninth year in which the Government has provided a 100% Christmas bonus."



Department of Social and Family Affairs

The 1.3 million customers who will get the bonus payment this year - 940,000 recipients and an estimated 400,000 dependents - covers the following categories:

- Almost €192 million for Social Welfare Customers
- Over €7 million for certain recipients of FÁS, VTOS, Job Initiative and CE Schemes
- €2 million for certain income maintenance schemes provided by the Department of Health & Children
- Almost €1 million for participants in the Rural Social Scheme operated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Minister Hanafin went onto to urge people who may be experiencing financial or debt difficulties, to seek the advice of experts in MABS (Money Advice and Budgeting Service) offices which are located throughout the country. **"The worst thing that anyone facing debts can do is to ignore it and hope that it goes away – it won't. Getting advice and assistance as early as possible will mean that you can turn around your difficulties all the quicker and get back on track financially. I know that social welfare customers planning for their Christmas will be assured by knowing that the Christmas bonus payment will be available for them again this year early in December."**

ENDS



Examples of Christmas bonus payments

Some typical weekly social welfare rates (maximum) include:

- State Pension (Contributory) (€223.30);
- State Pension (Non-Contributory) (€212.00);
- One Parent Family Payment (€197.80);
- Jobseeker's Allowance (long-term) (€197.80).

Examples of how claimants getting the maximum rate of payment will benefit from the Bonus are as follows:

- a couple with three children on long-term Jobseeker's Allowance will receive €802.20, which includes a bonus of €401.10.
- a person getting the One Parent Family Payment with two dependent children will receive €491.60, including a bonus of €245.80.
- a person getting the State Pension (Contributory) living alone will receive €462.00 which includes a bonus of €231.00

(All rates are calculated on maximum rates.)