



**Minister Says Contingency Plans Will Be In Place To Get €140m Christmas Bonus To Welfare Customers If Post Disrupted**

*Over 1.2m Customers And Dependents To Benefit From Double Christmas Welfare Payment*

The Minister for Social Affairs, Séamus Brennan T.D., today unveiled details of the Christmas bonus double payments that will directly benefit over 1.2 million welfare customers and their dependents and said that urgent meetings are being held to ensure that the money will be paid in the event of disruption to the postal service due to industrial action.

Minister Brennan said that the bonus will benefit approximately 835,000 welfare recipients and an estimated 384,000 dependents at a total cost of €139.33 million. The bonus is equivalent to 100% of the normal weekly payment and this means a double payment of entitlements – the bonus and the normal weekly entitlement – for all who qualify. The payment of the bonus is due to commence early in December.

Minister Brennan said: “For those relying on welfare supports and benefits the coming weeks are especially important. The weekly entitlements and the bonus of the double payment for Christmas are for many a financial lifeline as they approach a time of year that is stressful and very demanding. Any disruption to the payment pattern, particularly coming up to Christmas, would cause serious problems for a great many people. In the event of there not being a postal service, my direct concern is to ensure that welfare customers still get their payments. In recent days I have held a series of urgent meetings with senior officials at which contingency plans were reviewed and updated so as to ensure that alternative arrangements are in place to cover all possible situations in the event of any disruption to the postal service. I and my officials will be closing monitoring the situation over the coming weeks.”

The Department makes some 970,000 welfare payments each week and that rises to 1.6 million each month when Child Benefit payments are added.



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

---

Some 58% of customers (935,000) currently receive payment at post office counters, 32% (509,000) are paid by direct payment (EFT) to their account, and 10% (167,000) receive payment by cheque through the postal service.

On the Christmas bonus, Minister Brennan said: "This bonus payment is relied on by hundreds of thousands of people, and is important at this time of year as spending pressures increase. This extra social welfare payment at the full 100 per cent rate will now be paid for six years in a row and is a sign of our commitment to social welfare recipients and to supporting those who most need help, recognition and an extra financial boost, particularly at this time of year. For example, social welfare pensioners and long-term unemployed people would in general rely entirely on their social welfare payments for financial support and this is why maintaining the bonus at 100 per cent is so important."

Weekly social welfare payments range from €148.80 to €179.30 and include Retirement Pension, Old Age Contributory/Non-Contributory Pension, Invalidity Pension, Widow/Widower's Pension, One Parent Family Payment, Deserted Wife's Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Disability Allowance, Farm Assist, long-term Unemployment Assistance and a number of other employment support payments. The bonus is subject to a minimum payment of €30.

The bonus is also paid to certain participants of FÁS, VTOS, Job Initiative and CE schemes, in addition to those in receipt of payments under the Rural Social Scheme and certain income maintenance schemes operated by the Department of Health and Children.

The total cost of the Christmas Bonus - estimated to be €139.33m - breaks down as follows:

- €131.8m for social welfare customers;
- €5.89m for certain participants of FÁS, VTOS, Job Initiative and CE schemes;
- €1.19 for certain income maintenance schemes provided by the Department of Health and Children;
- and €450,000 for participants in the Rural Social Scheme operated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

**ENDS**