



Department of Social and Family Affairs

Minister Coughlan Launches First Strategy Statement Of The Pensions Ombudsman

Mary Coughlan TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs today launched the first Strategy Statement of the Pensions Ombudsman, Mr Paul Kenny. The Strategy Statement outlines the mission, core values and targets for implementation of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman.

“I am delighted to launch this latest milestone in the establishment of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman. I established the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman to address the need for a forum where members of pensions schemes and PRSA contributors could have their grievances in relation to their pension arrangements examined and judged in a fair and even handed way,” the Minister said.

As of this week, a total of 163 complaints have been received by the Ombudsman’s Office. There are currently 94 cases ongoing, and slightly over half of those have been advised they must first submit to an Internal Disputes Resolution procedure, as prescribed before the Ombudsman can formally take the complaint. 22 cases have been resolved as a result of mediation, one determination has been made already, and 46 are outside the Ombudsman’s terms of reference.

Minister Coughlan also launched three information leaflets produced by the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman – one for consumers, one for trustees and the third for employers, administrators, trustees and others who are named as respondents to complaints.

“These information leaflets will be invaluable in both raising awareness of the Pensions Ombudsman and in assisting people in making and responding to complaints,” Minister Coughlan said.

“I am particularly glad to see that all these leaflets are produced in both Irish and English,” the Minister added.



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Pensions Ombudsman, Mr Paul Kenny, said: "Our Strategy Statement is set out in very general terms; mostly because we are at the start of a learning process. As that process goes on, and we learn from our experience, our strategy will grow and change. That change will be a continuous process."

"I hope that these information booklets will be a positive first step on the road to informing as wide a public as possible that we are here, and that we are here to help them. Insofar as resources allow, my staff and I will also make ourselves available to talk to interest groups, industry bodies, and so on, to help to reinforce the message: It is OK to complain – and there is someone out there who'll listen," Mr Kenny added.

ENDS 29th January 2004

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PICTURES AVAILABLE FROM MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY PH. 8308072

Note for News Editors

Pensions Ombudsman

Mr Kenny is a former Chairman of the Retirement Planning Council of Ireland. He has worked with Irish Pensions Trust/Mercer Human Resources Consulting, holds a B.Comm (NUI) and is a Fellow of the Pensions Management Institute and of the Irish Institute of Pensions Managers.

Section 5 of the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002 (No 18. of 2002) provides for the establishment of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman. The Minister for Social and Family Affairs appoints the Pensions Ombudsman. The law provides that the Ombudsman will be independent in the performance of his/her functions. Generally speaking the Pensions Ombudsman will deal with complaints arising from the operation of Occupational Pensions Schemes and Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs).

Functions of the Pension Ombudsman

Under the Pensions (Amendment) Act 2002, the Pensions Ombudsman has the power to investigate and determine complaints made by or on behalf of beneficiaries of occupational pension schemes or Personal Retirement Savings Accounts (PRSAs) who allege that they have suffered financial loss as a result of maladministration by



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those charged with managing these arrangements and any dispute of fact or law brought to his attention that arise from the actions of those administering occupational pension schemes or PRSAs.

The Pensions Ombudsman can give such directions as he considers necessary or expedient to resolve a dispute. His directions can include a financial settlement to cover the actual financial losses incurred by the person making the complaint.

The decisions of the Ombudsman are binding subject to a right of appeal to the High Court.

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