



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*  
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

*Tuesday, 25 November 2008.*

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# DÁIL ÉIREANN

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*Dé Máirt, 25 Samhain 2008.*  
*Tuesday, 25 November 2008.*

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Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 2.35 p.m.

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*Paidir.*  
*Prayer.*

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## Ceisteanna — Questions.

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### Decentralisation Programme.

1. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff who have applied for relocation under the decentralisation programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [29484/08]

2. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach the number of members of staff of his Department who have applied for relocation under the Government's decentralisation programme; the numbers who have relocated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32377/08]

3. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach the way the decentralisation programme affects his Department in terms of staff relocation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [37595/08]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 to 3, inclusive, together.

Of the 184 authorised core staffing complement currently serving in my Department, 32 have applied through the central applications facility to relocate under the decentralisation programme.

The breakdown by grade is: principal officer, two; assistant principal, nine; higher executive officer, five; administrative officer, four; executive officer, four; staff officer, two; and clerical officer, six. Some 22 former members of staff have already been assigned to decentralised posts.

There are no proposals to decentralise my Department or any of the bodies under its aegis. It is a matter for those Departments to which staff from my Department have decentralised to assign such staff to locations outside of Dublin.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** There are at least 13 locations where advance contingents have moved and where permanent accommodation is neither affordable nor available, and this is to be reviewed in 2011. Is it intended that those staff who have moved on a contingency basis are now to return to Dublin because the situation is completely in limbo or will they remain isolated

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

from the rest of their Departments? As this will not be reviewed until 2011, is it not a cause of some concern to the Taoiseach that this will result in fragmentation within the Department?

A total of 35 locations are pending a review in 2011. What will happen to the sites that are required by the Departments under the decentralisation programme? Will they just sit there, depending on whether property prices go up or down, or what does the Government intend to do? Given that the former Minister for Finance, Mr. McCreevy, announced from the Taoiseach's chair in the Chamber that he was going to move 10,000 public servants over three years to 53 locations, this has not worked out the way the Government intended. Mr. McCreevy said that the Government should be judged on its success in achieving its targets, but it is clear that this is one target that has not been met.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I remind Deputy Kenny that the question relates to the Taoiseach's office. The Minister for Finance is the line Minister for the decentralisation process.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** I thought very carefully about it, Ceann Comhairle. The first question asks about the number of staff who have applied for relocation under the decentralisation programme. It does not mention the Taoiseach's Department.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** It was a mistake.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** It is not a mistake; it is a very deliberate question. Even the Ceann Comhairle, with all his experience, must have seen that.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I must not have.

**The Taoiseach:** The decentralisation implementation group has made a number of reports since this was first announced, such as outlining the expected timescales involved. Of the 2,500 staff already relocated, a further 3,500 will complete relocation as a result of the most recent Government decision with, as the Deputy said, subsequent decisions deferred until 2011.

The Office of Public Works has expended approximately €250 million gross up to the end of September 2008 on the property aspects of the programme. The Deputy may wish to note that the total income from property disposed of in Dublin between January 2004 and December 2007 was €355.9 million, leaving a surplus of €105.9 million between what has been purchased and what has been disposed of. In addition, property valued at €75 million was transferred to the affordable homes partnership, which would be a further surplus were it sold on privately to other bodies. I am advised the OPW has agreed joint venture redevelopment schemes with a minimum value of approximately €125 million up to the end of 2007. As expected, non-property costs have been increasing since the beginning of 2007 as more advance accommodation is in place. Staff training has increased and actual moves have taken place. There is an overall surplus in terms of what has been disposed of and what will be redeveloped as a result of relocation compared to the cost of providing the sites and the locations referred to.

With regard to those sites which will not be proceeded with in this phase but will be considered in light of budgetary concerns in 2011, they will remain under the management of the Office of Public Works which will continue to manage the State's property portfolio as is its remit. Regarding those advance parties which have moved to locations, those staff who indicated an intention to relocate will remain in place and move to permanent accommodation under the programme.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** If the 2011 review were to recommend not going ahead with the decentralisation programme in a particular town, will that mean that the contingency group in the town, which has lived semi-permanently there, will be transferred back to Dublin?

Does the Taoiseach agree the decentralisation programme as envisaged by the Government has failed? The Taoiseach knows from his town's experience, and I from mine, that where a well-planned decentralisation programme has operated, it has been a success. For example, I understand the local government appointments commission was to be decentralised to Clonakilty. There is no railway line to the town which would affect every applicant going for interview. Some of the locations chosen by the then Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevy, were not suitable for the type of office to be decentralised. A well-planned and well-managed decentralisation programme is always of benefit, depending on the level at which it is operated.

Does the Taoiseach accept the programme, as outlined by the then Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevy, has failed? I know, a Cheann Comhairle, you were interested in having the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and the Irish Sports Council decentralised to Killarney — a fine town with which I have some acquaintance. Recently, two public servants left Killarney for Dublin to assist in answering questions for the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism. The train, however, broke down before reaching Mallow. Between taxis and other trains and lack of mobile telephone coverage, the two public servants never arrived to Dublin on the day. Where Ministers require back-up in the Houses or elsewhere, the decentralisation process has not worked well in their favour.

The Taoiseach's predecessor, Deputy Bertie Ahern, spoke about Microsoft and having video links across the country. As the Taoiseach knows this requires full width broadband which is not available in many of the decentralisation programme locations. Does the Taoiseach accept the programme has failed in reaching its set targets? Is he serious about a review in 2011, as some time before a general election would not normally be in the offing?

**The Taoiseach:** Deputy Kenny, unfortunately, is not a supporter of the programme. In this phase of the programme, over 6,000 public and civil servants will be relocated. Over 14,000 public and civil servants applied to the Central Applications Facility, which highlights a significant demand. The programme and relocation must also fit in with the proper management and skills sets that are required in the various organisations which are being administratively relocated. I do not agree with the characterisation that it has not been a success. As Deputy Kenny said, he cannot indicate any location where it has not been a success and completed. Speak to any staff in decentralised offices——

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** This programme sought to have 10,000 public and civil servants moved.

**The Taoiseach:** The programme was the most ambitious ever devised in the State. It aimed to include not only those Departments which had a tradition of decentralisation and interoperability but also the wider public service and agencies in which these traditions did not exist.

While industrial relations issues have arisen in some agencies, up to 525 people from the agencies in question have relocated. The programme has to respect industrial relations processes and be achieved in a planned and proper way, which is the case. By the end of 2010, up to 6,000 public and civil servants will have relocated. Some 8,000 civil and public servants are retraining for working in the Departments to which they intend to relocate.

It is working its way through, more slowly than was originally targeted, which was very ambitious. It was always a voluntary scheme. It must abide by and respect industrial relations processes. Citing some extreme anecdote or suggesting there is a problem in one case on one particular day is not a fair characterisation of the fact that the decentralisation scheme in general — this one and previous ones that were less ambitious — have worked and are working. Of course, it is down to the quality of management and leadership in these locations to ensure the overall work and focus of the Department is maintained and that the output and professionalism required is provided.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** As a concept it is a success but this programme is not.

**The Taoiseach:** I do not accept that. There are 2,500 relocations, which is in excess of previous schemes.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** These are from around the country, from the provinces.

**The Taoiseach:** Some are.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** The vast majority.

**The Taoiseach:** Let us be clear about this. The decentralisation programme is available to everyone. If it is characterised as an administrative relocation, people from all parts of the country who work in the public service and may wish to get closer to home are entitled to apply in the same way as everyone else. The important point is that the posts that would have been created within the Dublin area in non-decentralised mode through retirement or promotion are decentralised. If someone relocates from one destination to another outside Dublin, that vacancy can be taken up by someone who wishes to relocate from Dublin.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** The then Minister, Charlie McCreevy, promised 10,000 people would move from Dublin in three years to 53 locations.

**The Taoiseach:** No, let us be fair. He indicated the hope that 10,000 would relocate in three years. It was clear once we got into the IR process that this would not be possible. The decentralisation implementation group has produced four reports since that Budget Statement outlining why the timelines must change to take account of the various requirements of the situation in terms of obtaining suitable sites and getting building going.

**Deputy Paul Kehoe:** He promised 10,000 on the first day.

**The Taoiseach:** That is clearly set out by the decentralisation implementation group, the report of which was adopted by the Government. We have moved on in terms of timelines. We are stating that by the end of 2010, as we approach the review in 2011, the decentralisation implementation group expects 6,000 to be relocated at that stage. That is a fair achievement in any terms.

**Deputy Paul Kehoe:** What about Parlon country?

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** After announcing the decentralisation package, the former Minister, Charlie McCreevy, said that if the Government had not managed to move 10,000 public servants out of Dublin in the decentralisation process by the end of 2006, the Government would not deserve to be re-elected. Of the 2,500 who have been relocated to date, how many are from Dublin? Does the Taoiseach think the scheme is working in practice when he examines the detail? Of 50 Revenue Commissioners staff who were transferred to Newcastle West, just two were from Dublin. Of 54 Revenue Commissioners staff who were transferred to Kilrush, just six were from Dublin. Of 49 Revenue Commissioners staff who were transferred to Listowel, just six were from Dublin. How many of the 2,500 staff relocated were moved from Dublin?

The Taoiseach says that the State has spent €250 million acquiring property. Can he clarify that this sum is for the purchase of property alone or whether, in addition to that sum, there are costs arising from the rental of property? If so, can he state the annual cost of renting property for decentralised State offices? In respect of property disposed of in Dublin, can he say if all of it arises from offices that have been decentralised or if it is due to any other reason?

He may not have the breakdown of the locations. I was going to ask him who was the unsuccessful bidder but I thought that might be stretching it. I appreciate the Taoiseach may not have the breakdown of the locations but could he circulate to us later a breakdown of the lists of properties acquired and the lists of those disposed of?

**The Taoiseach:** The Deputy will appreciate that the detail of that would be best put to the line Minister concerned in terms of the Department of public service but I will try to answer the questions as best I can from my own prior experience and the information available to me.

On the question of numbers, and this was the point I was trying to make to Deputy Kenny, up to September 2008 over 13,000 civil and public servants had applied to the central applications facility to relocate under the programme and over 7,000 of those were Dublin based applicants. Given the nature of the programme and the timescales involved, individual circumstances are open to change and the application status may change as a result. It is not possible to calculate at this stage how many of the decentralising posts to be moved would be filled by people originally from Dublin.

The Deputy mentioned some decentralisation where a certain number of the total complement were from Dublin. Those people came from other Departments and locations and those other locations created vacancies, some of which may be taken up by Dublin based applicants who wish to move to whatever location was subsequently providing a vacancy as a result of the people referred to by the Deputy moving to the locations he mentioned. Therefore, I cannot give the Deputy the full picture. He referred to six or seven people who came to one place out of a total complement of approximately 53 and therefore the 48 would have come from various other locations, some of which would have been filled by Dublin based applicants also. That is the way it works.

The Deputy must recognise that everyone in the service has an entitlement to apply for relocation from whatever part of the country if they so wish but the ultimate objective would be that having decentralised, and when this process is complete, the numbers who would otherwise have been working in centralised offices will be reduced by the number in the decentralised offices. While people are being accommodated to relocate, because it is a voluntary programme and everyone has an equal entitlement, the ultimate point is that the net number working in the civil and public service within Dublin will be reduced by the overall number in due course. That is the way the process will work and it is only logical and fair to point that out.

Regarding the question on the property issue, which I have outlined, some of the people who are relocating from Dublin would also be coming from rented accommodation within Dublin. Not all of the accommodation in Dublin is owned. In many cases, when one moves from rental accommodation, given Dublin property prices and prices in country areas, one is making a saving if one moves to some rental accommodation in a country area. I would enter that caveat in the first instance.

Approximately €17 million has been spent to date on the costs of renting and fitting out properties in advance party locations. Staff in such locations will remain in place or move to permanent accommodation under the programme. Of that €17 million, approximately €4 million has been spent to date by the Office of Public Works on the cost of renting and fitting out of mainly Civil Service properties in advance party locations where permanent accommodation has been deferred pending the review in 2011. Therefore, €13 million of the €17 million is in respect of rental accommodation, of which permanent accommodation will be provided in the course of the next few years, and people will move to that. A total of €4 million of the €17 million is in respect of people who are in rental accommodation about whom no arrangements for permanent accommodation have yet been made.



[The Taoiseach.]

The overall point I am making on the property issue is that €250 million is expended in terms of acquiring properties. The total spend by the OPW, which is also involved in the building and contracting of the buildings as well, is €250 million gross up to the end of September 2008. In respect of property disposed of, it has received €355.9 million. It has also provided another €75 million worth of property to the affordable homes partnership, which can be put to the value of the €355.9 million, bringing the figure up to €430 million. It has estimated a further €125 million as the minimum value for joint venture redevelopment schemes it has agreed. This is for enhancing the value of some of the locations vacated as a result of the decentralisation programme.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** I want to return to the numbers moving out of Dublin. The Taoiseach described very clearly for us that if one has a decentralisation to Kilrush, somebody might move there from Listowel, somebody might move from Carrick-on-Shannon to Listowel, somebody from Longford to Carrick-on-Shannon——

**The Taoiseach:** Or from Dublin. Deputy Gilmore can put a Dublin name in there somewhere. He does not have to make it very complicated.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** I am getting to it. How many have moved from Dublin? The Taoiseach said 2,500 posts have been established at various locations around the country.

**The Taoiseach:** I do not have that figure.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** Could the Taoiseach estimate it?

**The Taoiseach:** I will make inquiries about that.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I remind Deputy Gilmore that the detail of this is a question for the line Minister. The Minister for Finance has overall responsibility for the public service, as I outlined at the beginning.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** The Taoiseach appears to know everything about this except the bottom line.

**The Taoiseach:** I cannot win with Deputy Gilmore.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** The then Minister, former Deputy Charlie McCreevy, estimated 10,000 by the end of 2006, or the Government did not deserve to be re-elected. Now the Taoiseach cannot tell me the total number. It is probably little more than one tenth of the projected figure.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Omnipotence like infallibility is a rare gift.

**The Taoiseach:** One must have an orderly process where members of a service are entitled as a right to apply where a post arises.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** We know all that.

**The Taoiseach:** Deputy Gilmore knows that better than most. He remembers that. That number of posts has been taken out of Dublin into the country areas in the locations decided upon. Were we not to have a decentralisation programme those posts would be filled within the Dublin area. One must relocate on the basis on an equal entitlement for everybody regardless of where they are from. The ultimate number of posts provided for in the service within

the area before reform will obviously be that number fewer — if it is 6,000 it will be 6,000 less — because those posts are being moved. One cannot reapply for those posts in the Dublin area if they are being decentralised. That is the issue. Over time 6,000 fewer public service posts will be created in the Dublin area——

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** How many is it now?

**The Taoiseach:** It is 2,500 now with 3,500 ready to move.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** That is the number that have jiggged around.

**The Taoiseach:** It is not a question of jiggging around.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** It is.

**The Taoiseach:** Either one gives equal entitlement to people in the public service or one does not. There is no jiggging around.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** I am not arguing with that. How many fewer are there in Dublin?

**The Taoiseach:** I do not have that figure.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** This is it.

**The Taoiseach:** The question was put down to my Department but it is not my Department's responsibility. I cannot win with Deputy Gilmore.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** The last time the Taoiseach answered questions in the House on the Government's decentralisation programme he advised that 32 applicants in his Department sought to relocate under this programme. How many of these have been accommodated?

*3 o'clock* Given the freeze on the decentralisation proposals in budget 2009, what number have not and will not be accommodated? Can the Taoiseach confirm there are applications in his Department that are on hold? In the Department of Finance listing of the status of the various decentralisation projects, the identified towns and the Departments designated for them, we note that a number of them are referred to as "advance party in place". That applies in the case of Cavan town, which is in my constituency. The Department's listing says that permanent accommodation in the town is "not currently affordable" and that the matter will be reviewed in 2011. What does an "advance party" consist of?

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** If the Deputy does not know——

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** What does it do?

**Deputy Brian Hayes:** The Deputy is putting his chin out there.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I am glad the Taoiseach enjoyed that.

**The Taoiseach:** The rising of the moon.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I am the right man to ask you.

**Deputy Bobby Aylward:** Is the Deputy looking for advice?

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I would like to ask about the Department's statement that accommodation in some decentralisation locations is "not currently affordable". When was the



[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

available accommodation in such locations costed? As property prices continue to fall, it seems to me that the excuse that has been offered — that accommodation is “not currently affordable” — may no longer apply. That proposition merits a complete re-examination. The Taoiseach has said that a review will take place in 2011. Will the Department of the Taoiseach be directly involved in that review? Will it be solely within the ambit of the various Departments, with an over-arching position being taken by the Department of Finance? Will the Department of the Taoiseach, and the Taoiseach himself, have a specific responsibility in respect of the review? Will there be any consultation with the Houses of the Oireachtas?

**The Taoiseach:** Decisions on the timing of further work on the implementation of the balance of the decentralisation programme are being deferred, pending the outcome of the 2011 review. That is a sensible and reasonable approach to adopt in light of recent budgetary developments. Some 22 of the 32 staff in my Department who applied to relocate have already been assigned to decentralised posts. It is obvious that the other ten officials are waiting to see if it will be possible for them to relocate.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** Are they on hold as a result of the decision to suspend the programme?

**The Taoiseach:** I cannot say. I have not received that detail from the central applications facility. It is obvious that they are continuing to indicate an interest in relocating. The decentralisation implementation group will be in touch with them in due course, depending on whether a suitable post arises.

Advance parties are groups or complements of workers who go to locations where alternative accommodation has been provided, pending the commencement of the full decentralisation that is envisaged at such locations. Such parties are working well. In some cases, further members of staff can be relocated to the interim rented accommodation, if they so wish and if there is sufficient capacity there, as part of the advance party at that location, pending the finalisation of accommodation and other arrangements. As I have said, some advance parties are in locations where building work is proceeding. In some such cases, permanent accommodation will be provided during the current phase of the programme. In other cases, such as cases in which arrangements are not currently in train, there will be a deferral until 2011. People are continuing to work in such locations because they suit them better than their previous locations.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** The inability of the Taoiseach to clarify the status of the remaining ten officials in his Department invites a further question. What is the status of the freeze on the decentralisation programme in budget 2009? Are the ten officials who want to be decentralised but are still in the Department of the Taoiseach continuing to be considered under the decentralisation programme? Where is the truth in all of this? Is the programme suspended or not? What is the current status of the programme? I thought it had been decided that the relocations were not proceeding. I wonder how that decision affects the remaining applicants in the Department of the Taoiseach.

With regard to the missive prepared by the Department of Finance when were these assessments carried out on the affordable accommodation on the list? Does the Taoiseach accept the price of property has reduced significantly over the past 18 months and, particularly, over the past 12 months? Is it not the case that many of these options are now more affordable? Will that be part of a brought forward review of the overall plans? With regard to the idea of waiting until 2011, is the project being abandoned?

**The Taoiseach:** No, it is not. The costs of the decentralisation programme will continue during the coming financial year and the following year as we complete the process of moving 3,500 people earmarked for relocation to the new areas as agreed. Various decentralisation projects are at different stages of development and they are moving to completion, depending on where they are in the process. They should be completed because many of the 3,500 people are in training posts and posts in parent Departments awaiting to relocate to the new locations and, therefore, that process should be completed.

Having moved the 6,000 staff, we will examine the budgetary situation in 2011 to establish to what extent we can then move to the next phase of the original proposal. That is required as a matter of budgetary realities. We made this decision now in order that we can plan for the proper and orderly relocation of 6,000 staff and move beyond that in 2011 when we can see what is the budgetary situation rather than proceeding across all aspects of the programme, given the current budgetary situation.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** I refer again to the question of facilities for locations to which decentralisation was to take place. The Taoiseach's predecessor said on a number of occasions that an advantage of the decentralisation programme would be the ability to do business with Dublin from many locations around the country. Has he information in his brief as to how many of the 53 locations have full broadband width? It appears even if decentralisation took place, very few locations would be able to do business in the way envisaged. Has he information about capacity in the 53 locations laid out?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I remind Deputies again that the Minister for Finance has overall responsibility for the public service and issues such as this should be addressed to him. I do not know if the Taoiseach can be helpful.

**The Taoiseach:** I can. These 6,000 posts apply to 40 locations outside Dublin and the other 13 locations will come into play at another time. All these locations to my knowledge are working well. I have heard of no complaint locally from staff, those working to them or those supervising them. All of us know, as the Deputy mentioned, that when the process is completed, the people are in place and the arrangements are made, they will get on with business. There has been no indication of lower productivity and there may even be greater productivity because of the good work environments that are being created for these units in the new locations.

I have met people, as has the Deputy, who can get to work more easily without all the problems and stress that come with that and they are very happy in these locations. They are getting on with their business and people in responsible positions and positions of authority supervise that work. No one in the House has suggested their work is substandard or giving rise to reasons for matters to be brought to the floor of this House in respect of any of those responsibilities. To be fair, we should take from this that there is not the suggested disparity between the work in these locations and anywhere else in the system.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** Of the 2,500 posts that have been decentralised, how many have been filled by the original post holder? How many of the post holders who did not move and are not now in the decentralised job have been re-accommodated in other parts of the service? How many are still floating around somewhere without being accommodated in a regular job?

**The Taoiseach:** That is a level of detail I do not have with me. A specific question to the Minister for Finance will elicit the information.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** Are there any?

**The Taoiseach:** Any what?

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** If 2,500 people are moved——

**The Taoiseach:** I am only surmising. I do not have the information in front of me so I would not be able to answer accurately.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** Does the Taoiseach believe there are any staff whose jobs have been moved? This was to be done on a voluntary basis and staff were given the option that if their job moved, they did not have to go with the job. Are there many people whose job has moved but who now do not have a job to do?

**The Taoiseach:** They would be redeployed to other duties in a non-decentralised location.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** All of them?

**The Taoiseach:** The Deputy is asking me to speculate but I do not have that level of detail. A question to the Minister for Finance or to the decentralisation implementation group would probably give the Deputy more accurate information.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** I am surprised it is not the type of question the Taoiseach would have asked himself at some stage.

**The Taoiseach:** I am not in charge of the decentralisation programme.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** As I pointed out, the Minister for Finance has overall responsibility for the public service. We do not have time available to do justice to Question No. 4 so I propose to move on to Priority Questions to the Minister for Health and Children.

### Priority Questions.

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#### Private Health Insurance.

67. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children the assessment she has carried out to justify the introduction of recently announced private health insurance measures; the assessment she has carried out to measure the impact of this scheme on the market; if she will publish details of same; her views on the financial impact this move will have on subscribers; if she has had discussions with health insurance companies regarding proposed substantial increases in health premiums which according to media reports may be as much as 60%; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42892/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Immediately after the Supreme Court judgment in July which found the 2003 risk equalisation scheme to be *ultra vires*, I initiated a comprehensive review of the options which might be open to the Government in the aftermath of the court finding. Since then, I and officials from my Department had meetings with the Health Insurance Authority and the three insurance companies operating in the market. I also had the benefit of advice from the Attorney General and external counsel. At appropriate points, I also had the advice from the Department's consulting actuaries. Following receipt of a related proposal from the Health Insurance Authority, officials from my Department and the Department of Finance explored the potential of the taxation system to meet the long-established policy objectives of successive Governments in regard to private health insurance.

Based on the advice which I have received, I believe the interim arrangements which have been approved by the Government can be objectively justified. They are a necessary and proportionate response to the problems arising in the market for health insurance and have been formally notified to the European Commission as a potential state aid. The assessment undertaken of these measures constitutes part of the notification to the Commission and it would, therefore, not be appropriate to publish it at this time.

The effect of the measures on the premiums charged for particular policies by individual companies is a commercial decision for the companies themselves, as they set both policy benefits and pricing at the same time. However, they should not in themselves lead to an overall increase in the approximately €1.5 billion in private health insurance premiums paid, as the levy will yield approximately the same amount as the cost of the tax relief at source.

The package of measures announced last week will help to keep private health insurance affordable for older people. In addition, the introduction next year of lifetime community rating regulations will encourage younger people to continue to take out health insurance. The combined effect of all of these measures is overwhelmingly positive for the health insurance industry and its 2.25 million customers.

**Deputy James Reilly:** The Minister has told us that, as far as she can foresee, there will be not be any increase in premiums. Will she confirm this to the House? It is important to point out that community rating is still enshrined in law and, therefore, a rise cannot apply in a plan unless it applies across all age groups. Will the Minister admit that younger people will be pushed out of health insurance through the combination of increased premiums, levies and reduced tax benefit apart from those aged over 50? When will the new legislation be introduced? Will the Minister share with us why we remain insistent on a 40% reserve in the VHI when most other places, including the UK, have a reserve of 25%?

**Deputy Mary Harney:** To deal with the last issue first, I share the Deputy's view that it is high and out of sync with other countries. However, it is entirely a matter for the independent financial regulator and neither the Government, the Minister for Finance nor I have a role with regard to the reserve requirements set by the regulator in Ireland.

With regard to new EU directives, I hope there can be consistency throughout the European Union on this matter. A company incorporated in another jurisdiction doing business in Ireland would only have to meet the reserve requirement suggested by the Deputy if it were incorporated in the UK.

Tax relief has not been withdrawn from anybody. We all have 20% taken away at source and this has not been interfered with. Last week's announcement was that additional benefits will be given to everybody over the age of 50. This will be a benefit of €200 for those aged between 50 and 59, €500 for those aged between 60 and 69, €950 for those aged between 70 and 79 and €1,175 for those aged 80 and over. This will be deducted from the premiums at source.

It is true the Supreme Court found we must have community rating within a plan. However, the market is segmenting to such an extent that thousands of plans will exist. A company with a young workforce will get a particular plan while another company with a workforce of an entirely different age profile will have a different plan. Within each plan everybody will pay the same. We know many companies introduced plans covering maternity benefits, sports injuries, joining a gym and teeth whitening, but not hip replacements or cataracts. Within a plan everybody pays the same but an older person will not take out a plan offering maternity benefits and a younger person will not take out a plan providing for cataract removal.

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

The Minister has no function in approving price increases. This was changed a number of years ago. I believe in a highly competitive market and for the first time it will be competitive to attract older people. The introduction of lifetime community rating will encourage younger people to take out insurance.

**Deputy James Reilly:** To correct the point, there was no suggestion on my part that the 20% tax rebate would be removed. However, it has been reduced for higher earners from the top rate to the lower rate and this is another whammy for the young which may well undo what the Minister seeks to do, which is to keep younger people in insurance and make it more affordable for the elderly.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** This tax change was made a number of years ago and was made at the suggestion of those who examined the tax system to make it equal between the better off and the less well off, in other words, those who only pay tax at the standard rate and those who pay some tax at the higher rate. Otherwise, better off people would receive twice the benefit of those who are less well off and only pay the standard rate.

The introduction of lifetime community rating in particular will incentivise young people to take out insurance or disincentivise people to wait until they are in their 40s or 50s to do so. This will have a major beneficial impact on keeping young people in the market and attracting others.

#### **Health Service Staff.**

68. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the discussions she has had with the Health Service Executive on a redundancy scheme for management grades; if there are proposals to reduce the layers of management within the organisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42595/08]

**Deputy Mary Harney:** I have had a number of discussions with the chairman and the chief executive officer of the Health Service Executive about a targeted voluntary early redundancy scheme to be introduced for the HSE. Initially, the scheme will concentrate on surplus management and administrative staff. This will be extended to other staff in due course. It will apply to staff at corporate HSE and also to staff at hospital and community level. This decision was reaffirmed by the Minister for Finance in his budget speech on 14 October.

The HSE announced plans in July to modify its structures, including merging the existing hospital and community pillars at national and regional level. The purpose of this is to have clear lines of authority and accountability for delivering services to patients from national to local level, and between hospital and community services. Initiatives that lead to improved efficiencies and the reduction of administrative duplication at all levels of the HSE will be part of the scheme.

One such example is a plan to create single unified organisation structures between a number of hospitals. The aim of this model is to ensure that health service delivery is planned and organised on the basis of a single entity, thus optimising the use of resources, streamlining decision-making, harvesting the benefits of critical mass and avoiding wasteful duplication. Where two hospitals are to operate as a unified entity, there is no need for a duplication of payroll, personnel, IT offices and many other backroom services. This will lead to efficiencies of between 10% to 20% in administration costs.

Similar initiatives at community level will lead to equivalent efficiencies. As we continue to bring together services through primary care teams, there is an opportunity to reduce levels of



administration and to facilitate more clinician-to-clinician engagement regarding the care of patients. I support the rationale for this model of shared services, which is very much in line with the health reform programme.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** I welcome the Minister's acknowledgement that she has established a dysfunctional organisation, comprising an amalgamation of a large number of separate entities, with a layer of management at the top. It is clearly not working and was not set up properly in the first place. I welcome the Minister's recognition in this regard and her acceptance that nobody could possibly have run it in a way that would work well for the public. Given that more than €14 billion of public money, along with the lives and health of our citizens, are in the hands of this organisation, one must question why it was set up in this way in the first place.

I have several questions for the Minister in the context of the announced changes. We have heard much jargon from her without any clarity in regard to what is envisaged to be done. Does the Minister intend specifically to take out layers of management grades, including some of the 800 staff members above grade eight? One could count on two hands the number of staff at that level before the HSE was established. What types of numbers are envisaged in terms of those who will be offered voluntary redundancy? Is the redundancy programme targeted specifically at the management layers as opposed to those who are taking people's names in clinics? When can we expect these changes to happen?

**Deputy Mary Harney:** The Minister for Finance said in his budget speech that his plan was to introduce a voluntary redundancy scheme across the public service. I hope the HSE scheme will be the start of the process in 2009. I am engaged in ongoing discussions on this issue with Professor Drumm and the chairman. It is not a matter for me to identify who should stay and who should go. That is a matter for those charged with the management of the organisation.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** It is the Minister's role to lead. There must be political leadership on this issue.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** I invite Deputy O'Sullivan to read what was said by the spokesperson for her party and those of the other Opposition parties when the organisation was being established, accusing me of not being sensitive to staff and so on.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** Our spokesperson emphasised the importance of setting up the organisation properly in the first place.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** Since the establishment of the HSE, there has been a reduction of 10% in the numbers working at corporate level in the health service, and an increase of 10% in the numbers of professionals, including nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and consultants. I introduced the legislation providing for the establishment of the HSE. Many other countries are considering taking the same approach. I believed then it was the right thing to do and I still believe that.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** Such a body must be set up with proper management structures in place.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** Yes, but one must first establish the organisation and put people in charge before deciding who should go and who should stay.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** That is the wrong way around.



**Deputy Mary Harney:** All the best human relations experts in this State would confirm that this is the appropriate approach.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** Why did the Minister set up this huge structure in the first place? It is the equivalent of building a house and adding lots of rooms before subsequently removing those same rooms. What is needed is a simple but effective management structure where there is clarity as to who is in charge, instead of throwing up a general plan to take out personnel. Any changes should be focused in such a way that there will ultimately be a structure under which everybody can understand precisely who is responsible for what.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** It would not have been possible for any individual, no matter how extraordinary, to have sat down in any office and decided, when more than 50 organisations, including 11 health boards, were being brought together, which staff would be necessary to retain and which would not. It was known that the chief executive officers of the former health boards, since their roles were being abolished, would no longer be in position. Therefore, there was a redundancy plan for them. After that, it was important to establish the unified organisation and to assign it, under its new chief executive officer, Professor Drumm, and his team of managers, the responsibility to decide which personnel were required at the various levels and to learn from experience in this regard.

The recommendation in the reform analysis that was done, before I became Minister for Health and Children, was that there should be two pillars. However, my own experience and that of the management team is that this is not a good idea. We need integration between hospital and community rather than separate pillars with separate budgets. Yet the advice given to the Government in advance of the establishment of the HSE was that the model that was put in place was appropriate. Professor Drumm has been in office for three years. He is the appropriate person, together with his new human relations director and the other staff at his disposal and on the basis of the external advice he has availed of from individuals and organisations with expertise in this area, to decide, in accordance with the process the Minister for Finance will put in place, on the level of redundancy in the organisation in 2009 and onwards.

### **Health Services.**

69. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has received the Health Service Executive's service plan for 2009; if she has approved the plan; the locations at which the level of service in 2009 will be below that of 2008 or 2007; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42893/08]

**Deputy Mary Harney:** I received the HSE's national service plan for 2009 last Tuesday, 18 November. It is being examined by my officials and I will review it later this week. As is normal, the plan will be published after I have approved it.

Following the budget, I wrote to the chairman of the HSE on 15 October outlining my requirements for the 2009 plan. I emphasised that my priorities were to avoid service reductions, protect the least well-off and to continue the overall reform programme. I also highlighted the need for service levels in 2009 to reflect planned activity throughout the year.

Clearly, the current fiscal position demands the most careful control of public expenditure within the approved limits. However, the 2009 allocation for the HSE should allow it to continue to provide services in 2009 which are at least in line with those provided in 2008. The 2009 allocation includes €120 million to meet service pressures arising from demographic changes. It should, therefore, fund service increases in areas where there are unavoidable demographic and other pressures.

The 2009 allocation also includes €55 million for the fair deal scheme, an additional €15 million for the cancer control programme and €10 million for therapy supports for children of school-going age.

**Deputy James Reilly:** The Minister has referred to the transfer of €77 million from the fair deal scheme to the refund scheme. Already, therefore, we have been presented with a supplementary provision. Some €70 million is allocated for the new deal with consultants, €350 million is set aside for repayment to the United Kingdom health authorities, who hotly dispute the bill they received from the HSE, and some €60 million is allocated for pharmacies, although in her supplementary budget for this evening, the figure indicated by the Minister is closer to €32 million or €34 million.

Will the Minister give us some idea of the areas in which she will curtail the roll-out of programmes in order to make the savings to which she alludes in that document? My question was how the Minister plans to maintain the 2008 service level in 2009. How will this be achieved given the cutbacks already taking place? These include the closure of the orthopaedic unit in Navan, of 31 beds in Mercy Hospital, Cork, and of orthopaedic services at Naas General Hospital. Hospitals in Galway and Blanchardstown are withdrawing services under the pressure to break even. The 12-bed orthopaedic unit in Letterkenny is to be closed and cutbacks are taking place at Mayo General Hospital.

Can the Minister give a commitment that there will be no reduction in front line services to patients in 2009 given the budget she has been allocated and the supplementary allocation she is seeking this evening?

**Deputy Mary Harney:** Regarding appropriations-in-aid, as the Deputy is aware, when citizens of one country come to reside in another, the country where such a person spent his or her working life traditionally pays for health services provided. In this case it seems we were over-paid in the past which is the reason for the discrepancy. Apparently, the amount of money we received was significantly out of line according to the agreement reached concerning the services provided. I am not yet in a position to give a definitive answer on the service plan, but we will discuss it at the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children later this week. I am currently in discussion with my officials on this matter.

I want to see an increase in day activity and a reduction in in-patient activity in hospitals. I seek a move in line with best international practice in this area. I also wish to see shorter in-patient stays where such in-patient stays are required. I believe if we could move more rapidly to day stays and shorter stays in general we should be able to provide the level of service envisaged for 2009. I have stated in the House on several occasions since the budget that we face a challenge during 2009. Given the overall increase in the Department of Health and Children Vote including capital and current expenditure, the increase is less than 2%, which is the smallest increase in 13 years. The annual increase has been running at an average of 9% for the each of the past 11 years.

**Deputy James Reilly:** How will this be achieved? In 2002 and 2007 three thousand extra hospital beds were promised. The Minister delivered 1,300, but this year she reduced by 500 the number of beds and plans to reduce by 600 the number of beds next year. This amounts to 1,100 beds taken out of the system and there is no sign of any co-located hospital beds. I fail to see how the Minister will manage it.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** As the Deputy is aware the matter of co-location arises in the next question and we will deal with the matter then. The big issue with acute hospital beds is how they are used, it is not only the number of beds involved. There can be a significant discrepancy

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

between hospitals in the country in the level of activity between one and another even if the budgets are very similar. That is the reason I seek more day case activity and shorter in-patient stays for hospitals. I believe with such changes we can deliver the level of service necessary in the country during 2009.

### **Hospital Accommodation.**

70. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children to outline the funding difficulties with regard to the co-location plan; her views on the fact that more than three years since the announcement of this plan not one bed has been created; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42894/08]

**Deputy Mary Harney:** The aim of the acute hospital co-location initiative is to make available additional public acute hospital beds for public patients by transferring private activity, with some limited exceptions, from public acute hospitals to co-located private hospitals.

The beds in public hospitals that were formerly used for private patients will be used for public patients. In addition, public patients may also be treated in the new private beds, subject to value-for-money agreements being entered with the HSE or the National Treatment Purchase Fund. Each co-location project is required to demonstrate value for money for the State, taking into account its comprehensive benefits, as well as the cost of tax allowances and private bed revenue currently accruing to public hospitals.

There is a complex process to achieve the results we seek and significant progress is being made. The board of the Health Services Executive has approved preferred bidder status for the development of co-located hospitals at Beaumont, Cork University, Mid-Western Regional Limerick, St. James's, Waterford Regional and Sligo General Hospitals. Project agreements for the Beaumont, Cork and Limerick sites were signed in March 2008.

Planning permission was granted by An Bord Pleanála for the Beaumont project earlier this month. Planning permission for the Cork and Limerick projects was granted by the local authorities concerned and appealed in each case to An Bord Pleanála. The necessary preparatory work for project agreements in respect of St. James's Hospital, Waterford Regional Hospital and Sligo General Hospital is proceeding. A tender in respect of Connolly Memorial Hospital has been received and is under consideration. Work is being undertaken to finalise the invitation to tender for Tallaght Hospital. It was not envisaged that projects would be completed at this stage. I am satisfied that co-location remains the fastest, most efficient means of increasing public bed capacity in acute hospitals.

As regards funding, each successful bidder has to arrange its finance under the terms of the relevant project agreement. It is the case that the funding environment has changed radically in the past six months, for both public and private sectors and as with other major projects the co-location initiative has to deal with this. The successful bidders are working on the details of contractual terms with banks and other arrangers of finance in the very difficult and changed credit environment. The HSE is continuing to work with the successful bidders to ensure that the co-located hospitals can be built and brought into operation as soon as possible, and that the goal of achieving new public acute bed capacity at value for money to the State is achieved.

**Deputy James Reilly:** Unfortunately, although I very much wish to believe what the Minister is saying I cannot. The co-located hospitals issue is still an ongoing quagmire. The plan has not delivered a single extra bed to the country. The Minister has removed 500 beds this year and will remove a further 600 next year. This is all very familiar to me. There are promises of wonderful things to come tomorrow while the Government takes always what is in place today.

Are all companies involved in the co-location process tax compliant and have such companies filed tax returns on time? The Minister mentioned contract negotiations. Are these completed, signed and legally binding? What recourse is there for the taxpayer if these companies proceed with these contracts? Have the banking requirements for funding been resolved? I believe there was a significant issue long before it was known the economy turned.

I mentioned the matter of reducing the number of beds. I asked a question earlier and perhaps the Leas-Cheann Comhairle can rule on the matter. Can the Minister specify which services had a slower than expected roll-out from which the Minister hopes to save €38 million in the supplementary budget?

**Deputy Mary Harney:** I realise there is an obsession with co-location. The purpose of co-location is to convert some the beds currently available. Some 700,000 bed days per year are used in public hospitals funded by the taxpayer for private patients at a subsidy of considerably in excess of €100 million. Since I became Minister for Health and Children I have substantially increased the cost of those beds to the insurers. I have more than doubled the cost of category 1 beds and category 2 beds to reduce substantially the subsidy paid by the taxpayer to beds that can only be occupied by insured patients. This is the purpose of the policy. As the Deputy is aware, owing to consultant contracts and so on, it is desirable to keep our consultants on site rather than moving among three or four hospitals to look after private patients. I was in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin last night, which Deputy Reilly has often referred to as his constituency hospital. It has 110 beds for private patients. I believe it would be highly desirable to convert those beds for the use of public patients which the taxpayer is funding and the staff of which are all paid for by the taxpayer.

I do not have details regarding tax affairs of the relevant companies. There are rules relating to State projects which apply and relevant companies must be tax compliant. I am not aware of the tax position of any company involved. If the Deputy has information which he wishes to make available to me, I would be more than happy to receive it. It is not a matter for me. Project agreements and bids must be overseen by the HSE. I am not involved in the selection of tenders or in negotiations with bidders. I am optimistic that we can see progress by way of construction on these sites very quickly. I understand that from the time work begins it will be approximately two and a half years before these beds can be commissioned.

**Deputy James Reilly:** I repeat the questions previously asked. Will the Minister confirm by letter within one week or ten days the position of the tax status of the companies? I believe the staff in the Department can do this. I asked if contract negotiations had been completed and what the legal implications would be for those who have signed contracts which do not materialise. That question was not answered. Have the banking requirements been resolved?

**Deputy Mary Harney:** The banking requirements are a matter for the bidders and their banks. I am not involved in negotiating with banks on behalf of bidders. I was accused in the House for many months of devising what was termed a sweetheart deal from which everyone would benefit. Now the Deputy accuses me of a deal so restrictive that no one can raise the finance to build accommodation for these beds. That seems to be the implication.

**Deputy James Reilly:** Not at all. The Minister should not be paranoid.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** The tax situation of companies is a matter for the HSE. However, I will seek to establish the facts. If the Deputy has information, I invite him, perhaps on a confidential basis, to make it available to me. The Deputy seems to be operating on foot of some information he may have which I would be very happy to receive.

### Child Care Services.

71. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive has finalised its inquiry into the circumstances relating to the death of a person, of whose details are supplied; if she has received a report in respect of the said inquiry; if not when she expects the report to be completed; if the report will be published; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42174/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews):** I understand that the internal HSE inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of the person referred to by the Deputy has been recently completed. A draft report has now been received by the HSE. I am informed that a final report is imminent.

The inquiry was set up at the request of the then Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, Deputy Brian Lenihan. Deputy Lenihan requested that an internal inquiry be carried out and that the Minister be made aware of the findings of the inquiry. In accordance with this request, I understand that the findings of the inquiry will be forwarded to me once the report is finalised.

I acknowledge the tragic death of this young person. I am committed to ensuring that we learn lessons from any inquiry or investigation of this kind and that we take the necessary steps to ensure that, where possible, tragedies can be averted in the future. The development of robust, responsive and appropriate child welfare and protection services is a priority for both myself, as Minister of State with responsibility for children and youth affairs, and the Government.

**Deputy Alan Shatter:** Can the Minister of State confirm if he is aware that this report relates to David Foley, who voluntarily sought care from the State at 14 years of age? The State failed utterly to provide for him properly and put him in what is known as “out of hours” facilities. Three years after seeking help from the State, on 10 September 2005, this poor man lay dead in an apartment in Blackhall Place in Dublin.

The Minister of State’s predecessor, Deputy Brian Lenihan, sought a report on these events a considerable time ago. Can the Minister of State indicate when his predecessor requested that report? Will he receive the full report? Can he confirm that it is an internal inquiry of the HSE, rather than an independent report? Will he receive the full history, or simply the findings? When does he expect to receive it and will it be published? If it is published, will it be available to all Members for their consideration? If we receive it, we should be able to determine whether action is required to ensure that we have the robust child protection services that the Minister of State claims he would like to see.

**Deputy Barry Andrews:** This report relates to the death of David Foley, who presented himself voluntarily for care services when he was 14 years old in 2002, and died three years later. I do not want to pre-empt the findings, but I can confirm that this is an internal inquiry. I will receive the report this week. I will have to look at the report before I can make any statement on how, when or to whom publication would occur.

The findings will be outlined in this report, as well as a chronology of the issues that gave rise to him being in care and any gaps that may have occurred. I hope that it will be a full analysis of the situation and will enable us to avoid repeating these failings. It is unacceptable to have to wait three years for this report and I will try to establish why that happened.

**Deputy Alan Shatter:** Does the Minister of State accept that this tragic teenager was scandalously failed by the State? Does he accept that under no circumstances should a situation arise



where a teenager cries for help, presents himself to the State seeking care, is essentially left to his own devices and ends up dying three years later? Does he accept that it is in the public interest that there be transparency in our child protection services and that this full report be published without delay? We have waited three years for it.

The “Children First” guidelines on child protection have now been in place for almost ten years. Does the Minister of State accept that he, his predecessor and the Government have scandalously and objectively failed to ensure that we have a uniform application of the child protection guidelines throughout the State? Does he accept that our current child protection services are dysfunctional and chaotic? It is unacceptable that a report published last July, almost ten years after these guidelines were put in place, refers to the absence of consistency in the delivery of child welfare and protection services across the State, and to the absence of any standards against which the delivery of services can be benchmarked. What steps are being taken to ensure that we provide protection for children who are at risk and that there is a uniformity of application of these guidelines and appropriate training available to all those social workers under pressure to provide fire brigade responses when reports of child abuse are made to the HSE?

**Deputy Barry Andrews:** I share the Deputy’s sympathy with social workers who work under great pressure and tremendous difficulty. When a child dies in the care of the State, there is no question that he has been failed in some way. Through this inquiry, we must establish how he was failed and make sure it does not happen again.

Much has happened since the death of David Foley in 2005. In particular, the agenda for children’s services became a core of child protection policy in this State in 2007. The principles of that are early intervention and prevention, to move away from crisis management towards the earliest possible intervention and family support services. We put in place a knowledge management strategy. We have already standardised the business process regarding the referral of children and initial assessment. We want to move towards further standardisation. As the Deputy points out, the service is not uniform throughout the State and that is partly a legacy——

**Deputy Alan Shatter:** It is a scandal. Ten years after these guidelines were put in place, they are not consistently applied across the State.

**Deputy Barry Andrews:** We have moved on considerably since these tragic circumstances.

**Deputy Alan Shatter:** It is a scandal. More children are going to die because of the abject failure of this Government to ensure the implementation of these guidelines.

### Other Questions.

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#### Nursing Home Standards.

72. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the standards for nursing home care, recently approved by the board of the Health Information and Equality Authority, will be published; when the standards will come into force; if the standards will be compulsory; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42548/08]

138. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children when she expects that the nursing home standards being developed by the Health Information Quality Authority will be in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42454/08]



**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 72 and 138 together.

The Health Information and Quality Authority submitted its draft national quality standards for residential care settings for older people to the Minister for Health and Children on 29 February 2008. The draft standards have been published and copies are available on the authority's website. In line with best practice, the draft standards, and the regulations required to underpin them, are currently the subject of a regulatory impact assessment. As part of this assessment, a consultation session with key stakeholders was hosted by the Minister and I on 23 October. Further details are available on the Department's website.

I expect the assessment to be finalised by the end of the year and the approved standards and regulations to be in place by the end of the first quarter of 2009. At that stage, and once the relevant part of the Health Act 2007 has been commenced, all residential centres for older people, including public and private nursing homes, will be subject to inspection and registration by HIQA and its chief inspector of social services. The standards involved will be compulsory. In the meantime, discussions are taking place between my Department, HIQA and the HSE about the administrative and other arrangements required to move from the existing system to the new system of inspection.

**Deputy James Reilly:** I thank the Minister of State for her reply. I am very pleased that HIQA will be doing this and there will be some independence in the inspection of public nursing homes. The major deficit to date is that the HSE has been inspecting itself, which is neither tolerable nor sustainable.

Have the necessary staff been appointed and trained up to begin inspections, since we must assume that they must be in a position to start by the first quarter of 2009? Have funds been allocated accordingly?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** Some staff have been transferred over, and more staff will follow. There is ongoing negotiation between the HSE and HIQA to finalise the arrangement to sign over the standards and put them in place.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** I wish to pursue that specific aspect too. We all welcome the fact that the standards will be in place for both public and private institutions, but they will not be of any use unless the relevant inspectorate is in place to carry out the inspections. The Minister of State referred to the fact that staff will be transferred. Will any new staff be recruited or will it be solely a matter of transferring staff within the system? How often is it intended to visit each nursing home or public long-stay institution?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** While there will be some new staff, we anticipate that the vast majority will be transferred over from the HSE. It would not make sense to let people go from the HSE and take on new staff. Therefore, the vast majority of the inspectorate will be transferred directly over, with the possibility of some new staff also being hired.

On the issue of the regularity or frequency of inspections, we do not want to be too prescriptive. As the Deputy is aware, private nursing home inspections take place twice a year, unannounced, which is a good guideline but we have not made a definitive decision on the matter as of yet.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** In her introduction to the National Quality Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People report, the HIQA chief executive, Dr. Tracey Cooper, stated that:

Once the necessary regulations are in place, the Authority's inspectors will carry out inspections across the public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure that the standards detailed in this report are being met and that residents are receiving the highest quality of care.

The Minister of State has indicated that the draft regulations have been published but the critical question is when they will be implemented. I ask the Minister of State to give a more exact indication of when she expects the draft regulations to become regulations which are *in situ* and being implemented.

The question of additional personnel has already been posed but what additional resources, across all of the needs that HIQA will identify, will be provided in order to carry out what must be a very extensive and comprehensive programme of inspections in all nursing home settings? What additional resources can we expect HIQA to be given to carry out its functions in the most effective and comprehensive manner?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** We have engaged in extensive consultations with the key stakeholders on the regulations and agreement has been reached. We hope to finalise the regulations early in the new year, at which stage we will be ready to move forward.

The Deputy also asked about costs and expectations that may emerge.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I asked about additional resources.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** A regulatory impact assessment is being undertaken at the moment, which will determine the costs and benefits. When the assessment is finalised we will know what additional costs, if any, will be involved. At present, however, I cannot give the Deputy a definitive answer on the matter.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I am less concerned about costs and more concerned about the quality of the changes that will take place. I seek information on the additional resources that will be given to HIQA to enable it to carry out its function. I must say, with respect, that Deputy Hctor and the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney, can worry about the costs. I want to know what resources will be provided to HIQA to ensure the best quality of care for older people in the various care settings.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** The vast bulk of additional resources will be transferred from the HSE and, as I have stated, some new staff may also be hired.

**Deputy James Reilly:** I am sure Deputy Ó Caoláin is no clearer than I am on the matter. I hope the regulations are not as woolly as the Minister of State's answers, with respect.

I have already asked whether training has taken place and whether staff have been trained up. In order to make the question easier to answer, I will be more specific. Has any additional training of staff taken place? How many staff does the Minister of State envisage will be involved, including transferred and new staff? What grades are involved? What types of staff will be involved; will they include doctors, nurses and occupational therapists, for example?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** The staff resources will come from a variety of areas and specialisms, including those mentioned by the Deputy. We envisage that the inspectorate will comprise between 60 and 70 people. Many of the staff involved have already received training and any additional training requirements will be met in due course to ensure the smooth operation of the inspection service.

### Health Services.

73. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason there are only three long-term care beds in Dublin north per 1,000 people over 65 years when the national average is 22; her plans to address this anomaly in view of the fact that two hospitals in the catchment area, Beaumont Hospital and the Mater Hospital, have lost in the region of 57,000 bed days in a single year, which is the equivalent of a 150 bed hospital, as a consequence of this; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42481/08]

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** Based on the hospitals listed, I understand the Deputy's question to refer to north Dublin, that is, to the area previously covered by the former northern area health board.

The number of long-stay nursing home beds in Dublin North at present is about 2,260. This includes 1,300 beds in private nursing homes, 440 in voluntary nursing homes and 520 in public nursing homes. This equates to 43 long-term care beds per 1,000 people over the age of 65 and compares favourably to the international norm of 45 beds per 1,000 people over the age of 65.

The new 100 bed community nursing unit which was commissioned at St. Mary's Hospital in the Phoenix Park is now fully occupied. Building work has commenced on an additional 100 bed community nursing unit at St. Joseph's Hospital, Raheny, which is scheduled to open in 2009. Planning permission has also been sought for an additional 100 bed community nursing unit at St. Vincent's Hospital, Fairview and for a 50 bed community nursing unit at Oldtown, County Dublin. These developments, when completed, will bring bed numbers in Dublin North into line with, or above, international norms.

**Deputy James Reilly:** Did the Minister of State say that there are 45 beds per 100,000 people aged over 65?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** No, I said that there were 43 long-term care beds per 1,000 people over the age of 65, which compares favourably to the international norm of 45 beds per 1,000 people over the age of 65.

**Deputy James Reilly:** That statistic applies across the country. The figures I have indicate there are only 22 beds. However, the real point of this question is to demonstrate that the reason we have such a crisis in accident and emergency departments in large urban areas and particularly in north Dublin, with both Beaumont and the Mater Hospitals suffering enormous delays, is the inability of hospitals to discharge patients back into the community. That inability is caused by the fact that an insufficient number of long-term care beds are available to such hospitals.

Information I have received from Nursing Homes Ireland indicates there are 1,810 nursing home beds lying idle around the country as we speak. I am not sure how many of those beds are in Dublin but I understand that it is in the hundreds. We must bear in mind that 130 patients were lying in beds and effectively blocking day-care beds which were earmarked for day-case surgery. This is what is frustrating the entire system. It is penny wise but pound foolish. There are beds available to which hospital patients should be discharged. Given the fact that we have a shortage of such beds in the public system, will the Minister of State give an undertaking to explore, with the private sector, the provision of such beds under contract until new beds have been built, if that is deemed necessary?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** I remind Deputy Reilly that 200 extra beds, most of them in Dublin, were provided from January of this year.

**Deputy James Reilly:** That is simply not enough.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** It is very difficult to say when we will have enough beds but that was a new development from 1 January of this year. Funding was provided by transferring fair deal money for both the installation and continued upkeep of those beds. The original fair deal funding figure was €110 million, a portion of which was allocated for the opening and upkeep of those additional beds.

**Deputy Jan O’Sullivan:** Figures I have for the Dublin North Hospital Group indicate that on 10 November, between Connolly Hospital, Beaumont Hospital and the Mater Hospital, a total of 117 people in acute hospital beds were in a state described as “delayed discharge”.

4 o'clock This refers to the category of patients or family requesting publicly funded long-term care beds. In the category of patients who required public residential care due to higher care or medical care needs, the equivalent figure was 46. Adding the numbers in these two categories gives a total of 163 people who, on this date, were on delayed discharge in acute hospital beds in north Dublin when they could have been in community beds — whether long-term public beds or private beds. It is crazy that acute hospital beds are being occupied by 163 people who could have been sent either to public beds or private beds. The Minister stated earlier that 110 beds are to be provided in the co-located hospital, if it ever happens, in Beaumont Hospital.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** It was 170.

**Deputy Jan O’Sullivan:** Surely it would be much cheaper for the health budget to provide public long-stay beds for these people, who are currently in highly expensive acute hospital beds blocking other patients, who are on trolleys. According to the *Irish Examiner*, there has been a 40% increase in the numbers waiting on trolleys since 2006, when we had a national emergency. Surely it is a crazy system to have 163 people in this area who are occupying acute beds but who could be in much cheaper community beds. It is the policy to have people out in the community, and they would prefer to be there. The system we have at the moment is totally illogical. Does it not make much more sense to provide cheaper, long-stay public hospital community beds?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** The fair deal will result in a much more equitable situation. As and from the new year, it will be the same cost regardless of whether people are in public or private beds. This will address the Deputy’s point.

**Deputy Jan O’Sullivan:** It will not be in for a while yet if the Minister is allocating €50 million.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** The question refers to the north side of our capital city, but that is part of the Dublin/North-East HSE region, if the questioner will excuse me for making the point. When was the last time an audit of all hospital beds across this region was carried out, and what was the result? Does the Minister of State have the information to hand? If not, will she furnish it to the Deputies representing the various parties here this evening?

Does the Minister of State also note that the HSE’s plan for this region is clearly a further reduction in the overall number of hospital beds, adding to the calamitous situation that currently pertains across the Dublin/North-East region? Is she conscious of the HSE claims that bed reductions will be compensated for by the introduction of further home-care packages and long-term residential placements for older people, as the previous questioner mentioned, occupying inpatient hospital beds?

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

Where will the funding come from? We do not have any of the promised packages in place. Where will the funding come from to compensate for this continual erosion of bed opportunities throughout the Dublin/north-east region?

**Deputy James Reilly:** Tomorrow's plans are no substitute for today's action. The reality is that our hospitals are chock-a-block on the north side. We cannot get people in. Waiting times are getting longer and longer. Beds are available in the community today. All that is required is to put out a tender and ask the operators concerned to provide the beds so we can move people who are finished the acute stage of their treatment, and therefore do not want to be in hospital any more, out of the hospital and into long-term care if that is what is required. I am asking the Minister to do this. Another possibility is a specific tender with rehabilitation associated to allow patients to continue their recovery at home.

I am sorry for raising my voice, a Leas-Cheann Comhairle, but when one hears this stuff and there is a ready remedy there in front of us which is not being availed of, it makes one pull one's hair out, such as is left of it.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** There is plenty of it anyway. The Deputy is all right.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** Deputy Reilly is welcome to try it. See where it brings the Deputy.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** Deputy Ó Caoláin asked about an audit. The most recent was the Prospectus audit carried out in January of this year. A total of 68% of beds in the HSE Dublin/north-east region are in private nursing homes, and 32% are public beds. However, that report also notes that there are significant variations across the local health offices regarding the ratio of public to private long-stay beds. For example, in the Dublin north LHO area, 95% of all beds are in private nursing homes, with only 5% in public facilities. Notably, the Dublin north LHO area also has the highest population over 65 in the HSE region. In the Dublin central LHO area, 77% of all beds are in private nursing homes, with 23% in public facilities.

### Health Insurance.

74. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Health and Children the action she will take to prevent health insurance premiums of older and sicker people from soaring in view of the recent Supreme Court decision to strike down the risk equalisation scheme enacted by herself; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42530/08]

93. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans on legislating for risk equalisation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42524/08]

**Deputy Mary Harney:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 74 and 93 together.

A primary objective of Government policy in health insurance is that it should be affordable for the broadest possible cross section of the community, including older people and those who suffer ill-health. This policy objective has been implemented through a substantial body of primary and secondary legislation providing for open enrolment, community rating and lifetime cover. Following the liberalisation of the market in 1994 every political party and successive Governments have supported the maintenance of community rating. It is an inescapable fact, supported by international evidence, that community rating cannot be sustained without some scheme to support the higher claims costs of older or sicker people.



Although the Supreme Court found the particular risk equalisation scheme to be *ultra vires*, it did not strike down the principle of applying risk equalisation or any of the other important elements of the regulatory framework that supports private health insurance in Ireland. However, after the Supreme Court decision, there was a real risk that older people would effectively face significantly higher premium costs than younger people. Accordingly, the Government has decided to introduce two measures on an interim three-year basis to stabilise the health insurance market.

There will be additional tax relief at source for health insurance, starting for people aged 50 and over and increasing for higher age groups. People aged 50 to 59 will get tax relief at source of €200, those aged 60 to 69 will get tax relief at source of €500, those aged 70 to 79 will get tax relief at source of €950 and those aged 80 and over will get tax relief at source of €1,175. Legislation will also be introduced to provide for the introduction of a community rating levy on health insurance companies in respect of all individuals covered by the health insurance policies issued by them, priced at €160 for each adult and €53 for each child under 18. The level of the relief will be reviewed annually.

The effect of the measures on the premiums charged for particular policies by individual companies is a commercial decision for the companies themselves, as they set both policy benefits and pricing at the same time. However, they should not in themselves lead to an overall increase in the approximately €1.5 billion in private health insurance premiums paid, as the levy will yield approximately the same amount as the cost of the tax relief at source.

The implementation of these measures is subject to approval by the European Commission. They have been formally notified to the European Commission as a potential State aid, as had been done with the risk equalisation scheme. Older people will benefit as the price of their policies will not rise significantly based on their age. While supporting the principle of intergenerational solidarity, younger subscribers will benefit from affordable health insurance as they in turn become older. The Government hopes and expects that the health insurance industry will respond to this initiative by continuing to market community rated products which meet the health needs of all segments of the population.

**Deputy James Reilly:** When are we going to get the replacement legislation for risk equalisation? In addition, I ask the Minister, through the good offices of the Leas-Cheann Comhairle, to give us a series of examples of how this new initiative, which we mentioned earlier and about which many people are concerned, will work. For example, what is the situation now for Mr. and Mrs. Murphy, aged 72 and for Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien, both in their 40s and their two children under the age of 18? It seems to me there will be additional levies on adults and children which in a four-person family with two children would result in €500 extra in levies. There will be a 20% cut in their tax rebate and they are facing the possibility of a rise in premia if what the Minister was intimating earlier and what the newspapers are saying is true, namely that there is to be a rise in premia. It appears the insurance companies will be getting the rebate at source from the Government and they will also be allowed hike up their premia which seems like a double whammy on the customer and a double gain for the insurers. This seems a little bit odd.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** There is no price control on insurance. The Government does not have to approve the pricing proposals of any company in the market. Traditionally it was the case that the pricing policies of the VHI had to be approved by the Government but this all changed as a result of the legislation to move the VHI to a commercial situation and it is in order that this should be a matter for the board and the management of the company, not for ministerial or Government approval.



[Deputy Mary Harney.]

With respect to the pricing policies of the companies, it is a fact that 52% of our population has private health insurance; in fact it is slightly more at 2.2 million out of 4.2 million or 4.3 million. It has moved upwards. Since liberalisation it has grown from approximately 36% or 37% even though many were of the view that we were at saturation point at that level. The numbers have increased due to a growth in the market, particularly the numbers of young people who have been attracted. In light of the Supreme Court decision, no risk equalisation payments would have transferred to the company that has by far the largest number of older people as subscribers. The claims made by an 80 year old are four times greater than those of a 40 year old and those of a 60 year old are twice those of a 30 year old. If one company has 320 times more people aged 80 or over compared to another company, clearly that company will have a higher claims experience. The basic plan would have increased from €600 per adult. In the case of Mr. and Mrs. Murphy on the basic plan at €1,200 a year, this would have more than doubled if we did not take this initiative.

With regard to the risk equalisation legislation, the case in court was argued on 13 or 14 grounds and the decision of the court was made with regard to one aspect. The legal advice available to me, the official advice from my Department and the actuarial advice all stated that it will take at least two years to draft the legislation in light of all the issues that have arisen. This is the reason we have come forward with a measure for a three year period while we draft the legislation.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** I will allow two brief supplementary questions from Deputy O'Sullivan.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** The Minister clearly believes in equality for all patients in the case of health insurance and for this I applaud her. I ask her to take the step to do the same for all people in the health service and introduce universal health insurance. Even Boston is now moving closer to Berlin so what about Ireland doing so?

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** Snap, Deputy O'Sullivan has asked exactly the question I would pose to the Minister. Will she not accept that the same universal provision based on need alone and funded by direct taxation is indeed the best example of true community rating in terms of the provision of health care?

**Deputy Mary Harney:** Since the Second World War no country has moved to introduce universal insurance.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** The Minister could be the first.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** It used to be the policy of my party. We have universal access to hospitals in Ireland——

**Deputy Seymour Crawford:** Except in Monaghan.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** ——and we would never get to a situation where some people could not top up their entitlements, even with a universal model in place. If we are talking about paying consultants for the public patients they are currently supposed to see on their salaries and if this is the only element which some would advocate——

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** It is much broader than that.

**Deputy Mary Harney:** —then we need to think very carefully. There are also implications for hospitals etc. in a system that is totally funded by insurers. These issues should be examined.

**Deputy Jan O'Sullivan:** Three years.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** That can happen on another occasion.

*Written Answers follow Adjournment Debate.*

### **Adjournment Debate Matters.**

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 21 and the name of the Member in each case: (1) Deputy Mary Upton — the need to ensure that Drimnagh Castle secondary school, Walkinstown, Dublin 12, be immediately given the promised funding for the school's leaving certificate technology programme; (2) Deputy Charles Flanagan — to raise with the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, the impact and consequences of the proposed cuts to the budgets of the Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission; (3) Deputy Pat Breen — the situation regarding the chronic overcrowding at the accident and emergency department at Ennis General Hospital in recent days; the need for the Minister for Health and Children to outline the situation regarding the proposed hospital development programme at the hospital; when this capital development project will be proceeding and if funding has been allocated for the project; (4) Deputy Bernard Durkan — the urgent and pressing issue of mortgage supplement in the case of a woman where the HSE is only prepared to assist on a 50% basis as the mortgage is in joint names but there is a barring order against her husband and if the Minister will make a statement on the matter; (5) Deputy Dinny McGinley — an tionchar diúltach a bheidh ag cinntí buiséadacha a rinneadh le déanaí ar Phobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair; (6) Deputy James Bannon — the need for the Minister for Finance to establish a mortgage rescue scheme to minimise mortgage repossession, which is a potentially major cause of homelessness; (7) Deputy Thomas McEllistrim — the need for the Minister for Education and Science to encourage and support the development of flexible learning at all levels; (8) Deputy Frank Feighan — the provision of the home help service in counties Roscommon and Leitrim; (9) Deputy Thomas P. Broughan — the need for the Minister of Transport to make an urgent statement to the House on whether he has been briefed on any proposed programme of cutbacks to Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus services and jobs and whether his Department or his colleague, the Minister for Finance, has suggested any series of cutbacks for public transport companies and operators; and if he will make a statement on the matter; (10) Deputy Kieran O' Donnell — to ask the Minister for Health and Children to immediately instruct the HSE to pay the €1.5 million Government funding due to the Brothers of Charity, Bawnmore, Limerick who provide services to the intellectually disabled; to prevent the loss of services to up to 100 intellectually disabled persons due to the fact that up to 60 carer staff who care for them face losing their jobs due to Government renegeing on these funds; (11) Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin — the need to publish the report of Deputy Garda Commissioner Crowley on the shooting dead of Aidan McAnespie at Aughnacloy in February 1998; and (12) Deputies Paul Kehoe and Tom Sheahan — the availability of school inspectors and the need to revise the procedures for teachers seeking their primary teaching diploma.

The matters raised by Deputies Feighan, McGinley, Ó Caoláin, Kehoe and Sheahan, have been selected for discussion.

### **Leaders' Questions.**

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** I am not going to stand up in the House and impugn the personal integrity of any person. The House has discussed on a number of occasions the capacity of

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

appointees of the Government to do the job for which they are appointed. One of the primary considerations of this Government has been to focus on the business of wastage of money. It is now perfectly obvious that there is something radically wrong in regard to the organisation known as FÁS or Foras Áiseanna Saothair. This organisation has an expenditure of €1 billion at its disposal. Since the latest revelations, my office has been flooded with claims. I do not know whether they are valid but they are coming from most unusual sources. In light of the fact that the fraud squad is undertaking an investigation; the Comptroller and Auditor General has been ordered in by the Tánaiste or at least she has attempted to order him to conduct an investigation; and the Committee of Public Accounts is investigating various matters concerning FÁS, I wish to remind the Taoiseach of what he said in June when he stated that the chief executive of that organisation was a person he held in the highest regard and whose integrity he would defend at all times.

**Deputy Pádraic McCormack:** He said it again yesterday.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** The Tánaiste said that this matter was all in the past. I would like to hear the Taoiseach's view on what has gone wrong because something is radically wrong.

The latest revelations are about some place in Florida and somebody in my office picked out some information about it for me from the Internet.

One of the more affordable vacation spots in all of Florida, there is never a lack of exciting things to do and see in and around Cocoa Beach. Besides offering the best of sun and fun while on the Space Coast, you can go deep-sea fishing or parasailing, try your luck aboard a casino cruise ship or take a fabulous eco-tour to get up close and personal with Florida's awesome wild life.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** What is the response to that?

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** Does the Taoiseach consider it appropriate that a sum of \$400 of Irish taxpayers' money should be spent on some person in a nail bar in west Cocoa Beach? Is this appropriate expenditure of Irish taxpayers' money when 10,000 people a month are losing their jobs? Is the identity of the person concerned known to the Taoiseach?

**Deputy Alan Shatter:** Look at the colour of his nails.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Allow the Taoiseach to reply without interruption.

**The Taoiseach:** The answer to the second question is "No". The serious point to be made is about the fact that as a result of the Comptroller and Auditor General looking into public procurement issues in FÁS, the Tánaiste asked for a further investigation into the management and systems in FÁS to ensure that wrongdoing, if there is any, cannot be prevented from being disclosed.

**Deputy Michael Creed:** If there has been any wrongdoing.

**The Taoiseach:** The Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment also asked it to examine the corporate services aspect of that operation since 2000. This process is in place and both the chairman and the chief executive officer were anxious that it would take place to get to the bottom of any issues that need to be addressed. No one is suggesting issues should not be examined or addressed. There is a question of process and ensuring we get to the bottom of it.

The Committee of Public Accounts is engaging in its own process. The Comptroller and Auditor General has been asked to follow up on a report he compiled on the organisation. That is as it should be. That is where matters stand and we need to get it resolved as quickly as possible. The Committee of Public Accounts is coming to a conclusion in respect of its investigation. That is what accountability is about.

**Deputy Leo Varadkar:** It is nowhere near it.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** What is the Taoiseach going to do about it? Up to 10,000 people a month are losing their jobs while these revelations come out week after week. To claim the process is in place and the Committee of Public Accounts will come to a conclusion displays a massively cavalier approach from the Government. Material was sent to the committee by FÁS that had entries blacked out. I understand there is an extensive range of information coming from FÁS offices, following on from freedom of information requests. In 2005, for example, the total cost for the Science Challenge week came to €886,000, €772,000 of which was spent on advertising. How is it that persons involved can have credit cards with €76,000 limits? This is incredible.

The Taoiseach is in charge of the Government. He has quite rightly spoken about cutting out wastage of public money. This, however, is a litany of extraordinary expenditures, facilities and requirements given to this organisation at a time when we need a massive drive in re-training and upskilling.

I did not catch the Taoiseach's reply on the identity, or other words, of the person at the nail bar in West Cocoa Beach, Florida. There might be an interest in this person's identity. Obviously, I do not have any indication as to who it is.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** It was the Minister for Defence, Deputy Willie O'Dea.

**Deputy Willie O'Dea:** The person was no relation to me.

**Deputy Michael Creed:** It was the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Deputy Mary Hanafin.

**Deputy Leo Varadkar:** Did she bring her barometer?

**Deputy Mary Hanafin:** I brought a compass.

**Deputy Leo Varadkar:** Was it a moral compass?

**Deputy Mary Hanafin:** No, it was a nautical compass.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** What is the Taoiseach's view on a €76,000 credit limit on a credit card issued to the persons involved? Will he explain beyond what the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment said was all in the past?

The situation is that the Comptroller and Auditor General, the fraud squad and the Committee of Public Accounts are examining the organisation. Various people associated with various elements of this organisation over the past several years are beginning to spill the beans at an inordinate rate. The Taoiseach is in charge. What is he going to do about it? How can he stand over this? Action is taken in other countries in cases involving the abuse and wastage of public moneys.

I am being careful not to impugn the personal integrity of any person. However, I am concerned about what appears to be extravagant wastage, abuse of privilege and failure to account for the taxpayer. The Taoiseach can sit over there claiming the process is in place and we will

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

get an answer in due course. That is not good enough; it is too cavalier an approach. The Taoiseach heads up the Government, people pay their taxes and 2,500 people are going on the unemployment list every week while these stories about wild extravagance on West Cocoa Beach in Florida emerge.

**Deputy Pádraic McCormack:** They were working on their golf handicaps.

**The Taoiseach:** I am not standing over any profligate or unauthorised spending. No one can stand over that. The process that is being undertaken is being conducted by the Committee of Public Accounts. The Comptroller and Auditor General has been asked to examine all this and detail the situation so that decisions can be taken on it. Obviously, there are questions to be answered. This needs to be dealt with as urgently and expeditiously as possible.

**Deputy Michael Creed:** There are many questions that need to be answered.

**The Taoiseach:** On Deputy Enda Kenny's point about information being brought to the Committee of Public Accounts, I understand from listening to a radio interview this morning with the committee's Vice Chairman that it was agreed between the committee's legal advisers and FÁS that certain data protection issues arose as to why certain stuff was redacted. That is a matter for legal advice.

The real issue is that the truth has to be established and accountability provided for those responsible with detailed consequences arising from that. We are in the process of doing this. It is not being ignored. It is a question of having the means by which it is dealt with comprehensively and factually in fairness to the organisation concerned and the taxpayer. That is the process that is in place. The quicker it is resolved, the better. In the first instance, it is a matter for the board of FÁS to bring forward a report on any recent controversies to the Minister.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** This year FÁS registered 6,000 fewer apprentices than it did two years ago. Next year, it will be worse. The number of apprentices in construction will be down from 4,500 to 1,000 while the number in the electrical trades will be down from 2,500 to 1,000. It has been hard at the best of times for a young man or woman to get an apprenticeship. It will be harder next year. Many in current apprenticeships are being told they cannot finish because of the downturn in the economy.

Apprenticeship is the core business of FÁS. Today, many young people who cannot get an apprenticeship or finish it will ask themselves what on earth were the top brass in FÁS doing looking at the US national space centre in Florida. Do we have apprentice astronauts? Were they in the nail bar trying to register apprentices for carpentry?

**Deputy Pádraic McCormack:** For ingrown toenails.

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** Chiropodists.

**Deputy Noel J. Coonan:** Wheelbarrows.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** I do not believe the Taoiseach has any sense of the public anger at the lavish extravagance and splurging of taxpayers' moneys involved. Nor do I believe has he any sense of the significant unease that this whole episode has caused for the majority of public servants who work conscientiously and for whom this carry-on is exposing them to being scapegoated and ridiculed.

The Taoiseach is a former Minister for Labour. There are few people in this House who have the understanding of the consequences that he has of the relationship between FÁS and



the parent Department and Minister. Will he deal with what we have heard over the past two days with some urgency? It is not acceptable that some process will work it out and it will all disappear into the ether again. There is much anger about this. We need to hear from the Government what action will be taken.

Will the Taoiseach agree that FÁS and its top executives would be better serving the country in dealing with the growing crisis with apprenticeships? If we do not register apprenticeships now, we will not have the trades in four years time when hopefully we will be through the current economic difficulties. Would it not be better for FÁS top executives to stay in Ireland dealing with the apprenticeship problem rather than gallivanting around the world at the taxpayers' expense?

**The Taoiseach:** I understand the legitimate anger and concern that people have expressed on some of the issues brought to public attention in recent days and times regarding this organisation. I can reply to the Deputy's questions with the same forcefulness. The apprenticeship situation derives from the sectors themselves in respect of numbers taken on and the numbers which go through the system. Let us be fair to the organisation. In that core issue, the interaction between FÁS and industry has been exemplary. FÁS has been in the position to provide the training and certification necessary for the doubling of the construction industry workforce over the past number of years, from 125,000 to 250,000 people at its height. That was accommodated by FÁS and the apprenticeship programmes it conducted. In fairness to that aspect of the situation, let that be said.

With regard to the specific issues raised here, whether regulations that apply to travel and subsistence for bodies and Departments were transgressed, these are matters that must be reported on with some urgency by the chairman to the Tánaiste as a result of the revelations of recent days. That should, and will, be done.

I am explaining that an examination by the Comptroller and Auditor General of wider issues, relating to management processes and the corporate services department of the organisation, has been requested by the Tánaiste on foot of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on public procurement issues in the organisation. I am aware of that situation and we must get to the bottom of it and have accountability. That process is in place, generally in respect of what is done by the Committee of Public Accounts and the Comptroller and Auditor General and in respect of the report to the Tánaiste on these matters that will be forthcoming.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** Has the Taoiseach made inquiries as to whether this type of carry-on is going on anywhere else in State agencies or across the public sector? Are board members and top executives of State bodies behaving like latter day Borgias at the taxpayers' expense anywhere else? In fairness to State agencies, those who work in them and the people who head them, some kind of inquiry should be ordered by the Taoiseach to find out if this type of carry-on is happening anywhere else.

It is all very well for the Taoiseach to say he is waiting for the Comptroller and Auditor General's report. The Taoiseach read what went on in FÁS, he heard the reports yesterday and he heard the explanation given by the chief executive of FÁS for the air fares and other expenses clocked up. Does the Taoiseach think it was excessive? Leaving aside whether rules were broken or regulations were transgressed, does he think junketeering at the level conducted by FÁS is excessive? This involved expenses that, everyone in the House agrees, were incurred for items that should have been removed from the bill before making an expense claim. One certainly does not charge up some of these items to the taxpayer. Does the Taoiseach think it was excessive?

**The Taoiseach:** I do not believe certain items of expenditure should have been incurred. In regard to that specific issue, it is clear. We must ensure that the accountability of the organisation is such that we find the full remit of what was going on. That process is in place. That is not for the purpose of deferring the issue, it is to ensure we find the full outcome based on what was going on. I understand the Comptroller and Auditor General has been asked to examine this back to 2000, a considerable period of time.

**Deputy Shane McEntee:** It should go back to 1990.

**The Taoiseach:** That issue is in hand. I am not aware of another agency that has this issue before it but clearly Ministers should contact agencies under their remit and have the chief executives confirm that their arrangements are in compliance with whatever regulations are in place.

### **Requests to move Adjournment of Dáil under Standing Order 32.**

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Anois, iarratais chun tairisceana a dhéanamh an Dáil a chur ar athló faoi Bhuan Ordú 32. Before coming to the Order of Business, I propose to deal with a number of notices under Standing Order 32.

**Deputy Thomas P. Broughan:** I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of local and national importance, namely, the need for the Minister for Transport to make an urgent statement to the House on whether he has been briefed on any proposed programme of cutbacks to Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus services and jobs and whether his Department or his colleague, the Minister for Finance, have suggested any series of cutbacks for public transport companies and operators, in particular in view of plans to improve the modal shift to public transport.

**Deputy Fergus O'Dowd:** I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, the need for the Medical Council to publish in full the transcripts of its fitness to practise inquiry which found former consultant Michael Shine guilty of professional misconduct while practising as a consultant at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance requiring urgent consideration, namely, the need for the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to publish the report of Deputy Garda Commissioner, Eugene Crowley, on the shooting dead by the British army of Aidan McAnespie at Aughnacloy on the Monaghan-Tyrone border on 21 February 1988, in light of the report of the historical inquiries team of the PSNI, which has concluded that the version of the shooting given by the British soldier responsible was not credible.

**Deputy Martin Ferris:** I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, the need to extend the slurry spreading period until the end of the year, as has been done in the Six Counties by the agriculture Minister, Michelle Gildernew, due to the extreme bad weather conditions that have prevented farmers doing so within the normal time and noting that the Minister has already recognised the difficulties that have been caused when he earlier granted an extension to the original deadline.

**Deputy James Bannon:** I seek the adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to raise a matter of national importance, namely, the threat of a rapid rise in homelessness, with a 70% increase in people seeking help to pay their mortgages from the start of this year and 7,000 now applying for assistance, up from 4,000 last December.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Tar éis breithnithe a dhéanamh ar na nitheardaithe, níl siad in ord faoi Bhuan Ordú 32. The matters raised are not in order under Standing Order 32.

### **Order of Business.**

**The Taoiseach:** It is proposed to take No. 8, motion re proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital Gains) (Republic of Turkey) Order 2008, back from committee; No. 9, motion re proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Malta) Order 2008, back from committee; No. 10, motion re leave to introduce Supplementary Estimates, Votes 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 32, 37, 38, 40 and 41; No. 11, motion re referral of Supplementary Estimates, Votes 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 32, 37, 38, 40 and 41; No. 12, motion re referral to joint committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of a Council Framework Decision amending Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism; No. 13, motion re referral to joint committee of Criminal Justice (Drug Trafficking) Act 1996; No. 14, motion re referral to joint committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of the Council Decision on the strengthening of Eurojust amending Council Decision 2002/187/JHA; No. 15, motion re orders of reference of committee; and No. 2, Finance (No. 2) Bill 2008 — Order for Second Stage and Second Stage. It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that the Dáil shall sit later than 8.30 p.m. and business shall be interrupted not later than 10 p.m.; and Nos. 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and subject to the agreement of No. 10, No. 11, referral to select committee, shall be decided without debate and any divisions demanded on Nos. 10 and 11 shall be taken forthwith. Private Members' business shall be No. 57, motion re small and medium enterprises.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** There are two proposals to be put to the House. Is the proposal that the Dáil sit later than 8.30 p.m. agreed to?

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** I agree to that.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** The Labour Party will not agree to any proposal on the Order of Business today until we have an assurance from the Taoiseach that the manner of dealing with the Combat Poverty Agency will be changed. The Minister for Finance announced in his Budget Statement that the Combat Poverty Agency was one of a number of State agencies to be wound up or amalgamated. Since then I have asked on a number of occasions on the Order of Business the legislative provision that would be made for that, whether all of these agencies would be done by separate legislation or a single piece of legislation, and I got various answers. On Friday evening, the Minister for Social and Family Affairs circulated a set of amendments in which she is proposing to add an additional Part to the normal Social Welfare Bill, and that is a Part to dissolve the Combat Poverty Agency.

This agency was established by the late Frank Cluskey. Its purpose was to provide an independent body to deal with issues of poverty and advise government on them. This Government has travelled a long way from Inchydoney in that the first State body it wants to get its thumb into is the body dealing with the issue of poverty. I am extremely disappointed at the cowardly and sneaky way——

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy cannot debate the matter now.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** ——it is being done. I want the Taoiseach to give an assurance that it will be withdrawn from the Social Welfare Bill. It can be brought into this House, if he or the Minister for Social and Family Affairs wants to do so, and debated as separate legislation.

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

It is interesting that the amendments circulated by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs provide for the transfer of everything — staff, resources, money and property — except the functions of the agency.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy cannot debate that now.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** It is neutering the agency but making no savings for the public purse in doing so.

**A Deputy:** Hear, hear.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I call Deputy Ó Caoláin.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I wish to speak to the second matter.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I call Deputy Enright on the first matter.

**Deputy Olwyn Enright:** I agree with Deputy Gilmore's comments about the Combat Poverty Agency. The Minister for Social and Family Affairs was aware, at least within two days of the Social Welfare Bill being published, that she intended to bring forward these amendments on Committee Stage. It would have been far better if we had at least had the opportunity to discuss it on Second Stage but, in any event, I disagree with what the Government is attempting to do in abolishing the Combat Poverty Agency. It is wrong to do it in this manner that has not allowed for adequate or proper discussion. When we consider what has been done in terms of this agency, the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority——

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy cannot debate that now.

**Deputy Olwyn Enright:** ——it is the agencies that have the ability to criticise the Government that are being affected.

**A Deputy:** Hear, hear.

**The Taoiseach:** I reject the contentions made by both Opposition Deputies on this matter. The functions conducted by the Combat Poverty Agency are held by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs. The question of them being incorporated into the office for social inclusion is logical in the circumstances. The amendment that has been put down enables a full discussion to take place during the debate on the Social Welfare Bill. The fact that an amendment was not adverted to on Second Stage did not preclude any Member from speaking on Second Stage about the public announcement that the Combat Poverty Agency would be incorporated into the office for social inclusion. There is nothing underhand in bringing forward an amendment to a social welfare Bill that enables a full debate in this House.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** It is very disappointing.

**The Taoiseach:** I would not accept the contentions made by the Deputy on that basis.

Question put: "That the Dáil shall sit later than 8.30 p.m. tonight."

## The Dáil divided: Tá, 68; Níl, 65.

## Tá

Ahern, Dermot.  
 Ahern, Michael.  
 Andrews, Barry.  
 Andrews, Chris.  
 Ardagh, Seán.  
 Aylward, Bobby.  
 Blaney, Niall.  
 Brady, Áine.  
 Brady, Johnny.  
 Browne, John.  
 Byrne, Thomas.  
 Calleary, Dara.  
 Carey, Pat.  
 Collins, Niall.  
 Conlon, Margaret.  
 Connick, Seán.  
 Coughlan, Mary.  
 Cowen, Brian.  
 Cregan, John.  
 Cullen, Martin.  
 Curran, John.  
 Dempsey, Noel.  
 Dooley, Timmy.  
 Fitzpatrick, Michael.  
 Fleming, Seán.  
 Flynn, Beverley.  
 Gallagher, Pat The Cope.  
 Gogarty, Paul.  
 Gormley, John.  
 Hanafin, Mary.  
 Harney, Mary.  
 Haughey, Seán.  
 Hoctor, Máire.  
 Kelleher, Billy.

Kelly, Peter.  
 Kenneally, Brendan.  
 Kennedy, Michael.  
 Killeen, Tony.  
 Kirk, Seamus.  
 Kitt, Michael P.  
 Kitt, Tom.  
 Lowry, Michael.  
 Mansergh, Martin.  
 Martin, Micheál.  
 McEllistrim, Thomas.  
 McGrath, Michael.  
 McGuinness, John.  
 Moloney, John.  
 Moynihan, Michael.  
 Mulcahy, Michael.  
 Nolan, M.J.  
 Ó Cuív, Éamon.  
 Ó Fearghaíl, Seán.  
 O'Brien, Darragh.  
 O'Connor, Charlie.  
 O'Dea, Willie.  
 O'Hanlon, Rory.  
 O'Keefe, Batt.  
 O'Keefe, Edward.  
 O'Rourke, Mary.  
 O'Sullivan, Christy.  
 Power, Seán.  
 Ryan, Eamon.  
 Scanlon, Eamon.  
 Smith, Brendan.  
 Treacy, Noel.  
 White, Mary Alexandra.  
 Woods, Michael.

## Níl

Bannon, James.  
 Barrett, Seán.  
 Broughan, Thomas P.  
 Burton, Joan.  
 Byrne, Catherine.  
 Carey, Joe.  
 Clune, Deirdre.  
 Connaughton, Paul.  
 Coonan, Noel J.  
 Costello, Joe.  
 Coveney, Simon.  
 Crawford, Seymour.  
 Creed, Michael.  
 Creighton, Lucinda.  
 D'Arcy, Michael.  
 Deenihan, Jimmy.  
 Doyle, Andrew.  
 Durkan, Bernard J.  
 English, Damien.  
 Enright, Olwyn.  
 Feighan, Frank.  
 Ferris, Martin.  
 Flanagan, Charles.  
 Flanagan, Terence.  
 Gilmore, Eamon.  
 Hayes, Brian.  
 Hayes, Tom.

Higgins, Michael D.  
 Hogan, Phil.  
 Howlin, Brendan.  
 Kehoe, Paul.  
 Kenny, Enda.  
 Lynch, Ciarán.  
 Lynch, Kathleen.  
 McCormack, Pádraic.  
 McEntee, Shane.  
 McGrath, Finian.  
 McHugh, Joe.  
 McManus, Liz.  
 Mitchell, Olivia.  
 Morgan, Arthur.  
 Neville, Dan.  
 Noonan, Michael.  
 Ó Caoláin, Caoimhghín.  
 Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.  
 O'Donnell, Kieran.  
 O'Dowd, Fergus.  
 O'Keefe, Jim.  
 O'Mahony, John.  
 O'Shea, Brian.  
 O'Sullivan, Jan.  
 Penrose, Willie.  
 Quinn, Ruairí.  
 Rabbitte, Pat.



Níl—*continued*

Reilly, James.  
Shatter, Alan.  
Sheahan, Tom.  
Sheehan, P. J.  
Sherlock, Seán.  
Stagg, Emmet.

Stanton, David.  
Timmins, Billy.  
Tuffy, Joanna.  
Upton, Mary.  
Varadkar, Leo.

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Pat Carey and John Cregan; Níl, Deputies Paul Kehoe and Emmet Stagg.

Question declared carried.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Is the proposal for dealing with Nos. 8 to 15, inclusive, agreed to?

**Deputy Enda Kenny:** I have been examining the list of Supplementary Estimates. On Vote 26 under Education and Science it says excesses which occurred in a number of services, including national teachers salaries and grants to VECs, are offset by savings on schools information and communications technology, the second and third level capital and the strategic innovation fund. The programme laid out for IT for schools is not being followed through.

In the Health and Children Estimate, Vote 40, there is the High Court ruling on the Hickey's Pharmacies case, where the Minister for Health and Children was advised that there was another way of making serious savings on drugs and drug repayments. That will cost €32 million in 2008 when a different course of action would have meant that case might not have had to be taken.

There is a range of other matters relevant to justice and the Garda Síochána Vote which need to be discussed regarding getting real value for money as distinct from the statements made by the Government at the outset. On that basis I oppose the Supplementary Estimates going through without debate. They should be debated here as we should be able to address the many issues that arise.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I oppose the proposal to take all these matters without debate. With respect, the Government has some neck to expect this House to pass a proposition without debate in this House to vote additional moneys to the HSE.

**Deputy Seán Power:** That is coming from a right one.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** Meanwhile we see a serious contraction of services across this State, not least in the north east area about which the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Deputy Dermot Ahern, should be very concerned, with the loss of all elective orthopaedic work between now and 2009. We see the continual erosion of services at Monaghan General Hospital and other hospitals. We see the reduction in home help hours.

All these matters should be debated in this House. This proposal to refer to the select committee regarding the specific areas for additional funding will also come back here, and the proposition will be to accept the report of the committee without debate. That is what is wrong with the system of health care provision in this State. This House has no real opportunity to properly debate the scandal that is the HSE's management and oversight of health care. The referral should not take place without debate. We should have a full and proper debate on this Supplementary Estimate on the floor of the House.

**Deputy Eamon Gilmore:** I concur with Deputies Kenny and Ó Caoláin. During these new times in which we find ourselves, the House should debate the Estimates from the various Departments in plenary session.

5 o'clock

**The Taoiseach:** It is proposed to refer these Supplementary Estimates to select committees in the normal way.

**Deputy Paul Kehoe:** They are being referred in different circumstances.

**The Taoiseach:** This referral gives the various committees a great opportunity to discuss these issues in detail with the relevant Ministers. In fact, it would be a far more effective debate than if it was in plenary session.

Question put: “That the proposal for dealing with Nos. 8 to 15, inclusive, be agreed to.”

The Dáil divided: Tá, 70; Níl, 66.

Tá

Ahern, Dermot.  
 Ahern, Michael.  
 Andrews, Barry.  
 Andrews, Chris.  
 Ardagh, Seán.  
 Aylward, Bobby.  
 Blaney, Niall.  
 Brady, Áine.  
 Brady, Cyprian.  
 Brady, Johnny.  
 Browne, John.  
 Byrne, Thomas.  
 Calleary, Dara.  
 Carey, Pat.  
 Collins, Niall.  
 Conlon, Margaret.  
 Connick, Seán.  
 Cowen, Brian.  
 Cregan, John.  
 Cullen, Martin.  
 Curran, John.  
 Dempsey, Noel.  
 Dooley, Timmy.  
 Fitzpatrick, Michael.  
 Fleming, Seán.  
 Flynn, Beverley.  
 Gallagher, Pat The Cope.  
 Gogarty, Paul.  
 Gormley, John.  
 Hanafin, Mary.  
 Harney, Mary.  
 Haughey, Seán.  
 Hoctor, Máire.  
 Kelleher, Billy.  
 Kelly, Peter.

Kenneally, Brendan.  
 Kennedy, Michael.  
 Killeen, Tony.  
 Kirk, Seamus.  
 Kitt, Michael P.  
 Kitt, Tom.  
 Lenihan, Brian.  
 Lowry, Michael.  
 McEllistrim, Thomas.  
 McGrath, Michael.  
 McGuinness, John.  
 Mansergh, Martin.  
 Martin, Micheál.  
 Moloney, John.  
 Moynihan, Michael.  
 Mulcahy, Michael.  
 Nolan, M. J.  
 Ó Cuív, Éamon.  
 Ó Fearghail, Seán.  
 O’Brien, Darragh.  
 O’Connor, Charlie.  
 O’Dea, Willie.  
 O’Hanlon, Rory.  
 O’Keeffe, Batt.  
 O’Keeffe, Edward.  
 O’Rourke, Mary.  
 O’Sullivan, Christy.  
 Power, Seán.  
 Ryan, Eamon.  
 Scanlon, Eamon.  
 Smith, Brendan.  
 Treacy, Noel.  
 Wallace, Mary.  
 White, Mary Alexandra.  
 Woods, Michael.

Níl

Allen, Bernard.  
 Bannon, James.  
 Barrett, Seán.  
 Broughan, Thomas P.  
 Burton, Joan.  
 Byrne, Catherine.  
 Carey, Joe.  
 Clune, Deirdre.  
 Connaughton, Paul.  
 Coonan, Noel J.  
 Costello, Joe.  
 Coveney, Simon.

Crawford, Seymour.  
 Creed, Michael.  
 Creighton, Lucinda.  
 D’Arcy, Michael.  
 Deenihan, Jimmy.  
 Doyle, Andrew.  
 Durkan, Bernard J.  
 English, Damien.  
 Enright, Olwyn.  
 Feighan, Frank.  
 Ferris, Martin.

Níl—*continued*

Flanagan, Charles.	Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.
Flanagan, Terence.	O'Donnell, Kieran.
Gilmore, Eamon.	O'Dowd, Fergus.
Hayes, Brian.	O'Keefe, Jim.
Hayes, Tom.	O'Mahony, John.
Higgins, Michael D.	O'Shea, Brian.
Hogan, Phil.	O'Sullivan, Jan.
Howlin, Brendan.	Penrose, Willie.
Kehoe, Paul.	Quinn, Ruairí.
Kenny, Enda.	Rabbitte, Pat.
Lynch, Ciarán.	Reilly, James.
Lynch, Kathleen.	Shatter, Alan.
McCormack, Pádraic.	Sheahan, Tom.
McEntee, Shane.	Sheehan, P. J.
McGrath, Finian.	Sherlock, Seán.
McHugh, Joe.	Stagg, Emmet.
McManus, Liz.	Stanton, David.
Mitchell, Olivia.	Timmins, Billy.
Morgan, Arthur.	Tuffy, Joanna.
Neville, Dan.	Upton, Mary.
Noonan, Michael.	Varadkar, Leo.
Ó Caoláin, Caoimhghín.	

Tellers: Tá, Deputies Pat Carey and John Cregan; Níl, Deputies Paul Kehoe and Emmet Stagg.

Question declared carried.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** When does the Taoiseach propose to introduce the Bill to take medical cards from people over the age of 70? He indicated that the measure would require legislation. I presume the approach that was taken in the case of the Combat Poverty Agency legislation, which was sneaked in, will not be adopted in this instance. When will the medical cards Bill come before the House?

**The Taoiseach:** It is due in this session. I cannot be any more specific.

**Deputy Joanna Tuffy:** A couple of weeks ago——

*(Interruptions).*

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I ask the Members in the lobbies to continue with their journeys.

**Deputy Joanna Tuffy:** ——I asked the Taoiseach whether the Government planned to implement the Kenny report, in line with the main recommendation in the All-Party Committee on the Constitution's report on property rights. This morning, I received a letter from the Minister, Deputy Gormley, in response to the question I asked in this House. I understand from the letter that there are no plans to introduce legislation to implement the Kenny report. The Minister pointed out in the letter that a range of mechanisms is already in place under the Planning and Development Act 2000 to secure planning gain for local authorities and communities when planning decisions are made. That is a major U-turn by the Government. When Deputy Bertie Ahern was Taoiseach, he set up the committee to tackle the issue of alleged land speculation. As part of its policy in opposition, the Green Party said it would implement the Kenny report.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy should ask a question.

**Deputy Joanna Tuffy:** In light of the mess we are in because of unrestrained land speculation, does the Taoiseach propose to implement the Kenny report and deal with the issue of land speculation for once and for all?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Is legislation promised on foot of the Kenny report?

**The Taoiseach:** I am not aware that it is promised.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** It has come to my notice that a number of banks and building societies are highlighting a clause in mortgage protection policies to the effect that they are only valid for a year after the main earner falls ill or loses his or her job. Since it is promised to transfer responsibility for this from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Department of Finance in the financial services (miscellaneous provisions) Bill, could the Taoiseach bring the legislation to the House more urgently than has been suggested to date to bring about a scenario where banks and building societies are prevented from repossessing houses in those circumstances? The Minister for Finance knows what I am talking about.

**The Taoiseach:** I understand it is due next year.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** Early next year.

**The Taoiseach:** I did not say “early”.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** On promised legislation, I noticed the resolute manner in which the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform proposes to deal with beggars. While begging is a nuisance, I am not certain it requires the rapid response the Minister proposes.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy can discuss that when the Bill comes before us.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** He proposes to put beggars in prison and I presume he has referred to the Vagrancy Act. I refer to the introduction of the criminal justice (amendment) Bill, which could be brought before the House to put real criminals in prison where they belong.

**The Taoiseach:** The criminal justice (public order) (amendment) Bill is due next year.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** I referred to No. 64, the criminal justice (amendment) Bill, which gives effect to certain provision of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

**The Taoiseach:** I understand that will also be next year.

**Deputy Bernard J. Durkan:** Next year for everything.

**Deputy James Reilly:** I refer to No. 54, eligibility for health and personal social services Bill. The income threshold for medical cards has not increased for years outside of the consumer price index and it is causing hardship for people. When will the Bill be introduced? Is it intended to review it?

The Taoiseach, the Minister for Health and Children and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will be aware of the growth of Rasta and hemp shops, which are selling pills and various mind altering substances that are not legislated for. Has the Minister for Health and Children plans with the Irish Medicines Board to outlaw these shops? Has the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government plans to introduce planning laws to restrict the setting up of shops to sell these products?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Is legislation promised in the latter area?

**The Taoiseach:** I do not think so.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Is legislation promised on the previous issue?

**The Taoiseach:** There are proposals to be submitted to Government next year on the matter but it seems to be at a preliminary stage.

**Deputy James Bannon:** Given the confusion caused to the public——

**An Ceann Comhairle:** There is no need for prologues.

**Deputy James Bannon:** ——by repeated Government misinformation in the health area, when can we expect the publication of the health information Bill?

**The Taoiseach:** There is no date for that legislation.

**Deputy Jan O’Sullivan:** Will the adoption Bill be published before Christmas?

**The Taoiseach:** That was the intention but I cannot confirm it with certainty.

**Deputy Jan O’Sullivan:** Is it not supposed to be this session?

**The Taoiseach:** Yes, it was expected but I cannot assure the Deputy that will be the case.

#### **Double Taxation Relief Orders: Motions.**

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I move:

“That Dáil Éireann approves the following Order in draft:

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital Gains) (Republic of Turkey) Order 2008,

a copy of which was laid before Dáil Éireann on 17th November, 2008.”

Question put and agreed to.

**Deputy Brian Lenihan:** I move:

“That Dáil Éireann approves the following Order in draft:

Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital Gains) (Malta) Order 2008,

a copy of which was laid before Dáil Éireann on 17th November, 2008.”

Question put and agreed to.

#### **Estimates for Public Services 2008: Leave to Introduce.**

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I move:

“That leave be given by the Dáil to introduce the following Supplementary Estimates for the service of the year ending on the 31st day of December, 2008:—

Vote 19 — Justice, Equality and Law Reform (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 20 — Garda Síochána (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 21 — Prisons (*Supplementary Estimate*).



Vote 22 — Courts Service (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 26 — Education and Science (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 27 — Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 32 — Transport (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 37 — Army Pensions (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 38 — Social and Family Affairs (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 40 — Health Service Executive (*Supplementary Estimate*).

Vote 41 — Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (*Supplementary Estimate*).”

Question put and agreed to.

### **Estimates for Public Services 2008: Referral to Select Committee.**

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I move:

“That, subject to leave being given to introduce the following Supplementary Estimates for the service of the year ending on 31st December, 2008, the Supplementary Estimates be referred to the following Select Committees pursuant to Standing Order 154(3) and paragraph (1)(a)(ii) of the Committees’ Orders of Reference, which shall report back to the Dáil by no later than 9th December:-

Vote 19 — Justice, Equality and Law Reform (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights.

Vote 20 — Garda Síochána (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights.

Vote 21 — Prisons (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights.

Vote 22 — Courts Service (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights.

Vote 26 — Education and Science (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Education and Science.

Vote 27 — Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Arts, Sport, Tourism, Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Vote 32 — Transport (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Transport.

Vote 37 — Army Pensions (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights.

Vote 38 — Social and Family Affairs (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Social and Family Affairs.

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

Vote 40 — Health Service Executive (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Health and Children.

Vote 41 — Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (*Supplementary Estimate*) — Select Committee on Health and Children.”

Question put and agreed to.

**Treaty of Amsterdam: Referral to Joint Committee.**

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey):** I move:

“That the proposal that Dáil Éireann approves the exercise by the State of the option or discretion provided by Article 1.11 of the Treaty of Amsterdam to take part in the adoption of the following proposed measure:

a proposal for a Council Framework Decision amending Framework Decision 2002/475/JHA on combating terrorism,

a copy of which proposed measure was laid before Dáil Éireann on 20th November, 2008, be referred to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights in accordance with paragraph (2) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 27th November, 2008, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply.”

Question put and agreed to.

**Criminal Justice (Drug Trafficking) Act 1996: Motion.**

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey):** I move:

“That the proposal that Dáil Éireann resolves that sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the Criminal Justice (Drug Trafficking) Act 1996 (No. 29 of 1996) shall continue in operation for the period ending on 31 December, 2010, be referred to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women’s Rights, in accordance with paragraph (2) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 4th December, 2008, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply.”

Question put and agreed to.

**Treaty of Amsterdam: Referral to Joint Committee.**

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey):** I move:

“That the proposal that Dáil Éireann approves the exercise by the State of the option or discretion provided by Article 1.11 of the Treaty of Amsterdam to take part in the adoption of the following proposed measure:

a proposal for a Council Decision on the strengthening of Eurojust amending Council Decision 2002/187/JHA of 28 February 2002, as amended by Council Decision 2003/659/JHA setting up Eurojust with a view to reinforcing the fight against serious crime,

a copy of which proposed measure was laid before Dáil Éireann on 3rd October, 2008, be referred to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights in accordance with paragraph (2) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 16th December, 2008, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply.”

Question put and agreed to.

### **Business of Dáil : Motion.**

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey):** I move:

“That the Order of Dáil Éireann of 13 March, 2008 in relation to the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children be amended in respect of the report-back date of the Joint Committee by the deletion of ‘30 November 2008’ and the substitution thereof of ‘9 April 2009’.”

Question put and agreed to.

### **Finance (No. 2) Bill 2008: Order for Second Stage.**

Bill entitled an Act to provide for the imposition, repeal, remission, alteration and regulation of taxation, of stamp duties and of duties relating to excise and otherwise to make further provision in connection with finance including the regulation of customs.

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I move: “That Second Stage be taken now”.

Question put and agreed to.

### **Finance (No. 2) Bill 2008: Second Stage.**

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I move: “That the Bill be now read a Second Time.”

The Bill before us has been framed in the context of the most difficult economic and financial climate in a generation. The upheaval and uncertainty in the international financial system has had a detrimental impact on the global economy and its prospects. Each day brings further bad news for economies across the globe. The majority of our trading partners are experiencing a weakening in their economic fortunes and this clearly will have a negative impact on a small, open trading economy such as ours.

On the domestic front, the contraction in the new house building sector, which will continue into next year, has been exacerbated by the international credit difficulties. The downturn in construction has resulted in a rise in unemployment and deterioration in consumer sentiment.

On foot of these developments, economic activity is forecast to contract both this year and next year. The rapidity and scale of the downturn has surprised even the most pessimistic of commentators. However, it is important to remember that despite the gloomy short-term outlook, our economy retains the structural achievements of the past decade. Notwithstanding the rise in unemployment, we now have 600,000 more persons at work than we had in 1998. Our export levels have doubled over the past decade and the living standards of ordinary workers have risen substantially. We also have one of the lowest public debt levels in the EU.

Our main economic focus must be the restoration of international cost competitiveness. It is imperative that we are in a position to take advantage of the global recovery when it emerges. Maintaining public capital investment at high levels relative to national income, boosting pro-

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

ductivity and ensuring credibility and sustainability in the public finances will all be helpful in this regard.

Confronted with rapidly falling revenues and negative economic growth, we had to introduce the most difficult and unpalatable budget since the late 1980s. As a Government, we faced difficult choices, but in making those choices we were at all times conscious of the need to protect the truly vulnerable in our country. That is why we increased the State pension by €7 per week and all working age payments by €6.50 per week.

In framing the budget, we were also guided by the need to introduce measures that would strengthen economic performance and encourage recovery. The essential first step to economic recovery is to stabilise our public finances. The Bill we are debating contains the necessary adjustments to ensure the 2009 budgetary arithmetic is maintained and that the core disciplines and decisions to correct our public finances remain intact. We must support and develop our productive sector to ensure our competitiveness is maintained and enhanced. As I stated last Thursday, the Bill supports enterprise and sends out a message that Ireland is open to business.

In my budget speech, I said that despite the need to raise revenues, the Government is committed to maintaining and enhancing pro-employment business tax relief. I announced in the budget the introduction of a three-year exemption from corporation tax on trading profits and chargeable gains for new companies commencing to trade next year. New companies that benefit from tax exemption will see full relief where total corporation tax liability in any of the first three accounting periods does not exceed €40,000. There will be marginal relief where corporation tax liability falls between €40,000 and €60,000.

I also announced in the budget that the research and development tax credit would increase from 20% to 25%. The Bill includes very significant changes to the scheme which increase its attractiveness to business, in particular small companies and those in the start-up phase. These changes involve the following: an option to carry-back unused tax credits for set-off against the previous year's corporate tax liability, thereby generating a tax repayment; a further option, where there is insufficient or no corporation tax liability in the previous year, to claim payment of the remaining unused credit which will be paid in instalments over a three year period; 2003 will be permanently set as the base year for calculating incremental research and development expenditure under the scheme — over time, this will have the effect of turning the scheme into a volume-based scheme; and finally, the Bill provides that a tax credit will be available in respect of a proportion of the expenditure incurred on a new or refurbished building used in part for research and development activities. This change reflects the reality that research and development takes place in manufacturing or production environments and not just in laboratory conditions. These combined changes make our research and development regime in corporation tax one of the most attractive in the world.

In respect of international trade, I want to refer to our network of double taxation agreements, which was significantly increased this year with the addition of Turkey, Malta, Vietnam, Macedonia and Georgia. These agreements lead to the reduction of tax obstacles that could deter cross-border activity and are critical to the development of our bilateral trading and investment opportunities. The signature of agreements with Malta and Turkey was particularly significant because they represent the completion of Ireland's network of double taxation agreements with all EU and OECD countries and brought our total network to 50 double taxation agreements.

As ratification of these agreements can take time, because of lengthy parliamentary procedures in most countries, I am making provision for the recognition of payments to and from these countries for preferential tax treatment as soon as the agreements are signed, rather than

awaiting the completion of the ratification process. This will have the effect of accelerating reliefs to business in the area of dividends, interest and capital gains tax already contained in the tax code.

The income levy was one of the key measures in the budget aimed at stabilising tax revenues. The levy will apply at a rate of 1% to gross income up to €100,100 per annum or €1,925 per week and at a rate of 2% to gross income above that amount. A further 1% will be payable on gross income in excess of €250,120 per annum or €4,810 per week. This additional 1% will enhance the progressive nature of the levy. It helps meet the cost of the exemption thresholds now being included for those on low incomes and the elderly.

All social welfare and similar type payments will be excluded from the levy. Similar payments from other states will also be exempt. Those with an entitlement to the medical card will also be exempt from the income levy. The exemption threshold of €18,304 per annum is being introduced to exclude those on low incomes and age-related exemption thresholds for persons aged 65 years and over are also being introduced. The income levy is progressive. It does not apply to low incomes or social welfare payments. In short, it means that the vulnerable and elderly are protected while those best able to pay will pay the most. Those paying at the top rate of 3% will contribute 20% of the total take from the levy.

In the case of income tax, the standard rate bands will increase by €1,000 from €35,400 to €36,400 for single individuals, from €44,400 to €45,400 for a married one-earner couple and an increase of €2,000 from €70,800 to €72,800 for a married two-earner couple. This measure will help to cushion the effect of the income levy on middle-income earners.

There is also provision for an increase in the rate of mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers from 20% to 25% in years one and two and from 20% to 22.5% in years three, four and five. While the measure also provides for a reduction in the rate of mortgage interest relief for non-first-time buyers from 20% to 15%, it is broadly revenue neutral. This re-balancing makes for a fairer system and helps those buyers with the biggest financial exposure and those facing falling property values.

The Bill confirms the budget day increases in excise duties and it makes provision for an increase in betting duty from 1% to 2% from 1 May 2009. The Bill allows deductibility for betting duty in computing the amount of profits or losses of a bookmaking business for income tax or corporation tax purposes.

New arrangements for the VAT treatment of tour operators and travel agents are also contained in the Bill. A margin scheme for tour operators, and a measure making travel agents liable to VAT on their commission, are being introduced with effect from 1 January 2010. Most EU member states operate a margin scheme for tour operators whereby they are taxed on the profit margin realised on the supply of a domestic or EU travel package.

I am amending Revenue's civil penalties regime across all taxes and duties except customs in accordance with the advice which Revenue received from the Attorney General, and as recommended in the Law Reform Commission's "Report on a Fiscal Prosecutor and a Revenue Court", so as to ensure its compatibility with the provisions of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. In brief, a person will be given an opportunity to have the courts examine whether that person is liable to a civil penalty for contravention of tax or duty legislation.

I will also amend the various tax codes so as to place on a statutory basis the current practice of the Revenue Commissioners in respect of the level of tax-geared penalties sought in settlements arising out of Revenue audits and investigations. In addition, a number of fixed penalties are to be brought up to date and standardised and the amounts of such penalties, which have not been increased in many years, are to be increased.



[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

The Bill runs to 95 sections and six schedules and is structured by tax heads. In the time available, I will outline some of the main provisions.

Section 2 describes the income levy. As I have already outlined, the levy will apply at a rate of 1% to gross income up to €100,100 per annum or €1,925 per week and at a rate of 2% to gross income above that amount. A further 1% will be payable on gross income in excess of €250,120 per annum or €4,810 per week. All social welfare payments will be excluded from the levy, as will similar type payments made by Departments and agencies other than the Department of Social and Family Affairs, in addition to similar payments from other bodies. Those with an entitlement to the medical card will also be exempt from the levy and an exemption threshold of €18,304 per annum is being introduced to exclude those on low incomes from the levy. Age related exemption thresholds for persons aged 65 years and over are also being introduced. These thresholds will be €20,000 per annum, with a provision for double that limit for a married couple where one or both is aged 65 or over. Where the age related or general thresholds are exceeded, the levy will be payable on all income.

Section 3 provides for a parking levy, which is to apply where an employer provides car parking facilities for employees. The levy will apply where an employee has an entitlement to use a parking space and such space is provided directly or indirectly by his or her employer. The levy will not apply to disabled drivers or to employees of the emergency services in the context of responding to an emergency situation. The charge for a full year will be €200 where an employee has an ongoing entitlement to use a parking space. Where parking spaces are shared by employees, the levy is reduced to €100 where the ratio of the number of employees to the number of parking spaces is two to one or more.

Section 4 provides for an increase in the standard rate bands by €1,000 from €35,400 to €36,400 for single individuals, from €44,400 to €45,400 for a married one-earner couple, and an increase of €2,000 from €70,800 to €72,800 for a married two-earner couple. This measure will help to cushion the effect of the income levy on middle income earners.

Continuing the work commenced earlier this year, section 6 will provide for a new CO<sub>2</sub> based system of calculation of benefit-in-kind in respect of company cars provided for employees. The new system is structured on the seven bands adopted for vehicle registration tax. Cars in the three lowest bands of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions remain at the current level of benefit-in-kind charge, and higher charges apply for vehicles with higher emission levels. Existing vehicles retain the current method of calculation of benefit-in-kind.

As regards health expenses relief, section 8 provides that the relief will be granted at the standard rate only from 1 January 2009, with the exception of nursing home expenses which will continue to be allowed at a the marginal rate.

In providing tax relief, we must ensure as far as possible that it is targeted on those that need it most. As such, section 12 provides for an increase in the rate of mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers from 20% to 25% in years one and two and from 20% to 22.5% in years three, four and five. The measure also provides for a reduction in the rate of mortgage interest relief for non-first-time buyers from 20% to 15%. This measure is broadly revenue neutral and this re-balancing makes for a fairer system and helps those buyers with the biggest financial exposure and those facing falling property values.

The so-called “Cinderella” rule is changed by section 13. Under this, presence in the State during a day does not count in determining residence for tax purposes where the individual leaves before midnight. In future, a presence in the State at any time during a day will be counted for determining residency.

As regards pensions, section 14 provides that the annual earnings limit for determining maximum tax-relievable contributions for pension purposes is being set at €150,000 for 2009 in comparison with the 2008 limit of €275,239. The formula relating to the determination of the annual earnings limit is amended, as are the standard and personal fund thresholds in order to provide the Minister for Finance with discretion as to whether those thresholds should be indexed.

In the area of farming, section 15 extends the farm pollution control relief to 31 December 2010. This relief will continue to encourage farmers to make the necessary and sometimes costly investments in pollution control measures while section 16 renews the 25% general farming stock relief and the special 100% stock relief for the same period.

A scheme to facilitate the removal and relocation of certain facilities where potentially dangerous activities are undertaken is introduced by section 19. Such industrial facilities can hinder the industrial and commercial regeneration of docklands in urban brown field areas. The scheme arises from the EU Seveso Directive 96/82/EC, which seeks to protect public safety near locations where potentially dangerous activities are undertaken. The relief, given by way of accelerated capital allowances and “additional relocation allowances” covers the removal costs of the industrial facilities and the cost of building the relocated facilities, including land purchase costs. Costs are limited to the net costs of the removal and relocation.

The rates of tax that apply for deposit interest retention tax and other investment products are increased by sections 24 and 25. In order to support new companies, section 27 introduces a three year tax exemption for new start-up companies which commence to trade next year. Also in support of business, section 29 makes provision for the recognition of payments to and from countries where double taxation agreements have been signed for preferential treatment rather than awaiting the completion of the ratification process. Sections 30, 31 and 32 deal with various amendments to the provisions relating to the research and development tax credit, the main elements of which I have already outlined to the House.

Building on the initiatives in the Finance Act 2008, section 33 extends from three to seven the categories of energy-efficient equipment included in the scheme of accelerated capital allowances for energy-efficient equipment. The scheme provides for 100% capital allowances in the year of purchase on expenditure incurred by companies on qualifying equipment bought for the purposes of the trade. The new categories included in this scheme are information and communications technology, heating and electricity provision, process and heating, ventilation and air-conditioning control systems and electric and alternative fuel vehicles.

All sectors must make a contribution to stabilising our public finances. Accordingly, section 34 provides for revised arrangements for the payment of preliminary tax by large companies with a tax liability in excess of €200,000 in their previous accounting period. It also revises the dates for payment of capital gains tax on asset disposals by individuals, thereby giving effect to the two measures announced in the Budget Statement. The section provides for payment of preliminary tax by large companies in two instalments, the details of which are set out in the explanatory memorandum to the Bill.

With regard to capital gains tax, the payment date for disposals made in the period 1 January to 30 November of a year of assessment will be 15 December, while the payment date for disposals made in December will be the following 31 January. The revised payment dates apply to disposals made in 2009 and subsequent years.

To ensure consistency with the EC treaty, section 37 amends the existing provision that provides that any gain arising from the disposal of assets situated outside the State and the United Kingdom to a person who is resident or ordinarily resident, but not domiciled in the State, is based on the actual amount received in the State, in accordance with the remittance

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basis of taxation. Section 39 increases the capital gains tax rate to 22%, as I announced in my budget speech.

Excise duties are dealt with in sections 41 to 61, inclusive. These sections set out a range of changes in regard to excise duties, including confirming the budget day increases in excise on tobacco, wine and petrol; the introduction of a lower rate of excise duty for low alcohol beer and cider; and for increases in excise duty payable in respect of licences, other than pub licences, permitting the sale of alcohol.

The provision to increase betting duty from 1% to 2% from 1 May 2009 is set out in section 48 and, as I have already mentioned, to allow deductibility for betting duty in computing the amount of profits or losses of a bookmaking business for income tax or corporation tax purposes.

The introduction of an air travel tax from 30 March 2009 is provided for in section 50. The general rate applying will be €10 per passenger, with a lower rate of €2 for shorter air journeys. I have taken account of concerns raised by regional airports, particularly those on the western seaboard. The lower rate of €2 will apply to departures from any Irish airport where the destination is 300 km or less from Dublin airport. This means that all Irish departures to locations such as Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow will be subject to the €2 rate.

To address ongoing concerns about road safety and VRT evasion, section 56 provides for the introduction, in respect of vehicle registration tax, of a pre-registration test for vehicles, including used imported vehicles, being brought into the State while section 59 provides for the setting up of a temporary registration system for non-Irish registered vehicles being brought into the State for a period of more than 42 days.

In addition, provision is being made for the introduction of estimated excise assessments in cases where excise duty, including VRT has not been paid; extending more specifically the principle of unjust enrichment to VRT; and for changes to the VRT relief scheme for short-term car hire including phasing out the scheme, over a period of two years, by October 2011.

VAT is dealt with in sections 62 to 71, inclusive. These sections set out a range of changes in regard to VAT including, as announced in the budget, the increase in the standard VAT rate by 0.5% to 21.5% with effect from 1 December 2008. This increase applies to all goods and services which were subject to VAT at 21%. The other VAT rates are unaffected.

Section 73 amends several sections of the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 to allow for the introduction of the e-stamping of instruments for stamp duty purposes. To facilitate the introduction of e-stamping, section 74 provides an incentive to encourage the presentation to Revenue of instruments executed before the enactment of the Bill and in respect of which the stamp duty chargeable has not been paid within the prescribed period of 30 days. Provided such instruments are presented to Revenue for stamping within eight weeks of the passing of the Act together with the full stamp duty and appropriate interest, a penalty will not be applied to such instruments. This measure is intended to facilitate a smooth transition to e-stamping.

Section 75 repeals section 110 of the Finance Act 2007 from the enactment of the Bill and reinstates it with the same charging provisions but subject to certain exemptions being made to those charging provisions. The exemptions relate to certain transactions involving public private partnership arrangements and certain incentive schemes for capital allowances purposes. The section is subject to a commencement order being made and it is my intention to commence the provisions early next year.

Section 79 amends Part 9 of the Stamp Duties Consolidation Act 1999 to confirm the new reduced charges, already announced in the budget, for ATM, debit and combined ATM debit

cards. The new rate on ATM cards and debit cards will be €2.50 and on combined cards it will be €5. The reduced charges for ATM, debit and combined cards take effect for the year ending 31 December 2008.

The reduction in the top rate of stamp duty for non-residential property from 9% to 6% is dealt with in section 80 along with a number of other items. Section 83 increases the rate of tax on gifts and inheritances from 20% to 22%. The tax reliefs in respect of the donation of heritage items to approved State institutions and the donation of heritage property to the Irish Heritage Trust are amended by section 87 to 80% of the market value of the items and property donated respectively. The ceiling on the aggregate value of donations qualifying for each of these schemes in any one year will remain at €6 million. This measure will ensure that the State achieves value for money and that there is a greater philanthropic element in the schemes.

To further facilitate business, section 89 and Schedule 3 give effect to the budget day announcement of an extension to return filing and payment deadlines where returns and payments are made electronically via the Revenue On-line Service. A number of amendments are being made to the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 and to the Value-Added Tax Act 1972 to extend and align the existing deadlines for corporation tax, relevant contracts tax and value-added tax.

With effect from 1 January 2009, where returns and payments are made electronically, the return filing and payment deadlines for these taxes will be the 23rd of a month. This has the effect of extending the existing filing and payment deadlines by two days for corporation tax, four days for VAT and nine days for relevant contracts tax. A similar extension to the 23rd of a month is also being made for PAYE and PRSI by way of an amendment to the PAYE regulations.

Similarly, section 90 and Schedule 4 streamline and simplify the provisions in various Acts relating to the collection and recovery of taxes and duties, except customs, and replaces them with an integrated collection and recovery regime across the various tax headings.

I hope that the House has benefited from this explanation of some of the measures in the Bill. The measures it contains strike a balance between the need to protect those on low incomes and the need to restore order to our public finances. It also contains the measures we need to promote enterprise and business in this country so that we can return as early as possible to the path of growth. There are some matters under consideration that I may bring forward on Committee Stage. I will, of course, also give consideration to any constructive suggestions put forward during the debate today and tomorrow.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** As each day passes, the ineptitude of the budget that was passed only weeks ago is further exposed. This Bill represents the last part of the jigsaw of a deeply flawed budget. The problem with the budget is that it was flagged by the Government as a serious strategy to address serious times. People looked to the budget to chart a way out of these difficulties. They looked for an approach by the Government that would seek to reinvent the real economy. We were once a strong and powerful exporting economy, but serious damage has been done to that achievement in the last five years. An important aspect of this is our loss of competitiveness, with many of these losses taking place in sectors controlled and regulated by the Government. People looked to the Government to set a new approach to those sectors which would ease the difficulties being experienced by exporters. They looked for a strategy that would support business through these difficult times. No such strategy emerged.

People also looked to the budget to see, for the first time, after all the talk of public service reform, a genuine implementation of reform that would lead to substantial savings in the budget. The public was anxious to see that the cost of running the shop managed by the

[Deputy Richard Bruton.]

Taoiseach, the Minister for Finance and their Cabinet colleagues would be lower. That did not come. What came instead were cuts of the most appalling nature. The Government need not look to this side of the House for criticism in this regard. Ample criticism was offered by Government Members themselves. How could a Government decide that the people who should carry the can for the rash budgets of the past and the ineptitude of preparing for these difficult times would be grandparents looking for health care, children seeking a decent education and young girls hoping to receive vaccination against cervical cancer?

It was a deep shock to people that a Government which spoke about strategic change and the new Ireland that would emerge to get us through this difficult time could produce a list of cuts of this nature. That is why people are appalled at the budget and why the Government's ratings have fallen. People did not look to this budget for savage attacks on those who are most vulnerable. It is the toughness of the schoolyard bully to pick out those least able to answer back. That is not what people expected in the budget. They were prepared for sacrifice and change in the context of a strategy that would get us through this difficult period but that is not what they got.

The problem with the Finance Bill is that it comes from the same stable as that flawed budget. As a result of the failure to address fundamental reform, we now stand almost alone among western countries in seeking to address the international crisis by raising taxes and cutting our investment. The EU in its new strategy is looking to precisely the opposite approach, believing that now is the time for member states to introduce an economic stimulus. We could have provided such a stimulus if there had been serious public service reform, if we were not in the position where more than one third of our borrowing is invested not in capital infrastructure for the future but in paying day-to-day costs. This is the direct consequence of the foolish management of public moneys over many years. I acknowledge that this did not happen on the watch of the Minister, Deputy Brian Lenihan. I feel his pain at being landed with this mess by his colleague. The reality is that the Government created the problems it now must face.

The Bill introduces 17 new taxes aimed at ordinary taxpayers, raising €2,500 from the typical household. These taxes have been cobbled together without any serious thought. The income levy has had to be completely rejigged. It is a little more equitable than it was in its original form but it remains unfair. The provisions for betting taxes have also been entirely rejigged. The air travel charge is another example of a decision taken without adequate thought for its implications. Not only are people aged over 70 years being asked to pay for their primary care, they are also being told that the tax relief available on medical expenses will be standardised. It seems the relief available on nursing home charges will also be standardised next year. This provision appeared in the budget but does not seem to be in the Finance Bill. These are significant changes. There is no evidence of clear thinking in the cobbling together of these provisions.

The changes announced yesterday by the British Government will have a significant impact for people living close to the Border. While the rate of VAT in this jurisdiction is being increased from 21% to 21.5%, the corresponding rate in the United Kingdom is being reduced from 17.5% to 15%. We could just about survive with a VAT rate that was 20% higher than in the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Now, however, the difference will be 43%. Consumer surveys show that people in the Republic are paying up to 33% more than their counterparts in the North for the same products in the same stores. This situation is getting worse.

Under yesterday's announcement, the low paid in the United Kingdom will be singled out for particular assistance. This is in dramatic contrast to the provisions in this Bill, where we



have denied any increase in tax credits and imposed a levy on the low paid. The British Government has also recognised that companies are strapped for cash and have introduced reliefs to ease them through this period. We have done the opposite in asking companies to pay their tax early, involving a figure of close to €3 billion. The interest cost for the ten and a half months is some €250 million. These are substantial sums at a time when banks are making it difficult for companies to obtain funds even to keep their ordinary stock in trade going. It is putting people under significant pressure.

I personally regard the British approach, given that county's position in regard to public borrowing, as a risky move. I certainly would not advise the Minister, Deputy Brian Lenihan, against the background of his budgetary position, to follow its example. However, we should have been able, as a strong economy, to do more. We should have managed public moneys in recent years so as to be in a position to invest when the rainy day arrived. Instead, because we had built huge spending programmes on the back of a property bubble, our borrowing requirement has risen to 6.5% of GDP at the first sign of trouble.

It would be great to have the room for manoeuvre available to some countries to reflate their economies. We are not in a position to do so. I put the blame in this regard squarely on the shoulders of the Minister's predecessors. Ironically, we may be in a position to piggyback on the reflation that is taking place elsewhere in Europe. The Minister may have to make some gesture towards reflation in order that we can keep this strategy going. Unfortunately, because of the way the Minister and his predecessors have mismanaged the situation, this option is not substantially open to us.

At the root of this, I do not understand how the Minister and his colleagues could have agreed over the past three months to pay €2 billion in extra public service pay between the September increase, the increase next August and the increase the following May. When the Minister looked at the books when he returned from holidays, he must have seen that the only way to fund that €2 billion increase was through borrowing. The money simply is not there. I cannot understand how a Government that was contemplating axing free primary health care for the over 70s and reducing all types of supports in schools did not see that this was an unaffordable pay deal. The Government is repeating the mistake that was made in the benchmarking exercise. The message is that while reform is desirable some time in the future, the pay deal will nevertheless go ahead.

If there is to be some logic, the Government would undertake to introduce a radical reform in public services after which, if progress is being made, there would be bonuses for staff. People would understand that and there would be an incentive to drive reform. However, the Government has done precisely the opposite. The only reform proposals we have heard about are those that were leaked. This is the same mistake that was made in the past. It is a tragedy and I was blue in the face from telling the Minister for Finance's predecessor about the need to reform the way the budget is compiled. The budget only considers inputs and not outputs for citizens. It only considers what is demanded by agencies and not what is needed by clients. It only considers what will be spent not what is to be achieved. We cannot continue with a budget system drawn up in such a way and this is what must change fundamentally. We are chronically condemned to under-perform if we continue with such a system.

Many people in the public service have been failed by the Government because they are trapped in a system which does not serve their interests or encourage high performance. The budget system does not hunt down waste and it does not reward high performance. When money is short it turns on the weak and vulnerable, which is unacceptable, instead of attempting to reform the bureaucracy. This is not the purpose for which we were elected and we must change it.

[Deputy Richard Bruton.]

I do not wish to put all the blame at the door of the Minister for Finance but the tragedy stems from the actions of the Government, through its decisions on benchmarking, decentralisation and the establishment of the HSE. These decisions were designed to send a message in code to the public service that performance to professional standards does not matter; that the Government does not care; that it will move public servants around like pawns on a chess board; and that it is not interested in the quality of the work of public servants, only in the political gains from such movements. The same applies to benchmarking. The Government was not interested in what would accrue in terms of reform. It took the soft option and used an ATM machine to get the public service off its back. These decisions were tragic.

I did not agree with the command and control system decided on by the Government when it came to the establishment of the HSE. However, if the Government was to have such a system, it could at least have removed layers of management and ensured the HSE would be a slim organisation capable of providing significant returns from shared services left, right and centre. It could have cut out human resources departments throughout the organisation and cut out managers no longer deemed necessary because of the streamlining of the system. Why did none of this happen? I imagine it was not because the Minister for Finance took no interest in greater efficiency, but because the Government decided it had no wish to disturb the hornets' nest. This sent a message to people in the public service that the Government is not interested in being professional, in high standards or results at the end of line. It indicated there is enough money with which to paper over all the problems. Such decisions damaged our system, and there is no getting away from those decisions.

We must accelerate the change. Since 2000 the Government has spent €20,000 extra for every family in the country. This is difficult to believe and one would expect a Rolls Royce public service as a result of that expenditure, rather than having grandparents sitting in accident and emergency units for 24 hours as happened to some 30 people in the Beaumont and Mater hospitals last week. One would expect such problems would be cracked. One would expect to see many other problems tackled also. One would have expected the grandiose strategies announced for climate change, health services or e-government to be delivered. However, we never got these. The reason is that we have locked ourselves into a budgeting system which does not serve its purpose.

We must completely change how we operate. This means making a courageous decision, which involves empowering the public service to deliver high quality services and to make the service providers accountable for the results. It means that the Government should not control everything to do with the pay levels set, the people employed or the way operations are run. Such matters should not be controlled from the centre. The Government should give the public service the authority to make these necessary changes and hold it accountable for the results. Rather than waiting for agencies to demand money, Ministers should ask what they intend to deliver next year and only then should they consider whether to allocate the money. Ministers should enter into deals and financial agreements with those agencies and units specifying what is to be delivered and any financial allocation should be dependent on these stipulations. This is a wholly different approach from the model now in place. Managers must be given the authority to manage and if we seek high performance such a change must take place. The Minister for Finance and his predecessor have been dancing around and have refused to grasp this fact and to bite the bullet in terms of changing the way we spend money. While the Minister continues in this vein, the public service will continue to under-perform.

Consider the 2007 output statements which appeared some ten years after the Government was first asked to produce them. I examined the figures for seven Departments. Some 37% or 106 targets were not delivered in those seven big-spending Departments. One would expect some

money to be returned to the Exchequer following the failure to achieve 37% of targets and the failure to deliver on output commitments. There was no such refund. One would expect that senior managers would be told that bonuses would not be paid because targets were not delivered. However, bonuses were paid. How can this be squared with the demand of the Government, the Opposition and the electorate that public money should be spent prudently and that it should be allocated based on high performance?

The Minister should not pretend the targets not delivered were trivial. Some were very serious targets, including a commitment to 100 extra primary care teams, 110,000 extra general practitioner hours, the expansion of cancer treatment and screening, 800 respite care beds for older people, research and development projects, high potential start-up enterprises, 9,000 social housing units and 5,000 social and affordable units. There was a commitment to build ten new schools catering for 7,000 pupils, many of whom no doubt live in Deputy Joan Burton's constituency and similar growing constituencies. There were commitments relating to a contract for the new prison at Thornton Hall and the implementation of the Childrens Act 2001. These were significant issues and were important to people. They were not trivial matters; these were targets committed to but not delivered.

I cannot stand over a budgeting system which allows such under-performance and which allows the people managing that money to receive bonuses. This is what galls people and this is the reason people are frustrated that we are not seeing any change. We will be locked into this under-performing system until consequences are introduced when targets are not delivered and until managers are rewarded for targets delivered. It is appalling to see hospitals claiming to be short of money and closing down wards. What sort of signal does this send? If one is running such an organisation which is short of revenue one would cut overheads and increase patient throughput to earn more revenue. One would sweat the assets to meet targets. People could then say that such a hospital was responding to public need. However, if one closes down wards there are expensive consultants, highly equipped theatres and nurses underworked because a "bean counter" decided that the way to manage the health budget is not to reward people for output and to encourage high performance, but to adhere to a budget decided some time previously. The view of such a person is that a given budget is appropriate for a hospital of a given size, regardless of whether the hospital is performing well or badly. That is the system to which we are married. The Minister is in a position to change the budgeting system, but until he does so we will continue to live with such under-performance.

I examined the health service output statement for 2008. It is frightening to consider what happened to under-performing departments. They were given more money and the ambitions or targets of such departments were reduced. The Government has not indicated to under-performing departments that they are not living up to expectations and has not reallocated finances to high-performing units and departments. Under-performing departments are told that since they have worked their way into a hole and since they are so inefficient, the Government has decided to allocate to them more money and settle for less in return. This is not acceptable. We must tackle the problem at its core. The greatest change necessary is to ensure Ministers are serious about their responsibilities. Their job is to buy in services from units and agencies and to deliver to our clients, namely, those who elect public representatives, those queuing in accident and emergency departments and those in classrooms throughout the country. These are the people we should consider when voting to deliver results, rather than the demands of the agencies, their inputs or the lists of what they seek. We should consider what to give to our clients. All this must be brought centre stage in the budget, but it is not mentioned here. We will search in vain for anything to do with outcomes in this budget. That is not what our budgets are about, but it has to become

6 o'clock

[Deputy Richard Bruton.]

what they are about. I feel strongly about this and I felt strongly about it with the Minister's predecessor. I am still "pissing into the wind"; that might be unparliamentary language.

I notice that provision is made in the Bill for specialist palliative tax relief. It is not that I object to tax relief, but I am a bit puzzled as to why we would make it retrospective to 13 March. It sounds like someone has got a deal that has been made retrospective. I welcome what the Minister is doing with the credit for research and development, but what is the justification for relaxing the treatment of buildings? We are not interested in buildings for research and development, but rather activity in research and development. The Minister seems to be under pressure from someone to give the relief to the building rather than the research.

The change on betting tax is welcome. The difficulty for bookmakers is that there is no other business in which a levy on turnover is the way to tax it. As I understand it, that levy is not passed on to customers. What is then the net margin in some of these businesses? People have claimed to me that the net margin is barely 2% in many bookmakers' shops. Many people are also running telebetting operations, and have located their head offices abroad, which is an effective ruse to avoid paying the tax. The transaction takes place between an Irish-based punter and an Irish-based company, but because it is routed through some brass plate operation in Malta, no tax is paid. If the Minister's proposal does not target these companies, then he will only target the operations that have high street locations employing people in Ireland. That is an issue of some concern.

I am also concerned about the thresholds the Minister has picked for the levy. The threshold of around €18,000 is marginally above the minimum wage, which is an extraordinary low level at which to ask people to pay taxes. There is now a complete riddle of these levies with different thresholds, such as health levies, PRSI levies, the special income levy and so on. They all have different thresholds for the low paid, with an exemption limit for some and a threshold for others. There does not seem to have been much thinking put into it.

I will not hold up the debate any longer. Unfortunately, we will probably have endless hours to get to know one another much better in the dungeons of the House as we go through the Bill line by line. I look forward to that debate.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** The budget of 14 October will go down in history as a boomerang budget that has slapped Irish consumers and businesses in the face since it was first unveiled. It has also given the Government a few smacks on the face, to judge by its surprise at the angry pensioners outside the Dáil. Bringing forward the budget was a clever ruse by the two clever Brians. Old-age pensioners, school-children and taxpayers have been lamenting it ever since.

Not only have we a boomerang budget, but we have corporate raiders — private equity and hedge funds — waiting to take over our banks. What is the strategy? The Government yesterday announced new laws to ban beggars. What will the Minister do about delinquent bankers? He told us the sad scéal about how the bankers came cap in hand on 29 September to get a guarantee from the taxpayers. They now seem to be lining up to hand some of our banks over to venture capitalists who may be more like vulture capitalists.

This is the Minister's first time in the House in a long time. He has not advised the House of the current situation and he has not updated me on the position with the banks.

**Deputy Richard Bruton:** The Deputy has not been singled out.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** I did not want to speak for anybody else. Perhaps he has been having a midnight *tête-à-tête* with Sinn Féin, who as somebody suggested might have large balances in the banks and might be in a position to assist.

**Deputy Brian Lenihan:** If the Deputy wants a briefing on the situation, I can provide it at any time.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** Why does the Minister not consider an equity stake by the State in the banks? This would provide the basis for a job retention strategy, but would more importantly provide the capacity to get credit flowing to small, medium and large businesses around the country.

Does the Finance Bill 2008 help or hinder the economy? As the Labour Party finance spokesperson, I want a budget that helps to stimulate the economy, stems job losses and gets people who have already lost their jobs back to work. I want to see Irish businesses, big and small, regaining confidence that their bank will be open for business and that the Government will be an agent of positive help as we face perilous economic conditions. Governments around the world are reflatting their economies and reforming their banks to give fresh hope to their people, but our Government is confirming a deflationary strategy in this Bill which will cost jobs and destroy confidence.

In today's Bill, the Minister is proposing to increase VAT by 0.5% to an astronomical 21.5%. This is one of the highest rates in Europe, and only Poland at 22% and Sweden at 25% have higher rates. VAT will now be 6.5% above the new rate of 15% in the North and across the Irish Sea. No town north of a line from Dublin to Galway is less than 90 minutes drive to a shopping centre in the North. People go from Donegal to Derry, or from the Naul and Garristown in north County Dublin to Newry in 55 minutes. Irish retailers are hanging on by their finger nails for Christmas business and the new year sales. Many of them make most of their profit in the pre-Christmas and post-Christmas sales. This is an enormous problem for them.

The budget imposes an income levy on all income above €18,304, without any marginal relief. When the Minister considers amendments to the Bill, he should consider introducing marginal relief for older persons. The relief only applies to couples earning more than €40,000. If they earn €10 over €40,000, they will pay 1% on everything. Many older couples on age relief may have an occupational pension that would lead to an income of more than €40,000. If they earn €39,900, they will completely escape the 1% levy.

In terms of tax structuring and design, not having marginal relief is crazy. If a person earns €18,304, he or she will not have to pay the 1% levy. However, if that person's employer asks him or her to do some overtime, bringing his or her earnings up to €18,350, then he or she will be liable for the full 1% levy. We must bear in mind that we are referring here to people who are barely earning above the minimum wage. If they are asked to work on a Sunday or a bank holiday for example, their earnings will go over the limit and they will have to pay 1% on their income. This is what is known as an "employment trap", whereby workers refuse extra hours of employment because their tax position is such that their overall net position would be worsened by doing additional work. The Minister must examine this again.

I am also concerned that the budget fails to address the poverty trap for those who are in need of mortgage interest assistance. There are lots of young couples in the country paying mortgages of €1,400 to €1,600 per month. Let us take the example of such a couple, with the man working in the construction sector. If that man loses his job, he will not get any assistance with paying the mortgage from a community welfare officer. In the early years of any mortgage, most of the monthly payment is interest. In order to get assistance with that payment, his wife will also have to go on the dole. If both partners go on the dole, they will qualify for the mortgage interest subsidy after about 12 or 13 weeks, if the man in question is a self-employed construction worker. Such a couple will be forced to take up life on the dole.



[Deputy Joan Burton.]

This is a crazy economic strategy. The Minister must take on the banks. He must ask them what is the point of foreclosing on the homes of such couples, who are only late with their mortgage payments temporarily because of a job loss. Such couples were a good credit risk when they took out their mortgage. I am not referring here to sub-prime borrowers but to people who were viable mortgage risks a year ago but who, through no fault of their own, have now lost their jobs. It indicates an appalling lack of ideas on the part of those who drafted this budget that such situations were not even imagined. We will have banks foreclosing on houses all over the country. Who will buy those houses? Most likely, the banks will rent them back to their former occupants, who will have to stay on the dole in order to qualify for rent subsidy. This is a poverty trap that is being consciously established by the Government at present.

In this 204 page Bill, there are 21 pages dealing with one issue, which is not getting people back to work, preventing foreclosures or the like but urban parking charges. I suggest that writing those 21 pages probably cost as much as the urban parking charges will yield. We have only two pages devoted to bicycles, but apparently we will have very detailed regulations at a future date. On what planet are the Minister and his officials living? While these are worthy objectives they do not need to take up so many pages and sections of the budget at a time when the economy is in mortal peril, when tens of thousands of people have already lost their jobs and tens of thousands more are at risk of so doing. Is this the Minister's definition of change? Does he believe that this is the kind of issue upon which the Finance Bill should concentrate?

To return to the issue of VAT, it is unbelievable that when the British Chancellor, Mr. Darling is slashing UK VAT rates, our Minister for Finance is increasing the Irish rate, which is already one of the highest in Europe. The Minister should take the opportunity provided by the Finance Bill to drop his decision to increase the VAT rate by 0.5%. I found it very difficult to understand the Minister's logic on this on budget day. Does the Minister realise the extent of the administrative burden placed on businesses by a change in the rate of VAT? If a company has, for example, 100 product lines, it must make hundreds of changes for the sake of 0.5%. At a time when businesses are trying to stay afloat, not to mention the competition element *vis-à-vis* Northern Ireland, it does not make very much sense.

In February of this year I spoke on the last Finance Bill. I said that the time for action had come to stem rising job losses and that the Government could not afford to wait six months until unemployment was more than 5%. Ten months later, unemployment is now almost 7% but the Government forecast for the unemployment rate next year is only 7.3%. That forecast is already hopelessly out of date, with the ESRI indicating that unemployment will reach 8% relatively early next year.

The risks posed by our economic situation go far beyond statistics and percentages. The social cost of sustained economic decline will be immense. An entire generation of young people could find themselves locked out of the jobs market. The young people graduating from third level colleges at the moment, in whom we have invested so much and who have really high-quality qualifications, cannot find work here. It is back to the future and back to the 1980s, when people spoke about where in the wider world they would go for work.

Tens of thousands of people around the country are losing their jobs from building sites and factory floors. While some of those jobs will return when the economy rebounds, many will not. We must urgently put in place pathways back to employment for those who lose their jobs. We need a major programme of training and upskilling to help people acquire the transferable skills needed for 21st century jobs. If the builders of today who are losing their jobs go back into education, they can be the technicians and engineers of tomorrow. They will be able



to find work in the IT sector, for example, which is experiencing shortages in certain types of skilled workers. The scourge of long-term unemployment must be public enemy number one.

The Social Welfare Bill introduced by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Deputy Mary Hanafin, which is a sister to this Finance Bill, withdrew child benefit for 18 year olds in full-time education, including third level. Many women in this country are parenting teenage children on their own, with the hope of sending them on to third level. I hope the Minister has given some thought to the blow that the cut in child benefit will mean to the family budget of, for example, a woman in her forties with teenage children who receives limited support from her former partner. Not only will she lose her child benefit payment, but the registration fee for third level institutions will also increase next year by €600. The woman in my example is in the PAYE sector and may well be working in the Minister's Department or some other Government agency. As the Minister knows, PAYE workers cannot qualify for grants to put their children through third level unless their income is extremely low. The parent of an 18 year child stands to lose just under €1,000 in 2009 and just under €2,000 in 2010 due to the changes to child benefit.

There are 100,000 more people on the live register now than one year ago and in one of the meanest budgets in a quarter of a century, qualifying conditions for jobseeker's benefit have been made much more difficult. The effect will be a reduction of €2,600 per year in income for those who become unemployed. I must query the logic of this, particularly in terms of reflating the economy and getting people back to work. Where is the pathway in this? We can see the punitive element clearly but how will taking €2,600 away from people help them to find another job?

Mr. Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Laureate for economics wrote recently:

The laws of nature and the laws of economics are unforgiving. We can abuse our environment, but only for a while. We can spend beyond our means, but only for a while. We can free ride on the investments made in the past, but only for a while. Even the richest country in the world ignores the laws of nature and the laws of economics at its peril.

He also went on to say — and this is why the budget and the strategy of the Government are so lacking in any dimension of hope — that if we address our economic challenges in the right way, “it will help limit global warming and may even force the realization that a truly high standard of living might entail more leisure, not just more material goods”. This is the kind of revolutionary positive thinking that we need at this time. It is time to lay down a framework for a sustainable future built on economic competitiveness, environmental responsibility and social solidarity.

Investing in public transport, promoting green-tech enterprise and shifting to eco-friendly energy will stimulate the economy while providing the foundation for long-term sustainable growth. Developing the green economy now is not just smart in terms of the environment; it is good for the economy. If we invest in Government action now we can put ourselves on a path to smart green growth. Limited initiatives such as the bicycle grant scheme, the car parking scheme and the small home insulation grants are fine as small pieces in the jigsaw. They are like the taster menu one gets in a fancy restaurant. They are *amuse-bouches*. That is what they amount to. They are a little tasteen; they are not meant to be really serious. Protecting our environment is not an externality or an added extra. It should be our number one priority.

I welcome the Minister's decision to remove the Cinderella rule, as I dubbed it some years ago, for non-resident tax exiles. Up to now, the midnight rule, whereby non-resident tax exiles could spend a day in the State provided they left by midnight in their jet or helicopter, was a blatant opportunity for abuse. They could come back ten minutes after midnight and the day

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started again. This move is certainly welcome, but it really is tax justice for slow learners. Plenty of loopholes and tax shelters remain in the tax code. The Minister replied to a question only two weeks ago that the cost in 2006 of the 15 most popular tax breaks in the construction area was €464 million. He did not close the €260 million loophole that allowed developers to escape paying stamp duty. I know he has placed some restrictions in the Bill in this regard. These are welcome and we will ask him to spell them out on Committee Stage. However, our tax code needs real, meaningful reform to make sure everyone pays his or her fair share. The Minister will tell us that the Commission on Taxation will deal with the issues of reform. However, I do not hold out much hope, for two reasons. Tax justice — particularly for the PAYE sector — is not part of the commission's terms of reference; in addition, the commission is stuffed with practitioners of the dark art of tax avoidance.

The Bill contains significant measures to increase and broaden tax reliefs on research and development expenditure, including with regard to qualifying buildings. Moves in the area of research and development are welcome, particularly if we are serious about winning jobs in emerging high-tech sectors and attracting laboratory jobs to replace those being lost on factory floors. Our Nordic neighbours are streets ahead of us here, dedicating vastly greater resources to delivering a knowledge economy. The Minister promised to produce a cost-benefit analysis when introducing further tax breaks, and he should do so with regard to these and other tax break measures — for example, the exemption of companies from corporation tax for the first three years of their operation if their liabilities are below €40,000. It would be interesting to know whether the research and development measures were motivated by lobbying on behalf of a particular company. Much of it seems tailor-made for something, particularly the section dealing with buildings. Perhaps he will expand on this on Committee Stage. I support the high-tech measures but they are still not enough to get the country moving again.

Sounding a note of optimism is difficult when every day is a bad news day for the economy. Looking to the future with confidence is not easy when one has lost confidence in the Ministers running the country. I assure the Minister that people have lost confidence in his Government. It turns out that when the Minister announced the 2009 budget on 14 October, much of it was just kite flying. After a succession of own goals, he announced a series of retreats and climbdowns. I called it the boomerang budget. When the Government was asked to step up to the plate with a programme for economic recovery, it struck out.

Before the Finance Bill has even been debated, we are being told an economic plan is on the way. This is an amazing admission of the inadequacy of the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill is meant, broadly, to be the economic plan of inflows and outflows for the year. This Finance Bill will not do anything to get our economy back on track. The Government is now going back to the drawing board again in the hope that it will be third time lucky. At the very time when our economy needs a fiscal stimulus, the Government is hamstrung by its past profligacy. The forecast for a 2009 budget deficit of 6.5% of GDP already looks hopelessly optimistic, before we even reach December. All the news is that the inflow of receipts from the self-employed and similar this month appears to be less than expected. Every Minister for Finance in the Minister's seat has relied on this for a pre-budget boost.

There is a growing consensus that the Irish economy could decline by up to 4% next year, rather than the 1% forecast by the Minister on budget day. This could send the budget deficit into double figures. According to the old orthodoxies of fiscal conservatism, there is now little room for manoeuvre. Borrowing to boost the economy in the short term by investing in education and infrastructure will see us better placed to help the economy to grow over the medium term and balance the books over the long term. What we need at this point is to put money into the economy rather than taking it out. It should happen as part of a coherent, co-ordinated

economic strategy. Unfortunately, the rocketing budget deficit is not part of a strategy. It is the result of economic mismanagement on an epic scale.

The UK Government is now trying to meet the challenge head-on by betting the house on a fiscal stimulus package. Does this Government have any strategy to stimulate the economy and replace some of the demand wiped out by the credit crunch? Even the small matter of the 0.5% rise in VAT will make Christmas much more difficult for our retailers. We have many jobs in the retail sector, whose business will simply go north of the Border. The Labour Party has set out the framework of a billion-euro stimulus package, the main elements of which are as follows: a significant primary and secondary school building scheme, which would put construction workers to work building new schools, refurbishing old schools and improving educational opportunities for future generations; a meaningful and comprehensive insulation scheme to retro-fit houses and schools across the country — the Minister may have heard the President-elect of the United States, Barack Obama, refer to this as winterising; and a significant investment in public transport, which would improve quality of life and increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of our city regions — key magnets for inward foreign investment — as places to invest and create jobs by ensuring our infrastructure is good enough to attract the very best international business to the country. Moreover, the €1.2 billion in development levies currently held by local authorities should be allocated for immediate use under its designated headings. Again, this would put construction workers to work building much needed community infrastructure around the country.

We must utilise new small and medium enterprise-centred credit lines from the European Investment Bank which are available. I asked the Minister a parliamentary question last week. The Tánaiste is talking to somebody. The Irish banks will not use this facility. One bank is now making inquiries, as it were. I understand the margin may not be big enough. Our enterprises are small and medium businesses. If there is a fund which 22 European countries are using to draw down a significant flow of funds, why is the Minister not proactively selling it? If the existing banks will not provide credit to businesses then we should find another mechanism by which to supply it to them.

A 4% decline in the economy next year would see it fall by more than 10% in real terms over just two years. This is the technical definition of an economic depression and would put us on the precipice of a deflationary spiral. Much as in an aeroplane, the steeper the descent, the more difficult it is to get back on an even keel.

Fianna Fáil has now been in government for eleven years. In his last two budgets as Minister for Finance, Deputy Cowen was particularly remiss in continuing to boost the construction sector and to boost the bubble in land and construction speculation. Now that this bubble has burst, unfortunately, our economic difficulties are even worse. I note that both Deputy Bertie Ahern and Charlie McCreevy and the Minister, Deputy Brian Lenihan appeared on the RTE programme about the history of Bertie. Charlie McCreevy declared that he had boosted everything and that it was wonderful. I say, good for him; he is over in Brussels. Deputy Bertie Ahern has gone and the Minister might have some justification in feeling that he has the honour of picking up the pieces but I acknowledge it is a challenging job.

We need to rebuild the economy and this includes an important role for public services. The continual devaluing of public servants could not be regarded as an economic strategy. People look for scapegoats in time of war and currently many people are of the view that the public service might be an attractive scapegoat. There are serious problems in the public service and there has been a proliferation of agencies.

There are three areas in the public service which the Minister should address immediately. The first is the bonus culture. Why should every senior public servant above a certain level

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automatically get a bonus? In each Department, one or two people do not get the bonus. What does this bonus culture achieve? We have seen in the case of FÁS some truly reprehensible practices, yet all the people involved continue to collect their bonus. There has been a decrease in accountability in the public service. Good public servants cannot bring the light on the quality work they do and poor public servants are not being held to account for what they do wrong or where they waste taxpayers' money. Fianna Fáil has been in government for 11 years. There is a very significant element in some Departments of public service expenditure which is essentially patronage expenditure for Fianna Fáil. FÁS is not immune from this aspect. A Minister launches a programme, a Minister commissions a study, the Minister pops up for photographs to announce the launch or to announce the programme. The report is done and the Minister pops back again for the launch of the report along with photos in the newspapers. The Minister travels up and down the west coast to give out cheques with the purpose of generating massive political patronage. This kind of political patronage seriously worries many decent public servants who have no option but to follow whatever their master, the Minister, decides. How the Minister deals with this in his own party will be a measure of how courageous he is.

The Minister plans to announce public service reform but unless we hear tomorrow about an end to the bonus culture, the patronage culture and some serious accountability by public servants, I do not anticipate much outcome from tomorrow's announcement.

**Deputy Seán Fleming:** I welcome the opportunity to speak on Second Stage of the Finance Bill. I acknowledge the important steps taken by the Minister in bringing forward the budget at an earlier date this year and thereby ensuring the Finance Bill will be debated in the cool light of day at this time of the year. The budget is usually announced in early December and we would all go away and forget about it and then some time in February it would be debated in the House which is well into the new financial year. It is very good practice that the Finance Bill is being discussed and that all Stages will be discussed in the House and then it will go to the Seanad early in the new year. It is good from a taxation point of view to know the shape of the Finance Bill and the Government's economic programme for the year ahead before the end of the year rather than in February or March and sometimes near St. Patrick's day or at the end of March. It is good practice to have the debate early and to have the Estimates published on the same day as the budget. I am a former chairman of the Joint Committee on Finance and the Public Service and I spoke about this on several occasions. It did not make great sense for an organisation to announce its plans and economic activities for the coming year in two halves — what it planned to spend and then three weeks later announcing in the budget how it would raise the income. No commercial organisation could conduct its business activities in this manner and I am very pleased to see that both have been combined. This means a certain amount of information overload during that week and some of the details do not receive media coverage because of the amount of information. This is the first year that the Estimates have appeared with the budget but people will be more aware next year and media commentators and Members will be able to adequately sift through both documents and so ensure a proper debate on taxation measures and expenditure measures. There will be a couple of weeks of debate each year from now on and this is to be welcomed.

A couple of hours ago the House voted on the matter of referring Supplementary Estimates to the relevant committees. Some Members were of the view that the debate should be taken in the House. This was one of the most hollow and shallow reasons for calling a vote in the House that I have ever seen. Last year, Deputy Rabbitte produced a report on the amount of time the Oireachtas committees devote to considering the Estimates including the Supplementary Estimates. The committees should be going through the detail with respect to the Depart-

ments. They gave an hour or an hour and ten minutes to the discussion of the expenditure of billions of euro. It is only proper that not only should these matters be referred to the committees but I would like to see full engagement at the committees and a proper debate and a teasing out of each Department's Estimate and Supplementary Estimate. I would support a detailed discussion and I would like to see Members more genuinely engaging in the Estimates debate rather than just calling for a vote in the House as to whether it should take place in the Chamber or in committee.

There has been a severe change in economic conditions in the past year. This time last year even the most pessimistic commentator did not predict what was before us in 2008 and what will be ahead of us in 2009. What is happening in Ireland is not unique and it is exacerbated by the international financial difficulties. This is a worldwide happening and every part of the globe is affected. It is important to recognise that we can take those steps in our control to influence economic developments in Ireland. This will help ensure Ireland is in a good economic position next year and in the years ahead. It must be recognised that Ireland is a small country in the eurozone, a small player in the international community and can only have a small influence on international economic activities. Instead, some people would have us believe that every matter from the price of oil to the international financial sector crisis is the fault of the Taoiseach, Deputy Brian Cowen, or the Minister for Finance, Deputy Brian Lenihan.

I have attended several public meetings with farmers and teachers in the Laois-Offaly constituency since the Budget Statement. I have found the public knows the economic reality. The debate in this House, however, is far removed from the reality of which the people are aware. Blame is thrown across the floor of the House every day but it is not washing. Someone told me that a child of 14 years understands there is an economic recession. The public is aware adjustments need to be made. Last night, I met with 30 young farmers who understand the economic situation has changed utterly. They have seen some of their colleagues lose their jobs in the construction industry and have had to revert to farming as a safe haven. While the Government cannot prevent a change in the economic tide, we can manage what is under our control effectively.

I was intrigued by some of Deputy Joan Burton's earlier comments on the public service. She seems to have a problem with democratically elected politicians and Ministers having an involvement with the public service. Is it a crime for a Minister to launch a report or attend a public event hosted by a Department or State agency?

**Deputy Joan Burton:** Yes, when it is costing a fortune. That is where the money is being wasted.

**Deputy Seán Fleming:** This is termed as "patronage". I would hope elected public representatives engage more with public service bodies, be they national or local. I cannot understand the argument that there is something wrong with the democratic involvement of Ministers in activities in their Departments. I understand the criticism of Ministers not being involved in their Departments, not supporting policy initiative or not giving a lead on Cabinet decisions to be implemented by State agencies and Departments. However, when Ministers do participate in such processes, they are criticised as well. I do not buy into that line of argument.

Some of the measures being introduced in the Bill may not seem like good news but, on the other hand, people accept their necessity because of their understanding of the economic situation. Section 2 deals with the new income levies of 1% on income up to and including €100,100, 2% for income in excess of €100,100 but not greater than €250,120, and a charge of



[Deputy Seán Fleming.]

3% thereafter. I do not understand the €120 element to the last threshold but I am sure there is a good reason for it.

The levy will apply to all income in a similar manner to the Tax Acts, but will be applied before granting relief for pension contributions or deductions for capital allowances. The levy has been a bone of contention among the farming community. I have endeavoured to explain the reasons for it at public meetings. I have also highlighted that all business expenses, whether they are for the local garage, shop, electrician or farmer, are all subject to the same income tax code. All operating expenses that lead to the costs of running a business can be deducted. The message went out that the levy was a turnover tax, 1% on gross income. These levies are not a turnover tax. Some farmers believed it would be 1% of their creamery or mart cheque until it was pointed out it will be 1% of their net income.

The only items excluded are pension contributions and capital taxes. I commend the Minister on introducing this by way of levy rather than increasing the tax bands. Had we gone down that road, people would have been able to offset pension contributions, capital allowances and investments in properties to reduce their taxable income, resulting in less of a gain for the Exchequer. The Minister's use of a levy is correct, effective, pragmatic and gets straight to the high earners who could have used taxable deductions as a shield against this.

I am pleased social welfare payments, those on the minimum wage and those entitled to a medical card will be exempt from the levy. People over 65 years with a gross income of less than €20,000 per annum, with a provision for double that amount for a married couple, will be exempt. Will the Minister clarify that the over 70s with an income of under €700 per week, or €36,400 per annum, €1,400 and €73,800 respectively for a married couple, and an entitlement to a medical card will also be exempted from the levy? I hope the medical card entitlement has been taken into account for the over 70s as well.

Income from deposit interest retention is not taken into account with the levy because it is caught by the DIRT regime, which has risen from 20% to 23%. It would have been unfair to include this in the income levy. I raise this because the system is in place for senior citizens to pay their DIRT through tax relief at source if they sign a specific form with their bank. If it is a joint bank account, it must be signed by husband and wife. Recently, I had a constituency case of an elderly woman in her 90s and her son in his 60s who had a joint account in both their names. They did not, however, qualify for the tax relief at source because they were not a married couple. Will an exemption be made in such cases where both parties are over the age requirement? I accept it could open up unusual anomalies but there cannot be too many people in this category.

The Bill's provision for a levy on second homes is a good measure. As there are so many people with second properties, holiday homes and rental properties, the minimum we should get from them is €200. I welcome the measure and, at the risk of being unpopular, I would not hesitate to increase that levy in the next few years. People, who in the good times, were able to obtain a second property for rental purposes can easily make a contribution like that, particularly when water rates are not payable. The argument will be made that it will be added to the rent of the tenant but not every second house is rented. It is a minimum charge and I am pleased to see it introduced.

I understand the health expenses relief measure and we must accept the reality. Up to now, a person on a high income on the higher rate of tax could get tax relief on medical expenses, through the Med 1 form, at the top tax rate. If one had medical expenses of thousands of euro over the course of a year, one could get 41% of it back. From looking at those forms over the past few years, I know that the amount of money that one can claim as medical expenses as an



outpatient from private health insurers such as VHI is very restrictive. They allow paltry figures, such as €35 per consultant visit where the visit could cost €70, €80 or €150. This is a good tax rebate for those incurring medical bills directly, without going to the public hospital and adding to queues there. It is a good incentive and it is right that it be standardised. Those on the lower tax rate could not avail of the older measure. It is hitting many of us who have claimed it at the higher level but there is an issue of equity and fairness.

Another development regarding medical expenses relief is that the minimum amount has been reduced. There was always €250 that one could not claim. This was eliminated some years ago. Now, it is applied to the standard rate. This will help with the move whereby one can get tax relief at source. If consultants are operating through the larger hospitals, or GP practices or dentists properly registered for tax, it may be possible to get tax relief directly at source, as is happening with mortgage interest, the VHI and private health insurance. It is mooted to happen for trade union subscriptions. Maybe it has happened or is in the pipeline. It is only fair and equitable that those on the standard rate should not have to subsidise those who can get tax relief at the higher rate.

I welcome the provisions of section 13, which has been referred to by a previous speaker. This concerns the abolition of the residency rule. If a person left the country before midnight and was not here at the stroke of the bell like Cinderella, the day was not counted for being in the country. My view, although maybe my understanding is unclear, is that the system facilitated some people not having residency in any country. They were domiciled somewhere but if they split their time between three countries, they would never end up being over 183 days in any country. They could spend three or four months in each country, never amounting to six months in any one. They could legitimately say they were non-resident in any country. This will help us to ensure that people pay tax somewhere. Let us hope it is in Ireland but it might force them to pay tax elsewhere. The measure is long overdue. That people could avoid being resident here gave rise to a perception of inequity. I prefer people to pay the full tax rate in Ireland if they are earning income in Ireland and availing of services here, rather than making voluntary donations to particular causes they are keen on. I prefer the money to be paid in income tax to the Exchequer and to let the Government decide on spending priorities, not the individual taxpayer.

I refer to section 87, where some people can donate heritage items and paintings in lieu of tax. There is a cap on that and someone cannot pay a massive tax bill in this way because there is a limit to what the Government will accept. It is good that it has been limited to 80% of the value. If someone hands a painting worth €100,000 to the State, he or she will be allowed a tax credit of €80,000 from now on. That is fair enough because the person is getting a good deal by not having to write the cheque in the first place. It is only right that the person should forfeit some deduction and 20% is a reasonable amount.

In section 14, a significant deduction has been made to tax relief on pensions. This is only right in the interests of equity, many people shielded much income by having a large pension provision. This was not available to people on lower incomes. Section 15 deals with the farm pollution control relief. The Minister has extended it by a further two years to 31 December 2010. In the few seconds available to me, I might be bold enough to suggest he ask his ministerial colleague to extend the farm waste management scheme by a couple of months into 2009 because much work has not yet been completed. This would tie in neatly to allow the grant scheme to continue for a couple of months if tax relief was allowed on it for next year.

**Deputy Michael Noonan:** I have a few minutes now and again at 8.30 p.m. While I have the attention of the Minister, who may not be back at 8.30 p.m., I wish to raise the matter of tax relief for medical expenses. When I was debating with the Minister for Defence on budget day,

[Deputy Michael Noonan.]

I understood that it was the intention of the Minister for Finance to exempt nursing home fees from the standard rate and to continue them at the marginal rate of tax. The text of the Bill does not do so. It exempts them for 2009 but since the subsection lapses at the end of 2009, the primary section is maintained as law. It will apply to nursing home fees from 1 January 2010. If it is the intention of the Minister that this would apply at the marginal rate, an amendment is required. If he simply deletes the provision referring to the tax year 2009 it is a sufficient amendment to allow the issue to stand at the marginal rate of tax. The argument is that when the Fair Deal scheme is introduced, this will be necessary but the two schemes do not match. The means test in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill is unusual, in that it decides what contribution people will make rather than what entitlement they will get. The higher the fee and the higher the income, the greater the contribution. If one reads the tables for income tax in the Bill, people who qualify for the fair deal are standard rate taxpayers, unless the nursing home fee is very high.

Another quirk is that because it is a means test that decides a contribution, the level at which one gets a rebate will be calculated on income. If a person is paying tax at the higher rate and gets relief at the marginal rate, he or she will be assessed as having to make a greater contribution because the income has increased by that net amount. Under the Fair Deal scheme, it is great that sons and daughters will no longer pay but if they are not paying any longer they will not get relief at either the standard or marginal rates. The issue will not arise.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill is silent on tax issues. When a family home is attached at 7.5%, it is not clear that there is a tax rebate on that to the inheritor of the family home or at what level that will apply. I am not pushing that case. If someone inherits the family home and there is an attachment of 7.5% of its value, there is not a great case to be made for relief at either the standard or marginal rate but the Bill is silent on this. I understood it was the intention of the Minister to grant this relief. He has not done so in the Finance Bill.

**Deputy Brian Lenihan:** If it will assist in putting the matter beyond doubt, I will have it examined.

Debate adjourned.

### Private Members' Business.

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#### Small and Medium Enterprises: Motion.

**Deputy Willie Penrose:** I move:

“That Dáil Éireann:

- seriously concerned at the crisis situation now facing many small and medium sized enterprises arising from the credit famine and which is contributing very significantly to the massive increase in unemployment levels;
- condemns the refusal of the banks to make available the normal credit streams which are the lifeblood of such companies;
- deplores the failure of the Government to either ensure the banks make credit available or to provide alternative sources of credit;

- expresses its further concern that failure to take urgent action will result in the collapse of many such companies within weeks and a further serious increase in unemployment;
- calls on the Government to:
  - establish a Small Business Operational Fund to ensure that credit streams are made available to small and medium sized firms, drawing on the €15billion Small Business Operational Fund established in September by the European Investment Bank, which Irish banks have so far refused to access;
  - assist such firms by ensuring that Government departments and agencies settle their bills within ten days, rather than the current 30 days;
  - establish a monitoring group made up of representatives of the Government, small and medium sized enterprises and the banks to monitor the lending practices of the financial institutions; and
  - strengthen the role of the County Enterprise Boards by removing the limitation on the type of enterprises the Boards can support and raising the limit on the number of jobs they can create above the current figure of ten, as well as a significant increase in Measure 1 funding to maximise their potential for job creation.”

This is a simple motion in its content and intent but it addresses an issue that is pressing and vital. Small businesses in Ireland are facing a credit famine. The banks are not extending credit to small and medium sized enterprises. Instead, they are taking every opportunity to tighten terms and impose serious charges and restrictions upon existing customers. What chance do new customers have of getting a penny when they are behaving like that with existing customers?

This problem is not new. It has been going on for months but it was not addressed and is now at crisis levels. Had action been taken when this problem first came to light, we would not now be in this extremely difficult position.

What is at issue in the Labour Party motion is the survival of hundreds of businesses and possibly tens of thousands of jobs. What we are now facing is not businesses closing because they are not profitable, although that will happen, but profitable businesses closing down simply because they cannot get access to credit. That is a shame, and the Government must take responsibility for that along with the banks.

All businesses rely on credit. One needs credit to fill the gap between completing a job and getting paid and between paying someone for necessary supplies or meeting one's payroll and getting paid oneself. It is as simple as that. It is about cashflow, not profitability, yet across the country small business is finding it increasingly more difficult to access credit.

A recent ISME survey found that 54% of companies surveyed had been refused applications for new finance and-or the extension of existing credit lines. A striking feature of the results is that a similar survey in August revealed that 20% of companies at that stage had difficulties, confirming the escalation of the crisis in less than three months. In less than three months, therefore, we can measure the extent to which the crisis escalated and, in parallel terms, measure the apathy and lack of conviction of this Government to tackle a crisis that was as apparent as the nose on one's face. Of the 46% of successful firms, 38% could not meet the conditions attached by their banks to secure additional funding. Some banks are engaging in acts of usury. They are adding €40,000 or €50,000 for rearranging finance. That type of action

[Deputy Willie Penrose.]

drives people out of business. They are putting 1.75% on loans when people are already struggling.

It is time to call a halt. The Government helped out those banks in their hour of need but those of us in the Labour Party did not support that because we wanted to attach conditions to that guarantee to ensure they would not behave as they are currently. We wanted to make sure that in terms of the liquidity they were being guaranteed, that money would be made available to small and medium sized businesses but it has not happened and no amount of distortion of the figures can obliterate that fact.

These are not new businesses we are talking about — some 50% of them are in existence for more than ten years, with 74% in existence for 20 years or more. The Minister should know there are no mushrooms here. They are long-standing businesses that are suffering as a result of the credit crunch. The problem has reached the stage where the Small Firms Association estimates that up to 800 jobs per week are being lost in the SME sector. That is a phenomenal figure. What will happen next year if there is not immediate intervention? That is the reason we have tabled this motion.

The question that now must be focused on is one which the Government has an obligation to directly address. Why is it the case that the Government, after riding to the rescue of the banking sector on behalf of the Irish people, has not yet prevailed upon the banks to loosen the purse strings and make credit available to small businesses? Why has the Government, which rushed legislation through the Houses of the Oireachtas to protect the economy from the havoc that would be wrought from a banking system collapse, not exercised its muscle to put in place a plan to combat the recession and provide the necessary stimulus to reflate the economy and take a leaf out of our neighbour's proactive and positive attitude adopted in its pre-budget report yesterday? Is it ineptitude, inertia or indifference that gives rise to this perplexing state of affairs?

I refer to a local business to illustrate the points I am making. It concerns a local man, Johnny Owens, of Owens Concrete Limited, Gaulmoylestown, Knockdrin, Mullingar, County Westmeath, which is situated in a small, beautiful rural area outside Mullingar. It is home to my Labour Party colleague and land agitator, Councillor Dan McCarthy. The Minister should know that if Dan McCarthy were here, the roof would be gone. Johnny Owens started his business in 1972 and, with his family, built it up in the past three decades. It provides up to 140 jobs but in recent days he had to let staff go. These were people whom he said he knows well and with whom he worked hands-on for many years. It pained him to have to tell them last week, with just four weeks to go to Christmas, that he could no longer keep them on. He is deeply concerned that if things do not loosen up, of the 85 or 90 people remaining, he will have to let another 50% of workers go as he will have no work for them.

This is an area in the heart of rural Ireland, and the Minister can imagine the heartache and turmoil those unfortunate people will suffer in the next few months. These are people with commitments to mortgages, car loans, school fees and other household expenditures. Is there any concept on the Government side of the magnitude of what is happening in the real economy, which is not sheltered in any shape or form?

In the local newspapers Johnny Owens stated: "I am expecting to be forced to get rid of more workers when the Government's Farm Waste Management Scheme comes to an end in December." I visited him at his home last Saturday; I wanted to know if I could use his name in my contribution. I know him and his family since my early childhood. The man could not fathom how the Government could not see its way to extend the deadline for the farm waste management scheme, for which farmers were also calling. It affects 8,000 farmers, some of

whom have work that is ready to start. Does the Minister know we had a bad summer? There were three months in which one would not put a duck out on the land, let alone machinery. We want that scheme extended because of the three months of inclement weather during the summer.

Is there any pretence of joined-up thinking or integrated Government operating on the Government benches? Surely any money expended comes back into the Exchequer through income tax — keeping workers employed, VAT and through helping protect other downstream jobs, especially in a challenging environment for the rural economy.

What Johnny Owens has to say represents what one hears from the thousands of small businesses across the country who provide the backbone of employment in so many of our communities. It is what one hears from Patricia Callan on behalf of the Small Firms Association, from Mark Fielding on behalf of ISME and other leaders of these industries. I want to quote Johnny Owens in full from statements he made to the local newspapers, the *Westmeath Examiner* and the *Westmeath Topic*. He stated:

After spending your life building a business from nothing, starting out with just 40 pounds, and not sparing yourself, and to go where we were, and borrow a lot of money along the way, it is very hard to tell people who have helped build up the business that you've no work for them [this is the punch line so the Minister should listen carefully] especially when you look at so much money squandered in so many other directions. Banks lending over 100% in mortgages, and now unwilling to lend money at all, and instead acting like the 'grim reaper' towards those who got the money. Why is there no accountability from the people who lent the money recklessly, and how should we arrive at a situation where the Government, a year or so ago, predicted a €9 Billion surplus, and now we are being told there is likely to be at a minimum a €11 billion deficit? Can someone tell me where the €20 billion is gone, or what it was spent on?

I would like someone to explain just how this country got so far into the red. We are bailing out the banks for the mistakes they have made, but they are showing us no mercy when it comes to the crunch, they will still have to get back their pound of flesh.

This is not Labour Party propaganda but reports from the local newspapers under the headlines "Concrete business owner hits out at 'squanderers'" and "Mullingar job losses cause heart-ache". This is not black propaganda against the Minister. These are direct words from a man who started out with his family in a cottage. I, too, come from a cottage. Mr. Owens's father, the Lord be good to him, was a county council worker with my father. I was very proud of his achievements, building up an industry in a rural area with 140 jobs, plus at least another 80 indirect jobs. This is a rural area. He contributes to everything and is a tremendous community man. Stories like his litter every village, constituency and community in this country.

This calls for one simple, little stroke from the Minister for Finance, instead of allowing the finance mandarins to run amok over him. If I were Minister for Finance the farm waste management scheme would be extended until next June. They are extending it in Northern Ireland. Forget about the eurocrats. Tell them that is why there was a "No" vote in this country. Tell them looking for a green cover six weeks after tilling was the reason there was a "No" vote in this country. I would not allow bureaucrats anywhere in Europe to tell a sovereign country how to behave. We are capable of running our business. The farm waste management scheme is one of the reasons there was great reluctance. The rural community knows this. I visit the houses of rural people. They know this scheme is being terminated without all the jobs being completed and all the necessary farm work completed, and that is why people are being laid off.



[Deputy Willie Penrose.]

In this motion, rather than engaging in rhetoric, we have decided to let the real people be the mouthpieces through which we convey the seriousness of the situation. This seriousness underpins the cases upon which we mount the call for the very minimum, the four point plan of action which forms the core of this motion. We expect the Government will have no difficulty implementing it. I saw the blasé amendment and nearly fell off the chair. We are doing this in an effort to combat the recession and ignite a spark of recovery.

In the context of the plan unveiled by the British Government yesterday, especially regarding the 2.5% reduction in VAT, much more is required if we are not to witness thousands more jobs being put at risk. The disadvantage in VAT rate impositions is now a clear six percentage points and will lead to a further significant boost in cross-Border shopping and see shops of all sizes across the country suffering further falls in revenue, leading to a vicious cycle of further job losses. Lower prices in Northern Ireland and a favourable sterling exchange rate represent further challenges for this economy.

We must recognise these factors and not just say that is the way of the world and attribute them to the global economic recession. There is a recession but we are a sovereign country and we can intervene and take steps. We must be proactive in coming up with a plan to win back our competitive advantages. Old solutions dusted down and pressed into new bottles will do nothing for us, so the Government must rethink its strategy, which appears to focus purely upon fighting the recession. My colleague, Deputy Burton, who is an expert in this area, found 17 additional taxes in the Finance Bill. How many pages of the Finance Bill dealt with efforts to breathe life into our clearly ailing economy? We had a visionless budget lacking in imagination, with all the hiccups we saw over the last number of weeks. This is clearly the hallmark of a tired, jaded and, most important, out of touch Government.

**Deputy Ruairí Quinn:** Hear, hear.

**Deputy Willie Penrose:** As Mr. Pat Crotty, the chairman of the Small Firms Association, SFA, recently said, small businesses are created, mostly, by ordinary people who do extraordinary things. They have the vision, determination and willingness to take risks to deliver on their ideas, and they extend their business, create employment and, hopefully, generate the profits that enable the Government to generate tax income to redistribute. Thus they fulfil the social needs of our society, a noble concept which we in the Labour Party wholeheartedly endorse and applaud. Those concepts go back to our very foundation. Without a normal, functioning financial system, Irish small businesses have no hope of surviving this recession, and the jobs that will be lost as a consequence have absolutely no guarantee of being replaced.

As well as access to finance, which is critical for all businesses at every stage of their development, and which is especially important in the current climate, the issue of late payments across industry generally is also critical. This is the root cause of most businesses' problems, and the reason they require assistance from the banks more than usual. The Prompt Payment of Accounts Act has a lot of merit, but it does not work in practice as well as anticipated, as businesses are unwilling to apply its terms for fear of damaging long-standing business relationships and recourse through the law in terms of enforcement is too expensive. Perhaps the legislation should be renewed with the possibility of strengthening it and make the 30 day payment period mandatory. Some sort of buffer would have to be agreed by way of transition to the new arrangements; perhaps we should consider the establishment of a small claims court for business similar to the Small Claims Court for consumers. That could be a way forward.

Management capability is another area that requires immediate action because if managers are not given the skills to deal with a recession, they have little or no hope of coming up with



or delivering a plan to ensure their businesses' survival and potential expansion into the future. Even in the good times, 40% of small businesses were failing during the first five years. The OECD estimated that the primary reason for this was lack of management capacity. The SFA National Centre of Excellence was set up in 2006, and it is imperative that it becomes a top Government priority that adequate funding is allocated to this centre.

We need to concentrate on securing new markets. It is clear we have been over-reliant on construction and domestic demand over the past decade or so, when there was surplus cash in the economy. This has meant that many businesses have not looked overseas for new markets. This is now an imperative due to the small size of our domestic economy. Given that two out of three people are employed in domestic services, the internationalisation of our service industries must now become a policy priority. Enterprise Ireland has recently set up a unit for such services.

Government supports must be specifically targeted. The difficulty, as we in the Labour Party point out in our motion, is that county enterprise boards, which have been very effective, can deal only with entrepreneurs or companies employing fewer than ten people. We want to remove the limitation of the type of enterprises the boards can support and raise the limit on the number of jobs they can create significantly above ten, which is totally inadequate in the current climate. This will necessitate a significant increase in measure one funding to maximise that potential for job creation. The vast majority of companies in the country have no State support, other than training through FÁS or Skillnets, so we need to look after all companies that have the capacity to grow and create vital and much needed jobs for our citizens.

The cause of small businesses has not been helped by this Government's actions or, more correctly, inaction over the past decade. Is it not time a self-employed allowance was considered and that the PAYE allowance be given to proprietary directors? In the context of recent developments in Britain the level of indirect taxes and other forms of stealth taxes imposed over the years assume even greater importance in terms of competitiveness, and their possible impact on the distortion of economic activity must be addressed.

Our fuel and energy costs are way out of line with our EU counterparts, especially for SMEs, which account for almost 36% of total electricity consumption and have borne the burnt of these increased costs. The Government has achieved windfall gains through higher VAT receipts on fuel, electricity and gas, as these prices increased, as they also did for the consumer.

The level and depth of bureaucracy imposed upon businesses, which effectively strangles them and often prevents them getting off the ground, is another bugbear. People in small businesses have told me they often have to employ a specific person to formulate replies to all the queries and documents, some of which run up to 100 pages, received from various Departments and agencies. It is time to consider a significant reduction in red tape especially at this point in the economic cycle. A standard form could be developed to allow businesses to reply to queries from the Revenue, the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Social and Family Affairs, the Chief State Solicitor's Office, CSSO, county enterprises boards, Leader boards and the Health Service Executive. The CSSO form is dropped into the letter boxes of small businesses and they must reply within a certain number of days. What is the CSSO? It is another imposition. This would cut out the duplication and unnecessary, but time consuming, questions. We must make it simpler for businesses to get on their feet and stay there. I commend this motion to the House.

**Deputy Seán Sherlock:** One question needs to be addressed regarding this banking crisis, namely whether the Government guarantee will result in the writing off of private debt and turning that into public debt for which the Irish citizen will ultimately pay. In that context, should we be contemplating the writing off of private debt to avoid a probable recourse to the

[Deputy Seán Sherlock.]

taxpayer? In September of this year, the Central Bank published data showing that the M1 money supply — the physical currency circulating in the economy and the moneys held on deposit accounts — is shrinking rapidly. What does the 11% year-on-year decrease in the M1 money supply tell us? Irish businesses have less money in their accounts. They have become stifled, they cannot repay their debts and they cannot access credit. If Irish businesses are not able to repay their debts or access credit, the banks will incur further losses. Who will cover such losses? The bank guarantee scheme provides for the Irish taxpayer to cover losses to banks through shrinkage in the economy. If banking activity is shrinking, then bank losses are inevitable.

The Labour Party is proposing a set of practical measures, as outlined by Deputy Penrose, to stimulate the economy. The European Investment Bank, rather than the private equity capitalists, has to become our saviour. Private equity capitalists do not care about the future of the Irish economy. As soon as they get their pound of flesh, they move on to the next target. It should be noted that the Carlyle Group, which is currently flirting with one of this country's banks, was funded by Osama bin Laden's family at one stage of its history. I wish to make it clear that we are dealing with people of that kind. We should be very careful about who we flirt with when we are looking for people to invest in the Irish economy and the Irish banking infrastructure.

The Labour Party is in favour of sustainable and responsible investment. That has not been a mainstream feature of this country's banking culture. Having a sustainable and responsible approach to investment is not part of Irish banking culture. There is no proper risk assessment of lending and there is no proper model of corporate social responsibility. As Deputy Penrose has said, we need to change the culture of banking in this country so that we begin to lend in the real economy. Irish businesses should not continue to be stifled, as they have been stifled to date. The new type of lending we advocate will, *inter alia*, champion social capital. The former Taoiseach, Deputy Bertie Ahern, used to speak about Mr. Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone*, in the context of the need for volunteerism and investment in social capital. Why should we not use the banking guarantee scheme that the Government is sponsoring as a means of ensuring that we enforce change in this country's banking culture and thereby enhance investment in social capital? Why should preferential lending rates, below the ECB rate, not be offered to community organisations, sporting clubs and schools for any measure that involves effort that enhances our communities?

The banking crisis has given us an opportunity to set up an ecological loan book, whereby preferential lending rates can be made available to commercial and domestic projects that seek to reduce our dependence on carbon. Such loans would be offered in respect of everything from residential solar panels to biodiesel plants. Such a system would help us to offset some of the obligations we have under the Kyoto Protocol. We need to be imaginative in our approach to lending and getting out of this crisis. Nothing I have seen from the Government benches gives me confidence, as a Member of this House and as a citizen, that this country is in safe hands and that our banking infrastructure is secure for the future.

**Deputy Kathleen Lynch:** I support everything Deputies Penrose and Sherlock have said about how we should deal with the serious crisis that is affecting the Irish and international economies. It is hitting Ireland a little harder than other countries, unfortunately. From the outset, most people said that our economy could not keep going the way it was going. However, the Government did not think the day would ever dawn when it would have to deal with a serious issue.

The human face of this crisis is the plight of the unemployed. I will speak about the unemployed in the area I know best. I am sure the Members of the House can tell their own stories. According to the most recent figures, some 11,575 people in Cork city are unemployed. I am sure that number has increased since those figures were compiled. The figures in question represent an increase of 46% on the same period last year. When I try to imagine what large numbers of people might look like, I take a look around this Chamber. While it is a fairly small enclosure, it is significant in that it houses 166 people. In that context, one can imagine what 11,500 people would look like. It is the size of a small town. Most of the people in question have mortgages, children and dependents. They probably have a mother or a father in a nursing home. They have to make their car repayments and send their children to school. We do not have free education in this country. They have many responsibilities. One can imagine what happens when they are made unemployed. When they go to the social welfare office, they are told that staffing difficulties mean they will have to wait up to three months for their first payment. The office in Cork was always under-staffed, even in good times. Their next port of call is the community welfare office, which has not benefited from an increase in staffing. Community welfare officers will have to deal with all of those people until the Department of Social and Family Affairs gets its act together. What is happening is quite incredible. This is the human face of the problem.

I am frightened by some of the measures the Government put in place in the recent budget. I wish to refer to the letter one is handed when one becomes unemployed and presents oneself at the desk in one's local social welfare office. Under the heading "duration of payment", the letter states that if one has paid less than 260 PRSI contributions since one first started working, and if one continues to satisfy all the conditions for receiving unemployment benefit, which is now known as jobseeker's benefit, one will be paid for 312 days. One will be paid for 390 days, or 15 months, if one has paid 260 or more PRSI contributions. I ask Deputies to note the 312 and 390 figures, in particular.

I wish to refer to the Social Welfare Bill and the budget fact sheet which have been published by the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Deputy Hanafin, and her Department. The section of the fact sheet dealing with jobseeker's benefit — once again, I note the change in its title — states that the benefit will be now paid for 12 months, rather than 15 months as it was previously, to people who have paid 260 or more PRSI contributions. According to the fact sheet, this change will apply to new claimants and those with an existing duration of less than six months on jobseeker's benefit on budget day, 14 October 2008. Jobseeker's benefit will be paid for up to nine months, rather than 12 months as it was previously, where fewer than 260 contributions are paid. This will apply to new claimants and those with an existing duration of less than three months on jobseeker's benefit.

The whole point of these changes is to ensure that people who are claiming what is now known as jobseeker's benefit will not be able to avail of the terms outlined in the original letter to which I referred. Such people are under the impression that they will receive the benefit for 12 or 15 months, depending on the level of contributions they have paid. What will happen to them? Is this the first time the Government has introduced a social welfare payment instrument retrospectively? Will the people in question be given a further letter, telling them that the conditions under which they paid PRSI contributions and first claimed jobseeker's benefit have now changed? If such a change is to be made, it will be through no fault of the people to whom I refer. The change is resulting from the mismanagement of this Government. Are the people in question to be told that the conditions have changed, and they will not get the final three months of jobseeker's benefit payments they were expecting? I do not think that would be legal. I do not think the Government will be allowed to do that. I ask the Government to use the Finance Bill to restore the conditions under which those people paid PRSI contributions

[Deputy Kathleen Lynch.]

and first signed up for jobseeker's benefit. It was Warren Buffett who once said that it is only when the tide goes out that one sees who is swimming naked. The tide has gone out on the Government and it is not a pretty sight.

**Deputy Arthur Morgan:** I thank the Labour Party for sharing time and I welcome the opportunity to address the motion. The roof structure was threatened a number of times during Deputy Penrose's contribution but he did well.

We broadly support the motion and urge the Government to show leadership in what is becoming an increasingly dangerous situation for small and medium-sized enterprises. The financial drought facing such enterprises is clear for all to see. We have all had representations from local small and medium-sized enterprises desperately trying to find capital. The latest ISME survey shows that more than half of its members are being refused new finance or extensions to their existing credit lines. These are not unknown or high risk companies without a credit history but well established enterprises, as Deputy Penrose said, that have been trading for more than a decade and have a long-standing relationship with their banks.

The reason for this almost blanket refusal is clear. Having recklessly given billions of euro in loans to developers, the banks, which are faced with whopping debts, have responded in an ultra conservative way, virtually shutting up shop and rejecting even the most solid enterprises. The response from the banks demonstrates senior managers have buried their heads in the sand and are devoid of any forward thinking. Having bailed them out in the first place, the Government must ensure the banks live up to their responsibilities and provide credit to our enterprise sector. The consequences of allowing banks to refuse loans to SMEs will be dire.

A shortage of credit coupled with delays in payment from customers invariably leads to serious cashflow problems for even the most financially healthy enterprises. This means companies will find it increasingly difficult to pay the wages of their employees, ultimately resulting in lay-offs and even liquidation. Companies that are otherwise structurally very sound will be forced out of business with the consequent loss of crucial employment. Like Deputy Penrose, I refer to the Johnny Owens of this world. SMEs form the backbone of the economy and they are one of our best hopes of economic recovery. If the Government does not act, the credit drought will perpetuate the recession and lead to immeasurable economic and social problems.

The banks created this credit crisis through reckless behaviour and the Government and the Fianna Fáil Party, in particular, blinded by their love affair with dubious developers, turned a blind eye to irresponsible lending practices. The crucial difference between then and now is this time the public are acutely aware of every move the Government makes and will recognise any failure on its part to act properly. The Government will have to abandon its hands-off approach and play a leading role in providing credit for SMEs because our economic future relies on taking radical measures.

Options are still available to access finance. One option is the European Investment Bank small business operational fund. The fund was launched a month ago to address the difficulties facing smaller enterprises and, since then, lending institutions in 22 EU member states have joined. Ireland continues to be one of only a handful of states yet to access this fund through its financial institutions. Under the fund, the bank has earmarked up to €15 billion for 2008-09 with a further €15 billion for 2011. This is something we will have to get the banks to adopt if SMEs are to have any chance of surviving in the current economic climate.

While banks form one part of the cashflow problem, the late payment of bills is another serious matter. Small and medium-sized enterprises have been highlighting this problem for a long time. Small businesses are waiting, on average, 65 days for payments, which is a two-week increase since the adoption of legislation aimed at reducing the delay. The 2002 late payments

legislation, for which a number of the Government parties are responsible, did nothing to improve repayment of bills. Rather than addressing the cashflow problems of smaller businesses, the legislation exacerbates delays in payments between small and larger companies, resulting in higher dependence on credit streams. While obliging the banks to join up to the EIB fund will have a positive impact, we firmly believe that the late payments legislation will have to be revisited in the short term if business transactions are to be radically improved.

Trade between enterprises comprises the bulk of business transactions and we will have to do something more concrete than simply calling on Departments to settle their bills within 10 days, though that would be useful. I have doubts about the practicality of the suggestion and whether it can make a significant difference when SMEs are waiting for other bills for up to 120 days. Enforcement of the 30-day rule is lacking and the establishment of proper mechanisms to ensure companies comply with the rule would be the most effective remedy. This could be achieved by examining a number of proposals that have been suggested, such as a type of small claims court for business debts, to which Deputy Penrose alluded. That would be a practical, worthwhile solution. This legislation needs to be revisited as a matter of priority as companies will continue to be overly reliant on credit to meet their cashflow problems.

I support strengthening the role of county enterprise boards. Such boards will continue to play a crucial role in supporting our smaller companies while encouraging new enterprises into business. We are in a fundamentally different economic climate but many businesses are still trading and many entrepreneurial opportunities exist if the right structures are in place. The support structures of enterprise boards should be enhanced to meet these new challenges. The current grant structure for boards, which has been in place for more than a decade, has set grant aid levels that are too low and quotas which are too rigid. Employment grant aid has remained at €7,500 for the past decade, despite increases in, for example, the minimum wage, whereas quotas relating to the number of businesses that are approved for funding is too rigid. County enterprise board support schemes should be revised with increased employment grants, stock grants and cashflow support grants. Overall, boards need more flexibility and the Government must ensure they are properly resourced going forward.

The problems facing SMEs must be met by a rapid response from the Government. The Government cannot continue to just sit back and do nothing while SMEs go to the wall. It is time for the Government to re-engage and it is also time for a proactive, realistic response to the credit crisis, particularly, if businesses such as Johnny Owens's and thousands like his are to survive.

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I move amendment No. 1:

To delete all words after "Dáil Éireann" and substitute the following:

"recognises:

- that the global banking crisis is impacting on economic activity across the global and Irish economies;
- that small and medium sized enterprises are experiencing a more challenging environment for business;
- the importance of ensuring that credit, including short term credit such as overdrafts and current account facilities are made available to small and medium-sized businesses;



[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

- that the purpose of the EIB facility for SMEs is to provide medium to long-term funding for investment projects through the commercial banks; and
- that the Government has taken decisive action to stabilise the banking sector to maintain credit facilities across business sector including SMEs;

commends the Government for:

- bringing forward the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme which:
  - secured the stability of the major domestic credit institutions and the Irish financial system overall in the face of unprecedented international financial turbulence;
  - promotes confidence in the economy by ensuring the stability and sustainability of our financial system;
  - promotes through the realisation of the objectives of the Scheme sustainable lending practices and the appropriate availability of credit for the enterprise sector of the economy; and
  - facilitates the structured dialogue initiated with the covered institutions to ensure that the Irish banking system continues to be able to access liquidity and funding to meet the credit needs of the economy;
- requesting the banks to avail of the facility for medium to long-term lending to SMEs from the EIB;
- the very considerable progress made on the implementation of the recommendations of the *Report of the Small Business Forum* to assist small business;
- its decision of March 2008 to set a 25% target for the reduction of administrative burdens on business arising from domestic legislation, to be achieved by 2012;
- its schemes and supports already in place to assist SMEs through the enterprise development agencies;
- the very significant 16% increase in the capital allocation for 2009 to County and City Enterprise Boards in recognition of the importance of the micro-enterprise sector to our economic development;

and

expresses its confidence in the Government to take further appropriate, concrete measures to assist small and medium-sized business through the current difficult period.”

I wish to share time with the Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Deputy Kelleher, and Deputy Calleary.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to put to the House the Government amendment, which sets out the urgent and serious action taken by us to assist business in these present difficult conditions. All Members of the House appreciate the global nature of the financial turmoil which has impacted on the financial system across the developed world. The scale of the dislocation being experienced in international financial markets has been unprecedented in



recent historical experience. Ireland, as a small, highly open economy with a significant domestic and international financial sector, could not expect to be immune from such developments.

It has been necessary to respond to a rapidly changing economic and financial environment. The Government took swift and decisive action at the end of September last to safeguard the Irish banking system so as to ensure our financial system continued to meet the needs of the economy and, in particular, the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises, which have been a key driver of our economic success and employment growth of the last decade, and have a crucial role to play in underpinning the competitiveness and future growth potential of the Irish economy.

Over 250,000 small businesses operate in our economy and employ about 800,000 people. The development of the strength and depth of our indigenous sector will be critical if we are to return to the levels of prosperity achieved in recent years. We will need to foster the emergence of significant numbers of new indigenous businesses that are export-driven and, above all else, productive and sustainable. We will only be able to foster the emergence of such enterprises if the operating environment for business, particularly small business, is supportive. This has been, and will continue to be, a key focus of Government policy.

Access to credit and finance, including short-term credit, is the engine of the small and medium-sized enterprise sector and the Government is very conscious of the need to ensure that credit lines continue to be extended to viable businesses and this sector in particular. To support this objective and to secure the stability of the major domestic credit institutions and the financial system, the Government moved decisively to introduce the credit institutions (financial support) scheme. The focus has been to promote confidence in the economy and to ensure the Irish banking system continues to be in a position to access liquidity and funding to meet the credit needs of the economy. I must underline this was, and continues to be, the strategic objective of the scheme.

Let us be clear about one point. The guarantee scheme is not about protecting the interests of the banks; it is about safeguarding the economy and everyone who lives and works in this country. The objective is to reinforce the strength of Ireland's economy by supporting the financial sector in a manner that protects the interests of the taxpayer. This support is being provided in the public interest to protect the real economy from the consequences of the severe financial disruption that would otherwise have arisen.

The provision of the guarantee in the first instance and the access to the liquidity it has provided for our banks and building societies is an important benefit in ensuring finance is both available and affordable throughout the economy. As has been pointed out by many commentators, the availability of finance is of course a critical element of our overall competitiveness and a key part of our national economic and financial infrastructure.

The Government's guarantee has already helped ensure that credit institutions in Ireland have access to the normal liquidity and funding they require to fund their business. The Government, on behalf of the Irish taxpayer, has performed a major service for the banking community. The boards and senior executives of the banks now must meet the legitimate financial needs of business and assure the general consumer that their needs will be facilitated. Indeed, the first priority of the banks should be to ensure the flow of funding is channelled appropriately to support and underpin sustainable economic activities on the necessary prudent and responsible basis that is clearly in the interest of the bank, the borrower and the wider economy.

This is what the Government expects and the boards and senior executives of the banks must ensure they can meet this expectation. The banks are very conscious of what is expected of

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

them under the guarantee in so far as business lending is concerned. They have confirmed to me that, notwithstanding the challenging economic and financial environment with which we all have to contend, they remain open for business for creditworthy customers and will continue to support sound business projects.

The banks' principal area of focus is on their existing customers or new business customers with good, commercially sound projects. Of course, it makes commercial good sense for the banks to continue to support economic activity. In this context, the CEO of one of the main banks recently highlighted to the Small Firms Association that lending had increased to consumers and new small and medium-sized firms, and it had not changed its lending rules. He highlighted that the banks' primary focus was to support credit growth in key segments critical to economic recovery, including small and medium-sized businesses. It must be a priority for the Irish banking system as a whole to work to support the achievement of this objective to provide the basis for sustainable and balanced economic growth and the long-term commercial success of our banking system.

The Government will also use whatever other instruments are available to support access to credit to business. Deputies will be aware that the European Investment Bank, EIB, recently announced it was making €30 billion available to small and medium-sized enterprises in the EU member states to fund medium and long-term investment projects. The money is to be made available in two tranches, with €15 billion up to the end of 2009 and a further €15 billion for 2010 and 2011. It will be lent by the EIB in the first instance to commercial banks who will in turn lend it to small and medium-sized enterprises.

This is a very valuable facility and I understand the EIB has already been in discussion with a number of Irish banks about participation in it. I have urged the banks to utilise the facility to the maximum extent possible so funding can be made available to small and medium-sized enterprises as soon as possible. This is a source of funding that will, I am confident, be of interest to a considerable number of small and medium-sized enterprises but, clearly, it may not meet the needs of all such enterprises, particularly those for whom working capital is primarily the issue.

Access to finance has traditionally been a difficulty for small and medium-sized enterprises at start-up phase and development phase. In this context, grant schemes, seed capital schemes, business expansion schemes and venture capital arrangements all contribute positively to these enterprises' financial requirements. In particular, the Government's investment in venture capital funds of €175 million, promoted through Enterprise Ireland, has resulted in seven new venture funds which have raised over €500 million which is available for investment in the Irish small and medium-sized enterprise sector. All financial options for viable businesses need to be explored and exploited as we move forward.

The Government has put in place policies and programmes that encourage the emergence of new business creations and facilitate long-term business survival, including the following: the positioning of our tax system as one of the most supportive of business in the world, the development of Ireland as a knowledge-based economy through the dedication of significant Exchequer resources to the promotion of research and development and the introduction of the Better Regulation programme to tackle regulatory burdens, particularly those faced by the business community.

The adoption of new strategies to support the enterprise sector, including small business, is based on the report of the Small Business Forum. This report was published in May 2006 and contains a detailed analysis of the factors that drive the small business sector and has provided

us with a blueprint for its further development. The Government has already made very considerable progress on the implementation of the findings of the report.

The ongoing implementation of the report also supports enterprise development and entrepreneurship. Recommendations implemented to date include the following: the threshold for the exemption from the requirement that companies have their accounts audited has been increased from €1.5 million to €7.3 million; the extension and radical improvement of the business expansion and seed capital schemes up to 2013 — the Revenue Commissioners data for these schemes show that 279 companies raised investments in this form since January 2007, amounting to a total of €80 million in the 12-month period; important increases in the VAT cash accounting threshold, which now stands at €1 million, and VAT registration turnover threshold, which now stands at €75,000, have been introduced in order to simplify administration and reduce working capital requirements on small businesses; changes to the preliminary tax obligations of certain companies so that small companies are now permitted to calculate their preliminary tax payments based on 100% of the prior-period tax liability if their tax liability for the prior period did not exceed a threshold now specified at €200,000; and new companies which do not expect their tax liability for the first year to exceed €200,000 are no longer obliged to pay preliminary tax in that first year. In addition, my recent budget announced tax relief measures for start-up businesses by way of remission in corporation tax and capital gains tax in the first three years for new and start-up businesses.

The “Tech-Check” programme was launched in April 2007 through the county enterprise boards. This programme provides small businesses with the opportunity to access a highly subsidised, independent technology check-up and helps them to identify ways to boost their productivity and profitability through the better use of technology. This programme is being delivered by the county and city enterprise boards and some 850 of these check-ups have, I understand, been carried out up to the end of 2007.

The enterprise development agencies are focused on helping Irish businesses through the current economic difficulties to develop and grow their exports by continuing to prioritise investment in science, technology and innovation. Enterprise Ireland recognises the varied challenges facing small and medium-sized enterprises in the context of the changing environment and partners with companies to address their needs. In line with its strategy, Transforming Irish Industry 2008-2010, Enterprise Ireland provides supports, including finance and advice, aimed at developing all aspects of the critical business functions. Financial supports focus on supporting start-ups with a high potential to grow, providing comprehensive funding for research and development, driving growth and innovation capabilities and supporting major projects for large-scale development.

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** After an unprecedented period of economic success, when Ireland caught up with, and surpassed, many of our fellow European nations, we are now facing an unprecedented set of unfavourable international factors, including the ongoing crisis in global financial markets, faltering economic growth in almost all the major economies, exchange rate shifts and the sharp changes in commodity prices. These conditions are placing the Irish and other economies under considerable pressure. Domestically, we are also facing contraction in the construction sector, which has suppressed the rate of economic growth.

These current economic circumstances are not exclusive to Ireland but are a feature across the European Union and the globe. These changed economic circumstances represent major challenges for Governments, the European Union and businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises. Ireland has actively engaged with our EU partners in developing co-ordinated responses.

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

The scale of the economic, fiscal and environmental challenges facing the country required the Government to take necessary decisions to ensure stability in the financial sector and to curb the public finances, while at the same time giving firm support to those aspects of the economy which continue to perform strongly. In this way we can ensure that Ireland benefits as early, and as fully as possible, when any improved international economic conditions arrive.

As my colleague, the Minister for Finance, has already mentioned, the first action needed was to safeguard the Irish financial system. Decisive Government intervention through the guarantee scheme ensured the continuation of our banking system. Intervention was necessary and justified given the pivotal role of the financial system in the economy and in the day-to-day lives of businesses and ordinary people. The aim was to ensure that we have a banking system that as a whole works effectively, efficiently and competitively in facilitating all the daily economic transactions of commercial, business, family and social life.

A second priority was to address the budgetary situation quickly and in bringing forward the budget for 2009 the Government again showed itself to be decisive. Tough decisions were taken to control public expenditure while also ensuring that priority sectors, including business supports and infrastructural expenditures, were adequately financed. Through sensible and balanced management of the economy, the Government has ensured that the people of Ireland enjoy living standards that are among the highest in Europe. The Government will protect the gains that our country has made by ensuring responsibility in the public finances. Public expenditure continues to be scrutinised and further actions will be taken when necessary.

Our economic growth will be dependent on our ability to compete in international markets. The challenge now is to ensure that the economy is sufficiently competitive to enable further export growth. For this reason maintaining our competitiveness is now more important than ever.

Ireland's competitiveness model is one where innovation, talent and flexibility are our acknowledged core competencies. We have been seeking to grow our innovation capacity and will continue to explore opportunities where innovation can be better exploited. Through the national development plan, our taxation policies and investment in innovation the Government is fully committed to putting in place an enterprise environment that remains among the most favourable in the world.

We are fully committed to strengthening the competitiveness and productive capacity of the economy. Our priority remains the creation of high quality, sustainable employment, driven by companies with higher profitability, that are technologically advanced and prove a better fit with the competitive characteristics of our economy. We have a strong support system for developing the capabilities of Irish companies to compete in international markets with innovative products and services. In terms of enhancing productivity growth, which is the cornerstone of our competitiveness, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment has a capital allocation of €495 million in 2009 which will be spent on productivity enhancing investments by our agencies, namely Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, the IDA and the county enterprise boards.

To underpin long-term competitiveness, the Government's objective is to ensure that we build up the productive capacity of the economy though investing in people. We are doing this directly through the science, technology and innovation strategy and through our skills strategy. I am confident that the areas we have chosen to focus on are paying dividends and working well in terms of attracting and maintaining investment and growing jobs.

Ireland is now a critical international gateway to markets in Europe and beyond. Globalisation provides major opportunities for companies with international ambitions but it is also

presenting unprecedented competitive pressures. Our strong outward looking enterprise culture has been built up in recent years and will help us through the more challenging times that we now face. We are a small, open trading nation, exporting all over the world. We rely on new market openings to extend the reach of our exporters and give them new market opportunities. Although most of our exports are to the EU, compared to other EU member states Ireland trades more with the rest of the world. The enterprise development agencies provide specialised assistance to Irish exporters to focus on developing into the euro area and emerging markets to win new export sales.

Maintaining the competitiveness of the enterprise sector in Ireland is a priority issue for my Department and our development agencies. To sustain and grow the manufacturing sector, Irish-based manufacturing enterprises will be encouraged and assisted to continue the progression to high value added sectors and activities, and continue to increase productivity through investments in human capital, technology and innovation. The productivity gains that flow from innovation are the new foundations for competitiveness.

The report of the high level manufacturing group, which was launched earlier this year, contains 26 recommendations directed at key areas of innovation and productivity leading to transformational change, re-skilling and management development which will ensure Irish manufacturers can continue to compete successfully on international markets and provide high value sustainable employment.

The social partners agreed, as part of the recently concluded review of Towards 2016 — I remind Members of the House who were not aware of it that it includes a pay pause for public sector workers — that a manufacturing forum should be established, in line with the recommendations of the high level group on manufacturing. This matter will be progressed by my Department in consultation with the Department of the Taoiseach and the social partners.

We continue to be one of the world's leading service exporting countries and are currently ranked the 10th highest exporter of services in the world. In 2008, the Tánaiste launched the report of the services strategy group, *Catching the Wave: A Services Strategy for Ireland*. This report sets out new policy proposals on how we can ensure the continued development and growth of Ireland's services sector and outlines how to maximise the future returns to the country from services activities in all enterprises, both current and potential. The implementation of these recommendations will enable Irish service companies to exploit new and exciting opportunities, such as e-learning, business and financial services, professional and consultancy services and others. My Department is working in conjunction with other Departments to progress the implementation of these recommendations.

We fully acknowledge the vital role that the services sector itself and the growing services element within manufacturing companies will play in Ireland's future economic performance. Last Wednesday, the Tánaiste launched Enterprise Ireland's strategy for internationally traded services, which sets out priority initiatives that Enterprise Ireland will focus on for the growth and development of the services sector. This strategy will focus on maximising the performance of companies already active on export markets, encouraging companies trading locally to expand their markets abroad and fostering a new breed of start-up services companies with exporting potential. Enterprise Ireland has analysed the needs of service companies and is responding by aligning its resources with these needs.

We are clearly focused on the needs of both manufacturing and the services sector and have the strategies in place to deliver growth, strengthened productivity and improved competitiveness. We recognise that many companies are under pressure. Slowing growth is also an opportunity for the public and private sectors alike to improve efficiency, productivity and adaptability. Growth of exports is conditional on sustaining the competitiveness of tradeable



[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

goods and services in global markets. A range of domestic factors are influencing our inflation performance, which can be influenced by national policy.

The Government is emphasising the correct economic priorities for this time; seeking low inflation, reducing red tape, promoting competition and promoting consumer awareness, managing labour costs and tackling a range of specific cost categories, including property costs, utility costs and waste management costs, are all important factors. We have recently witnessed a welcome easing in energy prices and I hope this will feed through to the end user. Moderating consumer prices will help to ease inflation pressures, while, in the mid to longer term, the introduction of the services directive and the cost benefits that will arise from the eventual conclusion of the world trade talks will strengthen competition in the Irish market.

The SME sector is critical to our economic prosperity. More than 250,000 small businesses operate in our economy and employ more than 800,000 people. The policies outlined above and the activities of the enterprise agencies directly support SMEs. The agencies have a clear focus on small and medium enterprises and offer a range of direct supports. The specific importance of the small business sector was clearly recognised in the report of the Small Business Forum. In implementing the report's recommendations, the Government has again confirmed the central importance of the small business sector and its commitment to promoting that sector.

I welcome the opportunity to address these issues. The Government is conscious of the importance of SMEs and of the necessity of ensuring they have access to credit. The decisive manner of the introduction of the guarantee scheme is an indication that we take seriously our responsibility in these challenging times to ensure there is stability in the banking sector. I support the Government amendment to the Private Members' motion. Members on this side of the House will explain, in the course of the debate, precisely what the Government is trying to achieve in the context of supporting SMEs.

**Deputy Dara Calleary:** I am pleased to support the Government amendment at this time of intense pressure for small businesses. I particularly welcome the commitment in the amendment to increases in the allocations to county and city enterprise boards, which have the potential to be the foundation of our economic recovery. There is a case for directing funding away from other less relevant enterprise agencies within the Department to the county enterprise boards, given their successful track record. Their support for and funding of small business has resulted in numerous success stories in recent years, many of which were unheralded. In our rush to attract foreign industry, we sometimes forget the importance of enterprise boards and the support they provide in terms of capital and training to small businesses.

I note the commitment in the amendment to reducing bureaucracy. This commitment must be strengthened. It is time the Oireachtas declared war, for once and for all, on bureaucracy and red tape. As State agencies are merged and subsumed, we must ensure to cut the bureaucracy that goes with them. The Minister should conduct a red tape impact assessment in respect of the interpretation of every Bill that comes from the Oireachtas into the various Departments and their impact on small business.

Both the Minister for Finance, Deputy Brian Lenihan, and the Minister of State, Deputy Kelleher, have spoken about the importance of the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Act, known as the bank guarantee scheme. This is an opportune time to remind the banking sector that the Oireachtas placed great faith in them in passing that legislation in the manner we did. We have afforded unprecedented support to the banks participating in the scheme, which represented an international first. It is regrettable that, six weeks later, it is becoming increasingly clear that this show of faith on the part of this House and of the people we represent is

being thrown back in our faces by some banks, especially in the manner of their treatment of small businesses throughout the State.

All of us in this House have had representations from business people in our areas in regard to the difficulties they are experiencing. Many businesses, some of which have been operating for decades, have had credit facilities that were available to them for many years and which they managed correctly withdrawn without proper notice and without time to avail of alternative facilities. This is being done without any regard for businesses, their employees or the services they provide. Others have been threatened with closure because of outstanding loans even though the relevant banks hold securities over all the owners' assets, both personal and business. This security is insufficient in the face of an apparent obsession with reducing loan books at the expense of small businesses. Many businesses have been notified in recent weeks of substantial increases in their bank fees and charges. It is almost as though the banks are passing the cost of the State guarantee directly on to their small business customers.

I note the initiative announced yesterday by the Royal Bank Of Scotland to freeze overdraft and contract charges. As the mother ship of a banking group in Ireland, I hope the latter will treat small businesses in this State in the same way and that other banks will take heed. It is important that breathing space be given to viable small businesses. We are not pleading for charity cases or for businesses that were managed recklessly. Rather, we are concerned that viable small businesses which have provided important services and employment for many years are treated with respect in these difficult times. The behaviour of some banks in their dealings with small business is akin to corporate bullying. I ask the Minister for Finance, in his ongoing discussions with bank management, to call on them to desist from this type of behaviour, to engage constructively with their customers and to respect the mandate we have indirectly given them to facilitate economic recovery through support for SMEs.

The area of small business under the greatest pressure is the retail sector. The economic downturn is most evident in this sector, which is the one most prone to it. The retail sector can do without the hysterical promotion of shopping outside this jurisdiction, whether across the Border or internationally. RTE, our public broadcasting channel, could not get enough in recent years of shoppers travelling to New York and Boston. Now the obsession is Newry and Enniskillen. This agenda is also being driven by elements in the print media. They are quick to point out the price differentials and the apparent service differentials, but they are slow to point to the job losses that are resulting, the service losses that will result and the impact on small businesses and suppliers. Perhaps if we all started watching UTV or reading British newspapers because they apparently offer better value and choice, these media outlets might reconsider their coverage. Small business is struggling enough without this senseless promotion of shopping outside the jurisdiction.

This week a range of organisations lead by the IFA and the GAA have combined to encourage people to shop locally this Christmas. I add my voice to that campaign and encourage all Members to do the same. The Government can play its part by taking this message on board. I have spoken before in this House about the ridiculous rules regarding pre-qualification and the manner in which SMEs are disqualified from Government business. The Chairman of the Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Deputy Penrose, recently arranged a presentation by the Irish Printing Federation to a meeting of the committee. Documents sponsored by this Government and made using taxpayers' money are being produced outside the jurisdiction and outside the island. For example, much of the literature provided by the referendum commission during the campaign on the Lisbon treaty referendum was printed in other European states, despite the existence of a vibrant and innovative printing industry in this State. We must urgently review our interpretation of EU tendering rules in order to give SMEs a chance.

[Deputy Dara Calleary.]

The Government amendment reflects the work being done to support SMEs. However, we must take a more urgent approach. I am pleased to support the amendment given the track record of the Government to date.

**Deputy Leo Varadkar:** I propose to share time with Deputies Clune and McHugh.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** Is that agreed? Agreed.

**Deputy Leo Varadkar:** I welcome the Labour Party motion. I commend Deputy Penrose in particular on his excellent and timely proposal, which Fine Gael can support without the need to propose any amendment. Small and medium enterprises employ 800,000 people, more than the public sector and multinational corporations combined. In terms of employment, therefore, SMEs are big business. Given the plans by the Government and my party to reduce the numbers employed in the public sector and in view of the decline in manufacturing, we will increasingly look to SMEs for job creation. It is also important to note the role of family businesses, which include GPs' practices, shops and undertakers. They are an important part of the social fabric of our society, in both urban and rural areas.

Small businesses are suffering as they face the combined pressures of high costs, difficulty in accessing credit and the problems caused by our creaking infrastructure. The Minister of State referred to labour costs and to the pay pause for public servants. I assume this was intended as a dig at my party. I do not intend to engage in that debate tonight. Workers, in both the public and private sectors, will not receive a pay increase for 11 months under the terms of the partnership agreement. According to the Minister of State, this constitutes a pay pause.

There is an alternative view that private and public sector workers covered by the partnership deal will receive a pay increase. This includes, for example, a general practitioner registrar, such as I was, who would have received a 2.5% pay increase in September, an annual increment in July, a 3.5% increase next November and another 2.5% increase next May, followed by another annual increment the following July. Similar increases will apply to some of the Deputies opposite who have not received a pay pause. For example, Deputy Cyprian Brady who has now left the House will receive two partnership pay rises and two pay increments, the LS1 and the LS2, in the next 18 months.

**Deputy Billy Kelleher:** That applies to Deputies on all sides of the House.

**Deputy Leo Varadkar:** The Minister may take the view that three to five pay increases in 18 months represents a pay pause. I do not, but people must use their common sense to decide who is accurate and who is not. Those who work in small and medium enterprises will face a real pay pause. Many will see a pay cut as they will lose their jobs. Some 1,000 jobs are lost every week, which is equivalent to one job loss every three minutes, all of which are from the private sector and most of which are from small and medium enterprises. We face a situation where owner managers or sole traders will experience a significant reduction in income and we will see a similar situation for many others. Given the Government decision not to increase the minimum wage, those earning it will face a pay freeze. There is one standard for poor people and another for the upper middle classes.

There is a cost to business with the Sunday premium, which has been debated in the House previously. This is causing the closure of pubs, hotels and restaurants and will close more without action from the Government. I realise the Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment may intend to act on this, but if not he will have an opportunity to vote on the matter by the end of February.

I refer to the issue of rising utility costs. Electricity and gas costs in Ireland are among the highest in Europe. We have seen very little action from Government to counter price increases in these areas. There have been increases in levies and rates. All local government councils will increase rates by 3% or 4% next year. The councils used to justify rate increases based on inflation, but next year there will be no increase in the level of inflation, there may even be deflation. However, there is another reason provided for the increase. The Government is increasing VAT and is set on destroying the retail sector in Ireland, to which Deputy Callery referred. This will set a significant price differential in the Border counties. My colleague, Deputy Joe McHugh will refer to this matter in greater detail.

Excise costs are also rising which puts more pressure on businesses. If the public finances were managed in a sensible way, or even in some kind of reasonable manner such as happened in Britain, we would not be in a position where we must raise taxes and increase excise duties. We are one of the few countries in that situation and it is because of Fianna Fáil and Deputy Brian Cowen.

Earlier, RTE and its role in encouraging people to shop in New York was mentioned in the debate. However, the Tánaiste has encouraged people to shop around and shop in Northern Ireland. The National Consumer Agency, a Government agency, has encouraged people to shop in Northern Ireland. We should not be concerned about RTE when there are national saboteurs such as the Tánaiste and the National Consumer Agency which encourage people to shop and spend their money in another jurisdiction.

The issue of regulation was mentioned. The Minister for Finance spoke of the effect of regulation on business. We all recognise the cost of regulation on business is very significant. The Irish Small and Medium Enterprise Association estimates one in eight employees spends time filling in forms. The Government made a verbal commitment in March to reduce the cost of regulation to business by 25%. The cost should have reduced by 3% or 4% at this stage, but a figure cannot be provided because the Government has not yet worked out to what all of the cost amounts. How can one reduce the cost of regulation by 25% if one has not worked out the base line cost in the first instance? I asked the Government how it would calculate this figure and if it would use the international standard costs model. The answer given was “No” and that it did not know which model would be used. It is like offering a 25% off sale when one does not know the cost of the goods in the first instance. This is why I refer to insincerity and verbal non-commitments from the Government.

A major focus of this motion is the banking crisis, which is creating significant problems for the viability of small businesses. Since we are in a recession, many small business will go under regardless of what is done in the banking sector. However, those which are or may again be viable need support, which is why it is very important there is action taken to address the problems in the banking sector very soon.

Earlier in the financial crisis we voted for the bank guarantee and we were told by the Minister for Finance that the problem in Irish banking was solely an issue of liquidity and that there was no capital crisis. We now know that is untrue. The guarantee was still the correct course of action to assist with the liquidity problems of the banks, but it has not made credit available to those who seek mortgages, those who can afford them and viable businesses. We need to recapitalise the banks and make credit available. Deputy Enda Kenny called for this some four weeks ago. For a considerable amount of time Fine Gael has called for public support for the recapitalisation of the banks and it should be done with public money from the National Pensions Reserve Fund. Private money could be used also, but it must come primarily from the National Pensions Reserve Fund and we must retain a properly capitalised solid banking sector in Irish ownership.

[Deputy Leo Varadkar.]

I endorse the views of the Irish Bank Officials Association, which expressed opposition to the Government proposals to, as the association put it, “do an Eircom” with the Irish banks. There must be swift action, which we have not seen to date on this issue. I hope will need not wait until after Christmas for the banks to be recapitalised. If we wait until then, it will be too late and thousands of businesses will go under and with them will go tens of thousands of jobs.

Some progress has been made in terms of the European Investment Bank. The action and calls of the Small Firms Association was crucial and it is pleasing to see some progress made in that regard. Everyone in the House should recognise the importance of our position in the European Union. Never mind the European Investment Bank and its provision of credit for small businesses, where would we be now without the European Central Bank, propping up the financial services industry in the country at present through a capital injection of €65 billion? The answer is that we would be in Iceland. We should not forget the importance of the European Union in keeping the country afloat.

I refer to the settling of debts. In other jurisdictions a Government guarantee has been provided to allow debts to be settled within ten days. I believe there should be a similar provision here. The VAT increase should be reversed. It was suggested to me today that if Deputy Brian Lenihan was a superhero, he would be called VAT man, having increased VAT to the highest rate in the European Union, which is a serious mistake and which will make matters worse. The Government performance in paying debts to small business has not been bad, but a ten day measure is due.

I refer to a distinction in policy on the county enterprise boards. There are mixed feelings surrounding the boards, some are very good and some are not. A recent study of Enterprise Ireland, under which the boards fall, shows that more than 40% of the budget of Enterprise Ireland is spent on staff costs. It spends almost as much if not more on staff administration costs than on grants to business. While I do not believe Enterprise Ireland is in any way like the Minister’s charge, FÁS in that regard, I will pay particular attention to the way it works in the new year. I will examine its costs and undertake a detailed review of the value of county enterprise boards with reference to the job they should be doing, namely, working for small businessmen, rather than what they do for themselves and on which 45% of the budget is spent.

I welcome the spirit of the motion. I hold grave concerns about what will befall the economy in the coming months. I have no confidence in the ability of the Government to rescue the situation. However, I plead that it should take the Christmas break to consider once more the policies being pursued. Hopefully the Government will return following the Christmas break with a U-turn in its economic policy.

**Deputy Joe McHugh:** I congratulate the Labour Party for putting the motion, the timing of which is of critical importance. The stark reality in the services, retail and manufacturing sectors is that people are struggling. Despite the bad weather, discussion on the economy and the credit crunch is taking precedence over the weather, such is the critical nature of matters. People are losing their jobs and businesses are unable to cope with the continued increases in costs. There are competition factors also. I am a Deputy representing an area on the Border, where there is an uncompetitive playing pitch, which will drive business to the wall in the coming months if nothing is done.

It is very important to remain in the real world. I have listened to the contributions of the Minister of State, Deputy Kelleher, and the Minister for Finance, Deputy Lenihan. They contained fancy jargon and buzz words. It does not mean anything to the person who lost his job in the last two weeks and who I met in my office last Friday. He pays €1,700 per month on his



mortgage, and he has to set aside his children's allowance to pay for some of it and then figure out where to come up with the rest. That is the stark reality facing the people of this country.

I know this is not a motion on unemployment, so I will try to stick to the issue of small and medium enterprises. Last Saturday morning, the biggest retail store in Newry could not provide customers with trolleys. By 10.30 a.m. that business was faced with the choice of closing its doors. The manager of that store is expected to be under even greater pressure next Saturday. However, in the three Ulster counties on this side of the Border, there were stores faced with the prospect of closing their doors because they had no customers. It is not good for business in the Border areas outside of the Six Counties. There are swings and roundabouts, and petrol and diesel go up and down on either side of the Border. However, the commitment by the UK Government to reduce VAT to 15% is going to wipe out businesses over the Christmas period, because it provides an uncompetitive advantage.

We must face the reality that there are two separate currencies. However, we have bought into a democratic process under the Good Friday Agreement. In 1998, the Government led the Irish Republic into the Good Friday Agreement. Bertie Ahern, together with many colleagues who serve in the Cabinet today, sought and received from Northern Unionism and the British Government a commitment to develop co-operation and action within the island of Ireland. That included everything from marine integration to transport integration, but the commitment was underpinned by the democratic decision of the people who voted for the Good Friday Agreement on both sides of the Border.

Part of the document envisages the integration of the Border economy with the economy of Northern Ireland. It also recognises the regional significance of Belfast to the province of Ulster, which obviously includes Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan. It acknowledges the importance of the fourth largest city on this island, namely, Derry city, as the critical hub for the north west of the Irish Republic. Under the regulatory, environmental and fiscal measures, and under the subheading of fiscal instruments, taxation is described as an important factor in economic competitiveness. Achieving the right balance between competitive taxes and the adequate provision of public goods is a challenge faced by both Governments. There must be co-ordinated policy intervention, including intervention to generate and improve the regulatory environment, including the use of fiscal measures. Companies should also be encouraged to redesign logistical strategies and treat Ireland as one commercial zone, rather than two separate entities. The two Governments are proceeding on the basis that any strategy should be cost effective, to the benefit of the producers for the citizens, and should be greater than the costs it will impose on the taxpayer.

Did the Minister for Finance discuss with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the financial ramifications of their diverging fiscal strategies for the province of Ulster? As far as I am concerned, the answer is "No". I accuse the North-South Ministerial Council of not following up on the democratic mandate given by people on both sides of the Border. There has been a *laissez faire* attitude to Northern Ireland on the pretence that everything is sorted. The Fianna Fáil Party wanted to create an alignment with the SDLP out of pure selfishness, which is the only movement it has made in the last four or five years. Since the Good Friday Agreement was signed, 83 peace walls have been erected. People in business are losing out seeing others cross the Border. We have created a critical problem in the Border areas that needs attention. The Minister for Finance should pick up the phone and explain to the British Chancellor of the Exchequer why we have a VAT rate that is 6% higher than in Britain.

**Deputy Deirdre Clune:** I am happy to support this motion. It is a very important motion and I hope it will bring about some change in the Government's thinking in its support for small firms across the country. I particularly like the proposal that the Government establish a fund

[Deputy Deirdre Clune.]

to support small businesses and avail of the funding available from the European Investment Bank.

Small firms are the backbone of this economy. Deputy Varadkar outlined how 800,000 people are employed by such businesses. People who operate small businesses, be they retailers, professionals, traders or entrepreneurs, are the people who are taking risks. They are taking risks when they lease a premises, employ people and buy in stock. In many cases, it would be easier not to take the risk. I am sure it would be easier to take a job as a PAYE worker and to let somebody else take the risk, but these people are providing employment throughout the country. The Government should recognise how important small and medium enterprises are to this economy. Many of them are hurting at the moment. They are worried about how they will trade coming up to Christmas and whether they can keep their staff. They are worried that the banks are not supporting them as they once did.

A report produced recently by ISME claimed that 54% of companies were refused applications for new finance or the extension of their existing credit lines. A similar survey in August stated that 20% of companies were at that stage. That is a huge difference in three months. The firms that were successful could not meet the stringent conditions attached by the banks to secure funding. Many of these firms have been in existence for ten or 20 years. They have a long commitment to trading and providing employment in Ireland, but at the moment they are finding out that finance is not available. Last week, we heard about a woman who set up a speciality tea shop, but who could not get finance to provide the stock to keep her going until Christmas. Anybody who knows anything about retail knows that to have access to that kind of finance——

**Deputy Willie Penrose:** She was only looking for €5,000.

**Deputy Deirdre Clune:** That just underlines the difficulties that are out there for small businesses.

The Government is not helping in other areas. The cost of doing business here is high, as it is an expensive country in which to operate. An increase in commercial rates was announced last night in Dublin, which will affect small firms. I served with the Minister of State on Cork City Council. Coming up to the debate on the Estimates, we always needed to make an effort not to increase commercial rates, because it was seen to be the soft option, especially when no money was coming from the Government and we did not want to increase charges on ordinary citizens. In recent years, the rate has not increased beyond the level of inflation, but inflation is set to be reduced considerably, so the proposed increase will have a major effect on businesses.

The cost of electricity and gas has gone up since September. Nothing has been done to provide competition in the energy sector that would reduce charges. We also have water charges and a VAT increase of 0.5%, at a time when we are trying to encourage consumer activity. I appeal to the Minister to recognise the problems to which I refer. I hope this debate will bring home to the Government the serious difficulties and pressures facing small and medium enterprises in this country and I urge the Minister to adopt the very practical and worthwhile proposals before the House this evening.

Debate adjourned.

### **Finance (No. 2) Bill 2008): Second Stage (Resumed).**

Question again proposed: “That the Bill be now read a Second Time.”

**Deputy Michael Noonan:** When I spoke just before 7 p.m. I was drawing to the attention of the Minister for Finance an issue which first arose on budget day. I knew the Minister would

not be back in the Chamber at 8.30 p.m. but in the four minutes that I had before 7 p.m. it was difficult to make the point I was trying to make. That point relates to the decision that medical expenses in future may only be claimed at the standard rate of tax. I understand the reasons for that decision and am not opposing it because of the dire financial circumstances in which the Government finds itself.

I understood on budget day, from debating the budget in RTE as it was announced and subsequently, that it was the Minister's intention that this would not apply to nursing home charges. However, under the terms of the Finance Bill, while nursing home charges are exempt from application of the standard rate in 2009, they are not exempt from 1 January 2010. Due to the manner in which the Finance Bill is drafted, once 2009 elapses, the primary section takes over and the exception falls out. Therefore, without any further political decision or change in any future Finance Bill, nursing home charges will only be claimable at the standard rate of tax.

This is extremely unfair and anyone who is familiar with the thinking behind the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill, known as the Fair Deal proposal, will understand just how unfair it is. The provisions of that Bill do not apply to the people to whom I am referring. Under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill, an individual is subject to a means test. It is a curious means test in that it decides the contribution which persons in nursing homes will make to the Exchequer, rather than the amount they will receive from the Exchequer. It is, in a sense, a means test in reverse. If one applies the means test in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill to the standard rate bands in this Finance Bill, practically everyone in a nursing home will be paying at the standard rate band, so the issue does not arise. The people who pay tax at the higher rate will not be eligible, except in very occasional circumstances, for the so-called Fair Deal so, as a consequence, they will be paying their own nursing home fees.

The interdepartmental committee that examined the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill gave a range of nursing home charges, which are available on the record to the Minister of State, Deputy Mansergh, and everyone else who participated in Government. The charges were examined in 2006. In general terms, outside Dublin, a high-maintenance bed in a nursing home costs approximately €800 per week, while in Dublin the same bed costs between €1,200 to €1,500 per week. I know of a person in County Limerick who is paying €800 per week for a nursing home bed and of another person in Rathgar who is paying €1,200 per week. If one rounds off the figures, the cost is between €40,000 and €60,000 per year. Under the Fair Deal, if one has an income of €40,000, as calculated under that legislation, one will receive nothing from the State but will pay all of one's fees oneself. If one is a single person, under this Finance Act, one will not reach the higher rate of tax until one earns more than €45,000. In fact, the figure is even higher if one allows for personal credits, but the band is up to €45,000.

Let us examine the difference between the marginal and standard rate. The person in County Limerick, Cork or Clare who is paying €800 per week is getting a rebate of approximately 40% of that amount, if he or she is on the higher rate of tax. In other words, he or she is currently getting €16,000 per annum, but will get only €8,000 under the terms of this Finance Bill. One can easily do the calculations for my friend whose mother is in the nursing home in Dublin. She will be required to pay an additional 20% of €60,000, which is €12,000 per annum. In most cases, that is simply not affordable for people. The source of income is not unlimited. One would have to be in receipt of an excellent pension to be able to take €60,000 from it to pay for a nursing home, even when one is in receipt of a tax break, but to do that without getting a tax break at the marginal rate moves one beyond the realm of affordability.

I do not think this was ever the intention. Somebody somewhere thought there was a match between the marginal rate of tax and the means test in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill and on that basis, if one was a beneficiary of the Fair Deal, one would not need to draw

[Deputy Michael Noonan.]

down this money from the Revenue Commissioners. However, they do not match although there may be a marginal crossover. Furthermore, the means test in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill is based on after-tax income. Therefore, if one actually got the benefit of a rebate at the marginal rate of tax, one would have to contribute more to the nursing home because one's imputed income would be higher than if one received the rebate at the standard rate. The State was going to get it anyway.

In terms of the question of paying relatives who contribute to the nursing home charges, under the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill, they will be taken out of the loop completely. If the person in the nursing home does not have an adequate income, the family home will be attached. Therefore, the issue of a rebate to relatives no longer arises, whether at the standard or higher rate. If one looks at the attachment, at either 7.5% or 15%, the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill is silent on the tax treatment of the repayment. When a person who was a resident in a nursing home dies and the State, through the Revenue Commissioners, gets its money back through the mortgage attachment of the family home, I do not know what the tax situation is because the Bill is silent on the matter. However, I am not particularly worried about whether the person who inherits the family home gets no rebate, gets it at the standard or at the marginal rate. That is not the issue. The issue of concern comes into play while people are alive and in nursing homes. They need to have the use of their own funds to be able to pay the fees because, if they are on the higher rate of tax, in 99 cases out of 100, the provisions of the Fair Deal will not apply to them.

I understood from a response from the Minister for Defence, Deputy O'Dea and from the Minister for Finance that my point was taken. However, the Finance Bill is drafted on the basis that the marginal rate of tax will apply to nursing home fees for 2009 but from 1 January 2010, the standard rate will apply. That is unfair, misguided and based on a false logic. I believe the Minister intends to amend the Bill but having said that, I have had the same conversation with him on a number of occasions already. This provision is like Dracula — it keeps coming back.

I will now move on to the budget itself, which was a very difficult one for the Minister to put together. As with all budgets, he had three options — to borrow, tax or cut. In my view, he taxed and borrowed too much and did not cut enough. There is much talk about the public service at the moment. The public service is this and that, public servants earn this and that and so forth. I was a Minister on a number of occasions and worked with public and civil servants. When I was in the Department of Justice in the 1980s, fellows worked all night for small money. They were very good at their jobs. They did not get overtime once they were past a certain grade — administrative officer was the grade at the time. I also worked in the Department of Health. Sometimes I agreed with the policy that was being advocated and sometimes I disagreed, but I never disagreed with the fact that they work very hard. Again, once one was past a certain level of seniority, one worked into the night, and frequently at weekends. I am certainly not going to launch any kind of attack on the public service. Teachers work hard, nurses work hard, and gardaí all over the country and in my town work very hard indeed. However, that is not the issue. I resent the fact that by some convoluted logic an international crisis caused, by and large, by the private sector, specifically the financial services industry, is now being attributed to the public service. Whoever caused the financial crisis internationally, it was not the public service. However, the public service does come into it.

Let us come back to the choices facing the Minister of whether to borrow, cut or tax. We had a building boom that generated an enormous amount of revenue in income tax, PRSI, VAT, stamp duty and capital gains tax, which the Government, in its political unwisdom — if there is such a word — decided to spend on ongoing programmes. It was not sustainable. When the building industry collapsed, the revenue stream that was funding the public service

programmes collapsed as well. Thus, we are now running a State we can no longer afford. This is where the public service comes into it. We can no longer afford the public service we could afford when there was a huge flow of revenue coming through from the building industry. Every 10,000 houses built generated €1 billion. When the amount of houses being built goes from 90,000 down to 40,000 and is heading for 25,000 next year, is it any wonder there is a hole in the Government finances? In seeking to address this, the public service does come into the frame. It is not because its members are lazy — they are not. It is not because they are untalented — they are not. It is because a Government addressing a fiscal crisis such as this cannot do so without reducing payroll expenditure. Unless this is done, either through numbers or through salaries, the hole remains. That is the problem. The public service understands this as much as everybody else, but it seems to me we would go farther with a type of partnership solution in which everybody acknowledges the problem, rather than some people grandstanding and implying that public servants for one reason or another are now to blame for what is essentially a private sector crisis.

The country is spending what it cannot afford at the moment. We were supposed to restrict borrowing to 3% of GDP under European rules. According to the budget, we will now raise this to 6.5%. Already, even though the budget is only a few weeks old, it looks like 8% at year-end without further correction. That is not sustainable. We are no longer borrowing just for capital, which I support. Some 10% of the current budget is funded by borrowing. That cannot continue either. If we tax, we will take any steam there is out of the economy. Every country in Europe that has a bit of leeway is trying to give some kind of Keynesian impulse to the economy, either by cutting taxes or by further spending. Ireland is the odd man out because we do not have the leeway to do so. That is my objection to the budget. There is too much borrowing. A total of €2 billion is being raised in taxation of various kinds. It is the wrong solution.

There is a further problem. The public gets tired of medicine after a while. They get very tired of harsh measures. They can sustain it for a short period of time, but if the Government wastes a year with the wrong type of medicine, such as is being applied in this budget, it may run out of time. This budget has thrown away the options for 2009. There is nothing in this prescription which goes towards solving the problems in 2009. When it comes to solving problems for 2010, the Minister and his advisers would want to start now. To take measures which will be effective in 2010, the Government needs to have them sorted out before 1 March. There is a lead-in time to all these things. If it is left again until late autumn or early winter next year, and the Government comes up with another budget that is trying to fill a gap, with too many taxes, not enough cuts and more borrowing, we will be in for years of this. The time is short. I thank the Leas-Chathaoirleach for his patience.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Charlie O'Connor):** I thank the Deputy and hope Dracula is not upset by his remarks.

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh):** Without agreeing with everything Deputy Noonan had to say, I compliment him on the thoughtful and constructive tone of his speech. I share his appreciation of the public service. His point about nursing homes will be examined and a reply provided tomorrow before the close of the debate.

The Minister for Finance has set out the difficult economic and financial backdrop to the Finance Bill. For some months earlier this year an attempt was made to argue that Ireland was the only country in recession. It is now clear the problem is a global one, with events in one country having effects in others. There are of course specific characteristics to this recession, but to think that even the most perfectly intelligent and virtuous economic management would have sheltered us from the difficulties that are affecting every country in the world is an illusion.



**Deputy James Bannon:** We are the only country that brought in a property budget.

**Acting Chairman:** The Minister without interruption, please.

**Deputy Martin Mansergh:** We have many strengths that we must use, such as low public debt, low direct taxes, much improved infrastructure — although there is obviously still a long way to go — an employment level that has risen by almost a third since ten years ago and living standards that today can compare to elsewhere.

**Deputy Paul Connaughton:** Built on nothing.

**Deputy Martin Mansergh:** The Government has adopted a middle course between those who want us to be even tougher in terms of borrowing and expenditure and those who want us to reflate the economy and forget about the public finances for the moment. I agree with Deputy Noonan that the 10% gap is not something that can be ignored. It is politically convenient to suggest that all service cutbacks can be avoided and that public sector employment can bear the entire weight, in the short term, of reducing borrowing even more stringently. Many are not particularly impressed with the notion put forward at the weekend of extending a pay freeze from 11 months to 12 months. With regard to freezing increments, it needs to be realised that the top grades in the Civil Service — Secretaries General, second secretaries, deputy secretaries and so on — and their equivalents in many State services do not get any increments. A clerical officer, on the other hand, is on a scale of 14 increments.

Middle ranking and lower paid public servants would be most affected by a freeze. Some of the figures that have been thrown around amount to throwing shapes but they do not begin to add up as an alternative. Social partnership is a cornerstone to getting through the difficulties and to real and meaningful public service reform. One analysis of the failure of Government between 1982 and 1987 to get a grip on the public finances was the absence of social partnership. I do not think we should talk, as have some Members of this House, about scrapping social partnership or thinking that we can ride roughshod over it. We are going to need social partnership in the period ahead. There is a lot of realism to be found in the social partners and a lot of help that can be given through that process.

With regard to reflating the economy in the present situation, this was attempted in 1980 and 1981 and before that in 1974 and 1975. It did not work except for a relatively short period and higher indebtedness created much greater problems. The reflation being attempted across the water and which is being recommended to us from some quarters as the course that we should be following, takes place in a certain political and electoral context.

A *Financial Times* opinion piece this morning claims that the UK's budget deficit could soon be the largest in the developed world and that the present stimulus package will still fall far short of the desired effect. It pointed out that the UK consumer is now too stunned by the housing crash, stagnant wages and fears of unemployment, to be coaxed into resuming the insane credit-funded binge of yesteryear.

I am sure what was said about the UK would apply equally here if that were the course of action that we were following. As Deputy Noonan referred to one dimension of it relating to the public service, there is a blame game. I would regard the past 20 years in many respects as being the best years of our history, from an economic point of view. Of course the Celtic tiger period would sooner or later come to an end. The laws of economic gravity were not being suspended——

**Deputy Paul Connaughton:** The soft landing.

**Deputy Martin Mansergh:** The amazing thing was that it lasted so long and enabled so much progress to be made, economically, socially and in infrastructural terms.

To deal specifically with the Finance Bill, the importance of the manufacturing base remains. Research and development will have a high spin off which underpins much of the service economy. One of the most significant developments introduced in this year's Bill has been the change to research and development, R&D. The central issues considered by Government have been how we optimise the benefit to companies in order to influence investment decisions; how we recognise that most research and development takes place in a production setting and how we address the volume issue without exposing the Exchequer to deadweight costs in the short term.

In order to achieve this, the Finance Bill provides for a number of measures. The tax credit is set against current profits in the first instance; unused credit is to be set against the previous years corporation tax payment, creating a repayment; any remaining unused research and development tax credit would then be monetised by way of a payable credit, one third of the outstanding credit monetised per annum over the next three years. This means that a credit granted in any one year will be fully utilised by the company over three years, regardless of profits, giving certainty for planning purposes. To assist with the cost of buildings the scheme applies to buildings used substantially, 35%, for research and development purposes rather than wholly and exclusively as is the case at present. Finally, abolishing the ten-year look-back period for incremental research and development, that is, setting 2003 as the permanent base year, gives certainty about the scheme.

These measures represent a significant change to our research and development tax regime and would increase its attractiveness. When implemented the measures will target the tax incentive on the productive high value-added sectors of the economy and improve our offering to investors who derive full benefit over not more than three years. They would also help start-up companies to benefit from the credit in a period where they were unlikely to have profits against which to set the credit and recognise the fact that the vast majority of research and development does not take place in laboratories but in facilities involved in production.

Like many other Members of the House, I regularly visit such facilities in or on the edges of my constituency. In most cases, despite market difficulties and exchange rate difficulties, they have been in business for many years in many cases and they have every intention of staying rather than transferring somewhere else. They are a good advertisement for other industries from the same area. Yesterday I visited an Indian-managed plant in Ballymacarbry just inside County Waterford along with my Oireachtas colleagues. Much of the workforce comes from County Tipperary. Appreciation was expressed of the research and development supports in the Finance Bill. This measure would be a de facto volume-based scheme through the abolition of the ten-year look-back without short-run deadweight costs, similar to the evolution of the US scheme.

The Government is also supporting enterprise through an exemption from tax that is granted by reducing to nil the corporation tax relating to the profits of a new trade and the chargeable gains on the disposal of any assets used for the purposes of a new trade. The exemption period is three years from the commencement of the new trade. The exemption applies to companies incorporated on and from 14 October 2008, who commence to carry on a new trade in 2009. The scheme only applies to companies commencing to trade in 2009. There will be full relief where total corporation tax liability in any of the first three accounting periods does not exceed €40,000.

There will be marginal relief where corporation tax liability falls between €40,000 and €60,000. The marginal relief will be given by way of a standard marginal relief formula detailed

[Deputy Martin Mansergh.]

in the legislation. In short, the closer its corporation tax liability is to €40,000, the greater the marginal relief a company will receive. For example, a company with a total corporation tax liability of €42,000 in its first year will pay corporation tax of €6,000 and benefit from marginal relief of €36,000, while a company with a corporation tax liability of €59,000 will pay €57,000 and its marginal relief will amount to €2,000. New start-up companies with a corporation tax liability of €60,000 or more in any of its first three years will not receive any relief for that year. Since the taxable profits of a company in this scenario would be close to €500,000 at €480,000, this is not justified.

The Government does not believe it is necessary to formally notify this tax relief measure to the EU Commission from a State-aid perspective as the amount of assistance involved falls below the *de minimis* level of aid allowed under the relevant regulation. We want to be sure, however, that all aspects of the measure meet EU requirements and we will seek to clarify this with the EU Commission. An order will then be made to commence this section of the Bill.

The current stamp duty system applicable to non-residential property is being changed. At present, stamp duty is charged at various rates up to 9% where the consideration exceeds €150,000. The new top rate is 6%. The existing regime, with its top rate of 9%, was introduced by the last Fine Gael-Labour-Democratic Left Government in 1997. This change in the top rate is a positive move to assist business and sends a clear message that the Government is doing its part in restoring confidence in the market. In bringing stability to the public finances, the income levy is a progressive measure and is carefully constructed. It has several precedents in the past 20 years. Those on low incomes and the elderly who are below the exemption thresholds will not have to pay the income levy. Social welfare payments and medical card holders are also exempt. Middle income earners will pay 1%. Individuals with high earnings of more than €100,100 per annum will pay 2% on the amount in excess of €100,100 and very high earners of over €250,120 per annum will pay 3% on income above that amount.

To raise the same amount of revenue, approximately €1.2 billion in a full year, through increasing the standard and higher rates would have meant 1% on the standard rate, 2% on the higher rate or 4% if the increase were confined to the higher rate. Middle income earners would have faced an increase in income tax of 3%, or even 4%, instead of the 1% currently being applied on that range of income by the levy. The use of the levy mechanism also implies it is a temporary arrangement, as previous ones were.

The income levy has a broad base. Individuals who may be able to reduce their income tax liability through pension contributions, capital allowances or tax incentive schemes, such as film relief or the business expansion scheme, will not be able to do so under the income levy. Streams of income that currently have exemptions from income tax are not exempt from the income levy. These include earnings of writers, composers and artists, income from patent royalties, mining operations and profits from woodlands. Farmers will not be disproportionately affected.

The income levy is structured so that everyone who can afford to pay the income levy makes a contribution. The progressive nature of the levy is demonstrated by the fact the top 1% of earners, that is those earning more than €250,000 per annum, account for 20% of the yield from the levy.

The Government is always conscious of the need to target resources where they will have most effect. Changes to mortgage interest relief were specifically made to refocus the relief on those who need it the most. First-time buyers, who are under most pressure in the current economic climate, will benefit. This measure could be worth as much as an extra €3,500 over

a five year period to a first-time buyer couple and worth as much as an extra €1,750 over the same period to a single first-time buyer. These changes constitute a genuine reform of the system on a revenue neutral basis.

The so-called “Cinderella rule” has been controversial for some years. The current rules for determining residency in the State are based on the number of days an individual spends here. However, to count a day, the individual must be here at midnight, hence the Cinderella rule. It is clear that it is excessively elastic and allows individuals to allude the residency rule by leaving the jurisdiction prior to midnight and ensuring their presence in the State could not be counted for tax purposes. I could allow myself some humorous reflections on a comparison between the superwealthy and Cinderella but I will refrain from doing so.

**Deputy Michael Noonan:** She married one of the superwealthy.

**Deputy Martin Mansergh:** This amendment ensures that where an individual is present in the State at any point in a day, that day will be counted for determining tax residence. It will mainly affect high-wealth individuals who can fly into the State in the morning and fly back out by midnight. It will not affect cross-Border workers who are employed in the State.

Coming from the same region as Deputies Tom Hayes and Michael Noonan, I am glad a change has been made to the way the air travel tax will be levied. It will be levied as if from a single point defined as the east coast, Dublin Airport, and, therefore, will not be discriminatory against different airports.

I note the British Chancellor of the Exchequer further raised the UK’s equivalent of the travel tax yesterday. Even its lowest rate is higher than our higher rate of €10. The UK’s highest rate will be raised to £55. I do not see the Irish travel tax having a negative effect on airline competition from outside the country. Many other European countries are applying this form of tax. It may be the case that we are not tuned into some of the debates that take place across the water, but I do not recall hearing voluble protests by certain notorious airline managers at these increases. I will not refer to the manager of a certain well-known popular airline by name, as he is not in the House, but I wonder what he makes of these increases on airport tax across the water.

We live in a situation of tax competition. The Finance Bill raises VAT rate by 0.5%. Across the water, it has been reduced to 15% until the end of 2009. There has long been a benefit from having lower petrol prices and duty south of the Border. I suppose there is an element of swings and roundabouts. However, there are separate jurisdictions and each Government is rightly jealous of its tax sovereignty.

**Deputy Paul Connaughton:** I wish to share time with Deputy James Bannon.

**Acting Chairman:** Is that agreed? Agreed.

**Deputy Paul Connaughton:** This Finance Bill — I have seen a few of them in my time in the House — is a damage limitation exercise. With all respect to the Minister of State, Deputy Mansergh, one would think after listening to his speech that he never heard of this budget. He genuinely believes he was neither involved in nor knew the first thing about it.

On budget day, the Minister for Finance claimed he had a difficult task to perform, which we all accept, and everyone would be expected to share the pain. He continued that taking into account people’s capacity to do so, his budget would be fair and balanced. In times of great hardship when an economy runs into the high seas, most people will react positively to measures that are fair, reasonable, necessary, unavoidable and likely to lead to a better standard of living in the future. The public might not like such measures but it will buy them. My

[Deputy Paul Connaughton.]

colleague, Deputy Michael Noonan, spent much of his time as a senior Minister putting through such a regime in bad economic times. By and large, we were reasonably successful.

What did Fianna Fáil do this time? Let us consider the 3% levy imposed on the golden circle — the very gang that was inside the tent at the Galway races and which Fianna Fáil is trying to protect. When the Minister had finished his budget speech, it was the first time I saw a budget so enthusiastically received — both by Fianna Fáil and Green Party Members.

**Deputy James Bannon:** The clowns in the circus in my home town did not get as good a round of applause.

**Deputy Paul Connaughton:** How could Members on that side of the House expect the most vulnerable in society to accept the contents of that budget? It would be funny only that it has turned out to be so disastrous.

The budget was brought forward. The day I heard the Taoiseach say that it was the answer to the problem and that the Government was doing something, I decided it was a fig leaf. It takes time and commitment to get a budget balanced, particularly in bad times. I have ideas about what went wrong. As a result of the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Bill that was passed the week before the budget, the Government thought it was walking on water in the worst of times and that it could dish out anything. We are far away from the 1930s and 1940s now.

The vulnerable people in society knew it was not fair. It was in their heads — it was a psychological matter. The ink was not dry on the budget before people said this. There is no group more disorganised than the elderly. They do not pay into any group, they are very peaceful but they knew that the Government was trying to protect the super rich. They knew it was not a balanced budget. They knew it in their hearts and souls. A Fianna Fáil Government of ten, 20 or 30 years ago would not have done it. The Government got drunk on power. The greed and arrogance of this Government comes from the fact that whatever happened over the past ten years, it thought it could be solved by throwing money at it. That is what the Government did because it had the money. In the ten minutes at my disposal, I do not have the time to go back through the rigamarole of where money solved problems that should not have been solved by money. Good, prudent management was needed at that stage but we did not have it.

How many times did I hear the Taoiseach and the former Taoiseach tell us that the fundamentals of the economy were right and there were 2 million people at work? What sort of work were they doing and how productive was it? The vast majority were working in the building industry, building houses to sell to one another. The only ones carrying the cot now are the thousands of young men and women who paid twice the going rate for a house, which they will be paying for over the next 35 years, while the house will be worth half what it should have been.

My party backed the bank guarantee scheme not for the golden circle people or for the banks, but for the ordinary depositors all over Ireland. We gave it our full support and rightly so. I remember the Minister mentioning that the banks informed him that they had about €15 billion of assets on their books for which there was no return because the builders could not sell and it was toxic borrowing. There is a smell from that €15 billion and I think the sum is far greater than €15 billion.

Perhaps I am on my own in this House in this but I do not believe the bankers have the slightest intention of allowing the taxpayer or the Government to direct them in anything. One need just listen to the interview given by the chief executive of Bank of Ireland on the radio the other day. The man was surprised and disappointed that a reporter asked him to comment



on what would happen in the banking world in the future. There has been a particular culture in the banks down through the years. As they see it, they run their economy and are there to make money for the shareholders and how dare any Government get involved. The guarantee from the Government is that people will be appointed to act as watchdogs. We will come back to it in a year's time and see where we are going. For every small depositor, investor and person who has an iota of an idea of creating a job, I sincerely hope this will work but I greatly doubt it.

I referred to a fair and reasonable budget. The Government then turned around and decided to take out other vulnerable people in society. The Government had a go at the disabled but that had to be changed. It was the first budget in my 30 years here that was apologised for every day until a couple of weeks ago. Every Minister and Green Deputy apologised to the people for the hurt caused to them. That is some budget in a time when one expects the people of Ireland to tighten belts and that, in unison with one another, as a nation we would try to come out of one of the worst recessions I have ever seen.

**Acting Chairman:** The Deputy has one minute remaining.

**Deputy Paul Connaughton:** I am sorry I do not have 30 minutes.

I refer to the farming community, which I know most about. We discussed the 1% levy. Most farmers have been fined or penalised by 10% to 15%. The Government put its hand in every farmer's pocket, even the smaller lads, and took up to €3,000-5,000 in one go. It is difficult to think that in an agricultural country we do not have a programme to help the young farmers of Ireland to be trained properly, take over their farms and compete with the farmers of Europe. The installation aid grant and the retiring farmers grant were pulled for €10 million. Any Government that thinks this is fair and balanced and wants the people to back them is getting its answer in the polls and will get a lot more of it.

**Deputy James Bannon:** To say this Bill is based on a fallacy and mere empty words is an understatement. Announcing it with the usual fanfare and spin last Thursday, the Minister for Finance, Deputy Brian Lenihan, spoke the unbelievable words: "The Government is committed to protecting the economy from the worst effects of the current international downturn and to ensuring our international competitiveness is maintained and enhanced." I would like to ask the Minister what exactly he means by ensuring our international competitiveness is maintained and enhanced when the problem across the length and breadth of the country, leading to one business closure after another and a rapidly rising live register figure, is our lack of competitiveness and the impossibility of enhancing something that does not exist in the first place.

As for the Government protecting the economy from the worst effects of the current international downturn, the Minister will forgive me if I find that totally laughable. What would be more believable and relevant would be if the Minister had said the purpose was to protect the economy from the worst excesses and mismanagement of this jaded Fianna Fáil and withering Green Government. In perhaps the most desperate words ever used by a politician for self-justification, the Minister told us last Thursday that the Bill will give effect to the proposed budget changes and help restore order and stability in the public finances. Some hope with the inadequacies of budget 2009.

This was not the end of the farce. Once again, the Minister and the Government are harping back to what is becoming an old chestnut at this stage, the development of a knowledge-based economy. With a quarter of Irish adults functionally illiterate, perhaps rather than put the cart before the horse, it might be advisable to enhance rather than diminish educational spending and provision, to give what seems to be a pipe-dream of a knowledge-based economy some chance of getting off the ground. Words are cheap but the day-to-day reality for everyone in

[Deputy James Bannon.]

the workforce is that jobs are being eaten up at the rate of one every three minutes as the result of the Government's economic mismanagement, forcing businesses to close their doors. It is happening in my county and in County Westmeath, the two counties I represent. As a Deputy for Longford-Westmeath, which has suffered from continuous Government neglect under the watch of Deputy Peter Kelly and Deputy Mary O'Rourke, I am only too aware of the impact this is having on rural areas.

According to the latest live register figures, the number of people signing on in County Longford stands at 3,423. This represents an increase of 1,136, or 49.7%, in 12 months and a rise of 678, or 24.7%, since Deputies Cowen and Coughlan took over as Taoiseach and Tánaiste.

Unemployment in County Westmeath to the end of October was 6,213, with a figure of 2,331 in Athlone, up 1,470 since October 2007. The Castlepollard figures are up from 424 in October 2007 to 796 and Mullingar has 3,086 on the live register, an increase of 52.5% from the October 2007 figure of 2,023.

The standardised unemployment rate of 6.7% is the highest since 1998 in percentage terms. Ireland now appears certain to overtake the European Union average by the end of the current year. With the live register showing the biggest monthly increase in history, hard-hit families are suffering in their thousands from Fianna Fail's botched handling of the economy. The Government is paralysed and not one Minister is performing at the present time.

Unemployment is the human cost of economic mismanagement. The Government has abandoned the people on employment in the same way it as it has on public services and finances.

The Tánaiste, Deputy Coughlan, as Minister for Agriculture and Food, was responsible for a large number of Midlands farmers being driven off the land and now it looks as though she will stand over a continual pattern of job losses in the Midlands. Nothing changes in agriculture, however. The Minister's successor, Deputy Brendan Smith, has shamefully axed the farm retirement scheme and the installation aid scheme for young farmers, as Deputy Connaughton said, once again hitting the livelihood of our farming sector. There is nothing in the Finance Bill to relieve farmers from the 1% levy on their gross income. Across the board the Midlands is losing out under this Government. Whether it is the under-spend in BMW funding, corporate expansion, foreign business investment, infrastructure, health or education, this Government leaves the Midlands out of the equation.

Six months ago, when the Tánaiste, Deputy Coughlan, took the Enterprise, Trade and Employment portfolio, I shuddered to think what the new Minister could do to make the situation in the Midlands worse. Those months have told me exactly what her capabilities are, or rather, are not. There is a history of Government neglect in respect of Longford-Westmeath. The area has been shamefully disregarded in respect of the natural gas expansion scheme. Companies operating in Longford-Westmeath have again been left on the hind tit in respect of this important facility. Seven years after it was first promised inclusion under the expansion scheme, Longford-Westmeath is now under consideration for the final phase, phase 3, of that scheme. I do not like the word "phase" because I am aware of the position with regard to the development of the Longford-Westmeath General Hospital, which has been ongoing for the past 13 years under a Fianna Fáil led Government.

It is frightening to consider that in one year unemployment in County Longford has risen by 49.7%, and Athlone has seen an increase of 58.6% in the past year, with rises of 87.7% and 52.5% in Castlepollard and Mullingar respectively. Government policy is to blame others for the shocking rise in unemployment in Longford-Westmeath and other areas throughout the country. Far too many jobs have disappeared as a result of the high cost base. Companies are

leaving the country and transferring their operations to more business-friendly locations abroad.

Stealth taxes, high fuel prices, infrastructural deficiencies and a lack of competitiveness are driving up unemployment figures at an alarming rate. We need a high level of intervention and investment by Government and State agencies to secure a future for the people, and particularly my counties of Longford and Westmeath. This country lacks an industrial strategy geared towards low taxes. The Government deserves criticism in respect of inflation and the lack of competitiveness. There is no competitiveness.

The Government must overhaul FÁS, which was described today in the other House as a protected political species, and provide a public works scheme for the unemployed. I call on the Minister and the Government to restore competitiveness and to support business, in particular small and medium enterprises and other companies throughout the country and in the Midlands region, which has been badly hit recently. It is clear to everyone but the Government that this can be achieved by freezing charges such as rates and development levies; reducing utility costs for electricity, gas, water and telecommunications; investing in infrastructure, in particular broadband, road and rail; cutting back red tape; reversing the hike in VAT; and suspending the pay deal, consolidating labour law and abolishing anti-employment provisions such as double pay for Sunday working in the catering sector, something that a huge number of my constituents have come to my office on in recent weeks. The Minister will close down public houses and restaurants on Sundays with its carry-on in regard to double pay because most of the people employed on Sundays are young students who need the few bob but they will not have the few bob to spare to help them with their education and accommodation if restaurants close as a result of Government policy of doubling the rate of pay on Sundays.

I do not want to waste too much of the time of the House but the issue of the banks must be addressed. They are behaving dreadfully towards businesses and in terms of freeing up credit for people. In the past, farmers, machinery operators and other business people had no problem repaying mortgages and loans. There is now a credit squeeze and their industries are stifled because of the behaviour of the banks. The banks should free up more cash for those businesses, allow the economy to survive and save jobs.

Householders are becoming homeless as a result of home repossessions. The onus is on the Minister to minimise repossession. We need a proper mortgage rescue scheme to prevent families becoming homeless. The Minister should also increase awareness of the advice services for people experiencing difficulties with mortgages. Comprehensive advice should be available to people currently experiencing difficulties and there is an onus on the Government to provide that.

**Acting Chairman:** The next speakers are Deputies Cyprian Brady and Chris Andrews who are sharing 20 minutes. Deputy Brady has ten minutes.

**Deputy Cyprian Brady:** If it is agreed we will take ten minutes each.

I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important Bill. When we consider the economic climate, not just at home but abroad, this legislation is probably one of the most important legislative measures this House will have introduced in a very long time. We are a small, open economy on the periphery of Europe susceptible to the changes taking place globally in economies we have used as models for many years but which are now struggling.

The only welcome aspect is that the foundations we have laid in the past ten years will ensure we do not experience some of the more drastic and sudden collapses we have seen in other economies. Commentators and speakers in this House have mentioned countries such as Iceland but difficulties are being experienced in countries like Japan, which we regarded as a

[Deputy Cyprian Brady.]

model economy for many years. When we consider how susceptible we are as a small country, the chances are that this legislation will have to save us from going under like some of the other countries. This legislation is about managing our way through the difficulties. I have to laugh when I hear some commentators say we have wasted the so-called Celtic tiger and its benefits.

**Deputy James Bannon:** What about electronic voting, PPARS etc?

**Deputy Cyprian Brady:** I come from a working-class area in the inner city of Dublin and I see it there. The transformation in that area in the last ten years is phenomenal. Less than a generation ago we had very high unemployment, social deprivation, rampant crime and drug abuse in the north inner city.

**Deputy James Bannon:** We still have them.

**Deputy Cyprian Brady:** We now have third-level institutions, financial services centres, new housing, schools and colleges. This Bill is about providing those changes for people. Despite the recent losses, we have 600,000 more people in employment than we had ten years ago. They are 600,000 families and individuals who, ten or 15 years ago would not have had a job and a house. We had generations of that. We have doubled our exports over the last ten years. This Bill is about the management of where we go and what we do now.

Changes have taken place, particularly in the employment market. The costs of doing business in Ireland have increased, but so have wages and profits, and employment conditions have improved. Companies have come here from all over the world to take advantage of the situation we have had for the last ten or 12 years. Nobody can say we have not managed to attract our fair share of foreign direct investment when one considers the competition not just from Europe but throughout the world.

For many years I have listened to people denigrate developers and business people solely because they took advantage of the economic conditions of the last ten years. These are Irish people who took a chance, set up a business and took advantage of it. They employ Irish people and we should make no apology for supporting those people and ensuring they were in a position to do business.

**Deputy James Bannon:** The Government has wrecked their businesses.

**Deputy Cyprian Brady:** We supported and encouraged entrepreneurs to open businesses. That forms a large part of some of the sections of the Bill, particularly changes in research and development and increasing credits to 25%. This Bill continues to support those businesses and the higher value research and development companies we have managed to grow over the last number of years. We have been in a position to provide graduates from our third-level institutions to take advantage of the progress made in research and development. We have to continue to do that and to improve on it. The competition is not just in Europe and the UK. We compete with Asia, the Far East and the United States, particularly in these high-value, high-end businesses. Countries such as China and India are much farther advanced than they have been in recent times. We must continue to invest in our people. That is what we have done up to now. We have invested in our people and we will continue to do so. This Finance Bill does that.

There are 95 sections in the Bill and six schedules. I listened to the Minister of State, Deputy Mansergh, go through some of the detailed sections but some of the simple changes in the Bill will be extremely effective. There are simple changes in the business expansion scheme and

the seed capital schemes. Extending the cut-off date for claims by three months will make a significant difference to businesses starting off and continuing in to the future. It will change those schemes and make them more user-friendly and attractive for people to take advantage of. It is a very small change.

The changes to vehicle registration have been sought for some time. The establishment of a register particularly for secondhand and imported cars is crucially important. In the 1980s and 1990s we went through a spate of importing cheap cars from the Far East, some of which were not safe and caused accidents. Having to register foreign registered cars after 42 days is right because we have had an influx. People have raised this issue with me on a regular basis, particularly regarding foreign-registered cars.

I greatly welcome some of the other details, for instance section 12 provides for an increase in the rate of mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers from 20% to 25% in years one and two and from 20% to 22.5% in years three, four and five. It also provides for a reduction in the rate of mortgage interest relief. This protects people who have been in a position, up to now, to take up a mortgage and buy a house because they were in employment. We should not have to apologise for that. To listen to some commentators one would swear it was an offence to provide housing for people. We have provided record numbers of houses and made them available to people. The market dictated the prices. We managed to get mortgage relief right eventually. This is just another step in that direction.

I welcome the fact that the so-called Cinderella rule is changed by section 13. This takes advantage of the progress people have made in various different professions over the years. It is right that we expect people who have managed to do well and make a lot of money to make a contribution. Nobody would have a problem with that.

There has been much talk on the introduction of the air travel tax. I very much welcome the changes on this in the Finance Bill. When somebody is considering travelling abroad the pain of €10 extra will not change his or her mind. That is the principle behind this. The reduction to the lower rate of €2 for all airports is very much welcomed. People can and will accept this. Over the last number of weeks since the budget it has struck me that a number of people have said they are willing to take some pain to keep us going and to continue to provide services and improve our education and health systems. The Finance Bill 2009 is probably one of the most important pieces of legislation the House will introduce.

**Deputy Chris Andrews:** I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak. If anybody remained unconvinced that we live in a globalised world, they now realise we are part of something bigger than just a country alone. In many ways we are like a little ship bobbing on very stormy waters. Unfortunately we are being thrown around because of our dependence and interaction. We are more exposed than other countries and are probably suffering more than most. I heard the Minister speak earlier. It is hard to believe that each day seems to bring worse news and more negativity than the previous one. Almost all countries are suffering financial difficulties. The United States economy appears to be frozen. The President-elect, Mr. Barack Obama, seems to be stepping into the breach by trying to heat up the American economy with cash injections. I understand the US Treasury Secretary, Mr. Hank Paulson, today decided to inject a further \$800 billion into the US economy. While people might find it galling that such money is being used to bail out Wall Street, as opposed to Main Street, there would be repercussions around the world if such action were not taken.

Deputy Cyprian Brady spoke about the notion being peddled by the Opposition that the Celtic years were wasted. I will give an example of how money was spent for the benefit of this country during that period. In 1997 there were virtually no special needs assistants in our schools. In 2008 there are 10,000. Such assistants support children with special needs. They



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ensure the right of such children to an education is vindicated and help them to develop. That is where the money has been spent in the last ten years. It is helping disadvantaged people who are less fortunate than Members of this House.

The budget introduced comprises a balanced and coherent plan to address the difficulties we are encountering as a consequence of falling revenue. It has focused attention on the severe challenges and difficulties we face. It is important to stress that we are not going back to the 1980s which was a completely different time of mass emigration. We are in a different position. We are in good shape to take advantage of the tough decisions being made in the budget and future ones.

Its an unfortunate for the person who becomes unemployed. However, there are 600,000 more people in employment today than there were ten years ago. Our export levels have doubled in the past decade. As Deputy Cyprian Brady said, our living standards have improved dramatically in that time. We have one of the lowest debt levels in the European Union. There are over 600,000 more people working now than there were in 1998. There are 2 million people at work in this country. We have a low debt-to-GDP ratio. It has decreased from 53% of GDP in 1998 to 26% this year. We also have a pension fund and a generous welfare system. In real terms, the State pension is one of the highest in the European Union.

It is easy to criticise young people. We have an energetic, well trained and well educated young workforce. By international standards, we have a low tax environment for workers and business. That has been an important driver of economic growth. I am glad to say administrative changes will take place within the Health Service Executive and the rest of the public sector. People are looking for dramatic changes to be made in the broader public sector, as if that would change everything. In reality, public sector reform will take time. It will not happen overnight. It will be done in a constructive and meaningful manner that will see us right in the long term.

I wish to comment briefly on the banks. They appear to be unable to operate in any state other than greed or fear. We need them to be able to operate in a balanced way. It is important to stress that they were not bailed out for the sake of the banking industry. It was done to help ordinary people. If the banks had not been bailed out, this country would have collapsed, which would have had a desperate effect on families and, in particular, disadvantaged and older people. It was not done for the bankers — it was done for decent, hard-working and honest people. I am seriously concerned that the banks are continuing to look after themselves, first and foremost. They are being supported by the public, through the Government, but do not seem to appreciate that they are still in business as a result of that assistance. They do not seem to have realised that everything has changed.

The public will not accept the astonishing levels of arrogance the banks have shown to date. The banks appear to believe they are untouchable but they are in for a shock. They need to realise that they have to start behaving with a degree of humility. They should recognise that they will not get out of this mess, which they were active participants in bringing about, unless they show balanced judgment and a sense of social responsibility. If they do not do so, they will suffer just as the rest of us probably will. Now may not be the time for retribution but there will come a time when heads will have to roll. It will be expected that heads will roll. The terms and conditions that apply to any scheme of recapitalisation should ensure this happens to senior bank officials. The possible recapitalisation of the banks has been bandied about as a silver bullet that will solve everything. The reality is that recapitalisation, on its own, will not solve all the problems in the banking sector. If it comes to pass, it must be implemented and supervised carefully. The terms and conditions of any recapitalisation scheme must be very

clear. They must be skewed in favour of the public purse. It is clear that supervision of the banks is key. The banks need to be brought to heel but this has not yet happened.

The income levy, one of the key measures in the budget, is aimed at stabilising tax revenues. It will mean that the better-off will pay more. The more one earns, the more one will pay. That is a positive measure. This is a difficult time and almost everyone will have to bear some pain. It is likely that those who prospered most in the last ten years will, proportionately, have to endure the most pain.

**Deputy Ciarán Lynch:** I would like to share time with Deputy Morgan. I presume that will happen when the debate resumes tomorrow morning.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy John Cregan):** Is that agreed? Agreed.

**Deputy Ciarán Lynch:** I wish to begin by making a simple point. Twelve months ago Members sitting in this Chamber may have been asking themselves where would they be in a year's time. An obvious question needs to be asked. Who knew where we would actually be? I am of the view that the Government knew this time last year that the writing was on the wall. Civil servants in various Departments, including the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance, knew that the writing was on the wall. When the budget was brought before the House a number of weeks ago, the people expected two simple things to happen. They knew that we would have difficulties, that tough times were ahead, that hard decisions needed to be taken and that tough choices would be encountered. In the Budget Statement they expected a strategy to be put in place to deal with public spending and they expected an employment support package to be put in place to rescue the economy. In effect, we did not get either. The budget proved to be a record of unprecedented calamities, one after the other. For a number of years, as the economy expanded, there was an expectation that should a bad day arrive, we would be prepared for it. Like a builder leading a person to believe the roof will be fine as long as the sun is shining, we had one wet day and the water started pouring through the roof.

The Government claims foreign factors over which we have no control such as international banking and the global economic downturn are the source of our difficulties but this is clearly not the case. Two critical factors make the Irish recessions unique — banking regulation and a developer-driven property market. A country can decide to elect a government that leads development or one that is led by developers. For the past 15 years, we have had developer-led government and the legislation passed during that period reflects that. Tax breaks were provided for homes that were not required while tax incentives were provided for landlords to generate further money.

Last night I watched the television programme about former Taoiseach, Deputy Bertie Ahern. In April 2004, he appeared on our televisions on a Friday night complaining about those who said the property market was in danger of collapse. He called them naysayers and so on. However, that year the price of property was beyond the reasonable grasp of middle income earners. If hard working families could not afford to buy a home, surely there was a significant problem in the property market. For whose benefit were houses being built? Were they being built for bankers or developers or the professionals who had a 2% cut out of every property transaction? If one bought at house at the beginning of the 1990s for IR£50,000, the auctioneer was paid 2% of the transaction in fees. In 2006 when the property market was at its peak, the house was probably worth €400,000 but if sold, the auctioneer would still have been paid 2% in fees, as would the solicitor and the estate agent. Nobody in the State received wage increases of that magnitude over that 15-year period. Everyone was at it because there was no regulation and the Government, even in the dying days of the Celtic tiger, when the

[Deputy Ciarán Lynch.]

manufacturing base of the country was collapsing, camouflaged the problem through the Exchequer figures and stamp duty generated by the property market.

The Government parties behaved like junkies, high on the returns from property speculation and in complete denial of the problems its addiction was causing for broader society. That is why our kids must clean up the mess the Government parties have created. Like junkies high on the fix of property taxation, they ignored every single factor telling them the economy was in danger. A total of 20% of our manufacturing base was linked to the construction sector, 10% above the European norm. We know why the Galway tent was in place. Meanwhile, sewerage systems, housings standards and energy rating for housing have not been addressed because these are after the fact matters when it comes to development. The Government was happy for developers to move their houses and it did not care what happened afterwards. As a result, housing estate after housing estate was built but communities were not and they are still reeling from the effects of this mismanagement.

Given the downturn, why are the most vulnerable carrying the can? In the budget old age pensioners were hit through their medical cards, young children through education cuts and teenagers and the disabled through other measures. The Government has rescinded a number of its proposals and it will rescind more. However, the construction sector could have been stimulated and redirected many years ago through a permit scheme. The entire population could not be buying and selling houses. Credit card debt stands at more than €2 billion and, until recently, banks and credit card institutions were calling 18 year olds on their birthday offering them unlimited credit. People were offered mortgages up to 12 months ago who now cannot qualify for assistance from a community welfare officer because their finances were in such bad shape when they guaranteed their mortgages.

The Government could have done 101 things but no strategy was put in place and a crisis-driven approach to everything was adopted. I refer to a number of the more anomalous scenarios in the budget. The Minister for Finance proposes the introduction of a €200 parking levy.

*10 o'clock* Low paid workers go to work at 5 a.m. every day to stock shelves or work in the merchandising area of Dunnes Stores or another supermarket in Santry or another city suburb. They must drive to work because public transport is not available at 5 a.m. and one would not walk the streets of any city in Ireland at that time. They earn a minimum wage of €200 for a 15 to 20 hour week. They must pay for the parking space they avail of at 5 a.m. outside the supermarket and when the 1% levy is taken into account, they will lose two weeks wages next year because of the budget.

The budget will result in a litany of problems but the fundamental issue is the Government has lost touch and it does not know the value or cost of anything anymore. Sadly, the Government has no recollection of what is a recession and it does not know what are tough times but one only needs to ask one question of people of my generation in this regard. Ask anybody in their late 30s to mid 40s what is their PPS number and they will quote it off the top of their head. Why? It is because they went through the 1980s signing on and signing off social welfare. That is a legacy we inherited from the 1980s. It was something I hoped our children would not have as a mark of recognition as they grew up but, unfortunately, we may be back to that time again.

Debate adjourned.

## Adjournment Debate.

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### Home Help Services.

**Deputy Frank Feighan:** I ask the Minister for Health and Children how much longer elderly people will have to remain on home help priority waiting lists in counties Roscommon and Leitrim, my constituency area, before home help is made available. Is the Minister aware that persons in their late 80s and 90s are on this list for months? This must be resolved immediately.

In recent months my office and I have dealt with several issues regarding home help which I want to put on the record of the Dáil. Elderly people have been on waiting lists for months and remain on the lists until they can no longer cope and must go into nursing homes. Only very high dependency cases get home help cover for annual leave, which is unsatisfactory. There is no cover for Saturdays and Sundays unless palliative care is required. Primary care teams have been rolled out in Castlerea and Ballaghaderreen, and more will follow in Boyle, Monksland and areas of Leitrim, which I welcome, but no extra funding has been granted for home help, which should be part of the primary care team package.

I know a lady who is 99 years of age and living in my home town of Boyle. The public health nurse requested a few hours home help for her and she was assessed and put on the waiting list five and a half months ago. She is still on that waiting list, which is unacceptable. The family of an elderly lady in Leitrim sought a few hours home help. When the HSE assessed her needs, home help was granted but just six weeks later it was withdrawn and she was left to fend for herself again. A person in Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon, who provides care for her family 24 hours a day, seven days a week, sought just two to three hours home help to allow her to do the shopping, make visits to the doctor and so on. An assessment was made and the family member involved was put on this endless waiting list.

A man in Castlerea was assessed and approved for five hours home help last May. He was put on the waiting list and as a result of not getting a few hours home help as a back-up, he is depressed and in care of the psychiatric services. A member of another family asked for a few hours home help but, on stating that if home help was not forthcoming her parents would have to go into a nursing home, was told categorically as this would not be coming out of "their" budget, it would not affect the home help department. An elderly person was in Sligo Hospital. Her family applied for home help and a discharge but she was put on the long waiting list when, but for the lack of a few hours home help, she could have returned to her own home.

Having checked with families before this debate, I know of several elderly people on a waiting list for home help who could not cope with the long list and were forced to go into nursing homes. I have the names and addresses of all these people, of whom there are many more. The Minister of State, Deputy Hocht, would agree this is unacceptable. We are trying to keep people out of nursing homes and hospitals. This is about value for money. Every day, like other Deputies throughout the country, I am dealing this serious situation. Everyone claims it is a result of the budget, and that it has nothing to do with them or is the responsibility of another Department. I call on the Minister of State to resolve the situation. If she does, I will thank her and appreciate it. Value for money is the issue. Many families are waiting on extra home help hours. The sooner this impasse is broken through, the better. I thank the Minister of State for attending and look forward to her response.

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett):** I am taking this Adjournment matter on behalf of my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney. I thank the Deputy for raising the issue as it provides me with an opportunity to reaffirm the Government's commitment to services for older people generally and, in particular, to the important area of the home help service, even in these times of economic uncertainty.

Government policy in regard to older people is to support people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Where this is not feasible, the health service supports access to quality long-term residential care where this is appropriate. This policy approach is renewed and developed in the latest partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*.

The Government's objective of continued development of community-based services for older persons is reflected in the funding given to the system in recent times. In budgets 2006 and 2007, more than €400 million was provided to enhance service developments across the sector, of which just over €190 million was for community-based services over these two years. Budget 2008 allocated in excess of €20 million additional funding for community-based initiatives for older people, bringing the total additional funding allocated for this area to more than €210 million for the three-year period 2006-08. These measures have been designed to both enhance existing services that the Government had already put in place and to widen the range of services available to older people.

Home help is the backbone of community-based services and includes a range of essential services that make all the difference to the quality of life of each recipient. In 2006, almost 11 million home help hours were provided. In 2007 the number of hours provided increased to 11.78 million. In the first nine months of this year, to the end of September, more than 9.2 million hours were provided by the Health Service Executive, which is an increase of 3% over the same period in 2007. The executive estimates it will provide in the region of 11.9 million home help hours this year, which translates into more than 990,000 home help hours provided each month nationwide. This unprecedented level of service has been made possible due to the significant new funding — in excess of €55 million — in the past three years, and benefits more than 53,000 people annually. The HSE provided some €4.6 million additional funding in its 2008 service plan to expand the home help service around the country.

I understand the HSE has provided, in the period January to September 2008, a total of 195,000 hours to clients within the Roscommon local health office area. Each person who is referred to the local executive office has a full assessment of need completed. Cases are prioritised based on need and a service is provided in line with allocated resources. A total of 20,600 hours were provided in Roscommon in September in respect of approximately 850 clients, and there are currently 110 clients on the waiting list in that area for home help hours.

Figures in regard to Leitrim are collated for the entire Sligo-Leitrim local health office area and, therefore, current statistics are not readily available separately for Leitrim. I understand from the executive, however, that in 2007 just over 600,000 hours were provided for 2,283 clients for the Sligo-Leitrim area. In the region of 415,000 hours have been provided in this local health office area in the period January to September 2008. A re-assessment of needs in Leitrim is undertaken on an ongoing basis using recognised assessment methods. Clients with high priority needs are approved on receipt of applications. The HSE has indicated there are currently five people on the waiting list for home help services in Leitrim.



In conclusion, it is clear from the information I have outlined that the Government has made considerable improvements nationally to enhance home help provision. There is no doubt demand can at times exceed service resources. However, it is a matter for the HSE to deliver services both nationally and locally in the context of its evolving priorities and overall resources, and taking account of the individual circumstances of each applicant.

### **Schools Building Projects.**

**Deputy Dinny McGinley:** Tá áthas orm go bhfuil an Aire Stáit anseo. Tá súil agam go dtuigfidh sí mo chuid Gaeilge. Is scoil lán-Ghaeilge í Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair. Foghlaimítear gach ábhar trí mheán na Gaeilge. Is cinnte go gcuirfidh na gearraithe a fógraíodh sa cháinainéis isteach go mór ar imeachtaí na scoile. Tá cás speisialta le déanamh ag Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair. Tá sé lonnaithe i gceantar faoi mhíbhuntáiste — is scoil míbhuntáistiúil í. Níl sé clúdaithe sa scéim DEIS cosúil le ghnáthscoil. De thoradh ar na gearraithe seo, beidh ar an scoil 3.5 múinteoir, nó 15% d'fhoireann teagaisc na scoile, a chailliúnt. Ní bheidh an scoil in ann freastal a dhéanamh ar gach scoláire. Chomh maith leis sin, cuirfear deireadh leis an scéim caidreamh baile-scoile, nó home-school liaison scheme. Cuirfidh sé sin isteach go mór ar na daltaí is mó a bhfuil deacrachtaí acu. Ciallaíonn sé sin go mbeidh na ranganna níos mó agus go mbeidh rogha ábhair níos lú ag na daltaí. Cuirfear deireadh le cúrsaí speisialta ar nós an idirbhliain agus an curaclam leaving certificate applied.

I mí Eanáir seo chugainn, cuirfidh na athruithe ar an chóras ionadaíochta isteach go mór ar gach cineál imeachtaí na scoile, ábhair na gcuraclam ar nós tíreolaíocht agus bitheolaíocht ina measc. Caillfidh an scoil deontaisí de €13,000 sa bhliain, ina measc €4,000 sa bhliain fá choinne an scéim leabhair saor in aisce. Tá sé soiléir go gcuirfidh na athruithe seo isteach go mór ar imeachtaí na scoile, ar fhoireann na scoile agus ar dhaltaí na scoile. Is múinteoir í an Aire Stáit, an Teachta Hoctor. Tá a fhios aici nach bhfuil aon scoil eile i gContae Dhún na nGall den mhéid chéanna le Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair nach bhfuil halla spóirt ann. The proposed education cutbacks will have serious implications for Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair and similar schools in Donegal which are in the usual position of having disadvantaged status but not being included in the DEIS programme. Other such schools are Falcarragh community school and Glenties comprehensive school. Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair will lose 3.5 teachers or 15% of the teaching staff. Imagine the negative impact this will have throughout the school. It will result in a far higher pupil-teacher ratio, curtailment of subject choice, the termination of special courses and, in all probability, the end of the transition year programme. This will have a devastating impact on the morale of the entire school, including staff and pupils.

The curtailment of substitutes unless a medical certificate is produced will adversely affect many specialised subjects such as geography, biology and science. The school will lose an estimated €13,000 capitation per annum and €14,000 under the free books scheme which will place an impossible financial burden on many parents who are under severe pressure already due to unemployment and the current economic downturn. Taken together, all of the cutbacks will present principal and staff with a nightmare when planning subject timetables and school rosters, particularly when such changes are to be implemented during the school year.

I appeal to the Minister of State, who I am sure will convey it to the Minister, because of all of the community, comprehensive and post-primary schools in Donegal, to address the fact that Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair is still without a sports hall. It has been in existence for more than 25 years and has more than 300 pupils. All subjects are taught through the medium of Irish and it has been discriminated against because it is still waiting for this long planned for

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and long awaited sports hall. Our patience is wearing extremely thin. I hope the Minister of State will bring it to the attention of the Minister and the heads of the Department.

**Deputy Tom Sheahan:** Hear, hear.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** Gabhaim buíochas leis an Teachta McGinley as ucht deis a thabhairt dom an cheist atá ardaithe aige anocht a fhreagairt. I thank the Deputy for raising this issue as it affords me the opportunity to outline the position on behalf of the Minister for Education and Science, Deputy Batt O’Keeffe, with regard to the increase in the pupil-teacher ratio at post-primary level.

Notwithstanding the increase of €302 million in the education budget for 2009, which is a real achievement in the current economic climate, a number of tough and difficult decisions had to be taken. The 2009 budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. Decisions were made to control expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long term. In this respect education, while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure, could not be entirely spared, and the Minister, Deputy O’Keeffe, acknowledges the impact of funding restrictions in a number of areas, including at school level. However, these are the inevitable result of the challenging economic environment and the need to manage Exchequer resources prudently. These decisions included increasing the pupil-teacher ratio across all second level schools from 18:1 to 19:1. In the case of fee-charging post-primary schools, there will be an additional one-point adjustment to 20:1.

Taken in combination, the impact of the staffing schedule changes, withdrawal of historic DEIS posts and language support, weighed against the expected increases in the numbers of teachers for demographics and resource teachers for special needs, will mean an overall net reduction of 200 posts at second level. This is less than 1% of the overall number of teaching posts in second level schools. Measured against the overall payroll target reduction across the public sector, it demonstrates the Government’s desire to protect front line staff in schools to the greatest extent possible.

As the processing of the September 2008 enrolment returns for post-primary schools are not yet finalised, it is not possible at this time to outline to the House this evening the impact these changes will have on the allocation of mainstream teaching posts for the 2009-10 school year for this school. The staffing schedule for the 2009-10 school year will issue to all schools as soon as possible and, at that time, a more accurate indication of the mainstream staffing levels will be available.

The allocation processes include mechanisms under which schools can appeal against allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. This is particularly relevant at post-primary level, where the appellate process considers in particular any specific curricular needs of the school concerned.

At post-primary level there is no effective system-wide redeployment scheme at present and this can mean that schools retain teachers although over quota. In addition, discrete allocations are made to post-primary schools, for example, to cater for pupils with special educational needs and those with language difficulties, and these allocations can also alter the ultimate position of a school with regard to its being over quota.

The Department is aware of funding pressures on schools. However, progress has been made in recent years that has seen the post-primary school capitation grant increased by €15 per pupil and it now amounts to €331 per pupil. In addition, voluntary secondary schools have

benefited by the increase of €15 per pupil in 2008 in the support services grant bringing this grant to €204 per pupil.

The cumulative increase of €30 per pupil in a voluntary secondary school brings the aggregate grant to €535 per pupil. These grants are in addition to the *per capita* funding of up to €40,000 per school that is also provided by the Department to secondary schools towards secretarial and caretaking services.

Budget allocations for schools in the community and comprehensive school sector along with those in the VEC sector are increased on a *pro rata* basis with increases in the *per capita* grant. All schools are eligible for recurrent *per capita* grants towards special classes and curricular support grants.

The funding mechanisms in place afford schools considerable flexibility in the use of their resources to cater for the needs of their pupils. The Minister, Deputy O’Keeffe, appreciates that the abolition of a number of grants for some schools will impact on funding levels in 2009 but it is also the case that enhanced levels of funding announced in the budget for the capitation and ancillary services grants will help to alleviate the impact. I thank the Deputy for providing me with the opportunity to address the House on this matter and to outline the current position.

### Northern Ireland Issues.

**Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin:** I begin by extending my deepest sympathy and continuing solidarity to the family of Aidan McAnespie. I wish to remember especially his late sister Eilish McCabe who died earlier this year. She never gave up her struggle for truth and justice. Go ndéana Dia trócaire orthu beirt.

Aidan McAnespie was shot dead as he walked from Aughnacloy in County Tyrone to a football match at Aghaloo Gaelic Football Club on Sunday afternoon, 21 February 1988. He had to pass through the permanent British army checkpoint at Aughnacloy, which, on that date, was occupied by the Grenadier Guards Regiment of the British army. Aidan was shot in the back after he had passed through the checkpoint. The weapon used was a general purpose machine gun fired from the sangar of the checkpoint. Aidan lay dead on the roadside.

The British soldier who fired the shot, Guardsman David Holden, claimed his finger slipped on the trigger of the gun. In a report published in June of this year the historical inquiries team of the PSNI has found this to be the least likely explanation of what happened. Effectively, it has given the lie to the British soldier’s account. Nobody was ever charged with Aidan’s murder.

Two decades have passed since Aidan was murdered at the age of 24. I personally remember the terrible day when we heard the news that this young man had been gunned down in Aughnacloy and the pall of gloom that descended over communities along the Border. We were shocked but not surprised that the British army had finally carried out the threat that it and its cohorts in the RUC had so frequently made to Aidan. The story of Aidan’s death is not just the story of what happened on that Sunday afternoon, 21 February 1988. It is a story of unrelenting harassment by the British army, the RUC and, very often also, the Garda Síochána, which had been going on since 1981, when Aidan was 17.

What was Aidan’s crime in the eyes of the British crown forces? He was a young worker who had to cross the British-imposed Border twice every day to travel to and return from his work at Monaghan Poultry Products. He was an honest, friendly and popular young man. He loved Gaelic games. He endured their harassment, stood up for his rights and protested against their conduct. He was Irish and he simply wanted to live his own life in his own country. That was his crime and for that his life was taken away.

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

I assisted Aidan and his family in their efforts to highlight his plight and to raise with the authorities in his State and with the Catholic church, including the late Cardinal Ó Fiaich, the constant harassment to which Aidan was subjected. Some were sympathetic and endeavoured to act. Others were silent. It must be recorded that the British army and the RUC were facilitated in their conduct towards Aidan by the attitude and actions of the forces of this State. This was because Aidan was also subject to harassment by members of the Garda Síochána, undermining any credibility the authorities in this State may have had in raising his case with the British Government. In the years following the Hillsborough Agreement of 1985, Border posts and checkpoints like those at Aughnacloy were greatly reinforced by the British army and RUC with full co-operation from Governments in this jurisdiction. We in the Border communities bore the brunt of that British military occupation.

Such was the outrage at Aidan's death that the then Fianna Fáil Government ordered a Garda inquiry. During the course of that inquiry, I met with Deputy Garda Commissioner Eugene Crowley and outlined the litany of harassment Aidan had endured. I recall that a spokesperson for the Progressive Democrats went on RTE radio to say that the Garda inquiry should not listen to anyone connected with Sinn Féin, even if he or she had witnessed the murder. That Progressive Democrats spokesperson was none other than the Minister for Health and Children, Deputy Harney.

After many years of official silence, the historical inquiries team of the PSNI has published its report on the shooting of Aidan McAnespie. As I said, it found that the version offered by the British soldier who fired the fatal shot was the least likely explanation of what happened. The murder of Aidan was compounded by the lies that were told by the British army afterwards. The soldier who fired the fatal shot claimed his finger slipped onto the trigger when he was moving the general purpose machine gun. This lie has been exposed by the historical inquiries team report. The McAnespie family and the community have been vindicated.

However, the Crowley report has not been published. It should be opened immediately to the family and then published. Like others who participated in that inquiry, I find it totally unacceptable that the report is still being kept secret after more than 20 years. The Minister responsible and the Government collectively should immediately approve the release of that report.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** On behalf of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, I thank the Deputy for raising this matter. On 21 February 1988, Aidan McAnespie was fatally wounded by gunfire near a British army checkpoint at Aughnacloy, County Tyrone, on the Border with County Monaghan. The shooting gave rise to a great degree of public disquiet at the time. Consequently, at the request of the Government, Garda Commissioner E.J. Doherty appointed Deputy Commissioner Eugene Crowley to institute an immediate inquiry into the fatal shooting and the circumstances surrounding the fatality. The Deputy Commissioner's subsequent report was submitted to the Minister for Justice on 8 April 1989.

The Deputy Commissioner's inquiry was conducted on the basis that the wishes of the witnesses to have their statements and identities treated as confidential would be respected and that the report would not be made available to any party other than the Government. However, an associated post mortem report by the State pathologist was made available to Mr. McAnespie's family. In the years since 1988, members of Mr. McAnespie's family have met officials of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as relevant Ministers and the Taoiseach. Understandably, the McAnespie family has on

these occasions requested the release of Deputy Commissioner Crowley's report. Undertakings were given to examine the possibility of publishing the main findings of the report without disclosing the identity of any person who gave evidence or the contents of any statement.

Arising from the Good Friday Agreement, the Government established a victims commission under the authority of the former Tánaiste, Mr. John Wilson. Mr. Wilson's resultant report, *A Place and a Name*, was published in 1999. In paragraph 4.5.5, it recommended that the Crowley report on the shooting of Aidan McAnespie be published, while accepting that in order to protect innocent parties or sources some degree of editing might be required before publication. The Government subsequently decided, in April 2002, to agree to the release by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to the McAnespie family of a summary of the Crowley report into the fatal shooting of Aidan McAnespie. As part of this decision, the Government approved the text of the summary to be released. The approved summary was released to Mr. McAnespie's family in August 2002.

The Minister is aware of the recent report of the historical inquiries team in Northern Ireland, which concluded that the official explanation given at the time, namely, that the weapon in question had been discharged accidentally and randomly, was the least likely of the possible explanations. The report concluded that it was more likely that the soldier in question had deliberately discharged a burst of aimed shots at the victim or in his vicinity, or that he was tracking Mr. McAnespie with the gun and being unaware that the gun was cocked and ready to fire, pulled the trigger, inadvertently discharging the shots.

The McAnespie family will be aware from the summary of the report that was released to them that Deputy Commissioner Crowley was unable to establish whether the shooting was deliberate. The historical inquiries team investigation has therefore already been able to draw a more detailed conclusion. This is no surprise given that its investigation had access to various sources of information within Northern Ireland that would not have been available to the Garda Síochána.

In regard to the inquiry carried out in this jurisdiction, the situation remains that it would not be proper to renege on the assurances of confidentiality given to witnesses. To do so would call into question the value of any assurances of confidentiality that may be given in the future. Calls have also been made to release the report in such a way that witnesses would remain anonymous. However, I am advised that the degree of editing that would be necessary to anonymise the report would be such as to be impracticable, particularly as this process would require much more than the mere omission of names, so as to avoid the ready identification of witnesses who live in the small locality where the shooting occurred. Thus, this approach was discounted and a decision taken instead to release a summary of the report's conclusions.

The Minister regrets it is not possible to accede to the Deputy's request. He has asked me to extend his sympathy to the McAnespie family and his hopes that the historical inquiries team report has helped bring them towards closure in regard to Aidan McAnespie's tragic death.

### **Teaching Qualifications.**

**Deputy Paul Kehoe:** I am disappointed that neither the Minister for Education and Science nor a Minister of State at his Department is present for this debate. That is no reflection on the Minister of State, Deputy Hocht, but merely a reflection of the seriousness of the issue we are discussing. In recent years, the Department of Education and Science has encouraged young people to enter the teaching profession. Many people have done this through the higher diploma course, having first attained a degree elsewhere and proceeded to the 18 month graduate course or the Hibernian College on-line course. I speak on behalf of several students in



[Deputy Paul Kehoe.]

County Wexford and I am aware of students in a similar position in counties Limerick, Cork, Waterford and Galway. Deputy Tom Sheahan will speak for students from County Kerry. Some students have completed an 18 month course either on-line or in one of the teacher training colleges and are now in teaching placement. During this first year of teaching, they are to be assessed by a suitably qualified inspector from the Department of Education and Science. There are three such assessments or inspections due. The first involves an introductory inspection and an initial call from the inspector. The second assessment involves a mini-diploma, whereby the inspector stays with the student for two or three hours or a half a day. Then there is the full-diploma assessment, whereby the inspector stays with the student for a full day's teaching. This must be carried out within the first year of qualification.

A concerned student contacted me as no one from the Department had called to the school to arrange assessments with her. She made inquiries last week and was told that because of education cutbacks, she would not be assessed this year. This person is in dire straits as are her fellow students. She intended to complete her first year teaching practice as she wishes to travel abroad for two or three years. If this person is not assessed this year, she may have to cancel her plans. I do not believe it is fair on any person or student to have to put his or her life on hold because of the Department of Education and Science cutbacks. Will the Minister of State agree this is an outrageous situation for any student? Will the Minister of State relay to the Department the concerns raised by me this evening?

**Deputy Tom Sheahan:** Deputy Kehoe and I are sharing time on this matter as we have been contacted by many teachers and trainees or those soon to qualify. The highest concentration of teachers in the country are from County Kerry. I believe this extends to primary school teachers. We will hear a response from the Minister of State, but unfortunately we will not have the opportunity to respond. We are led to believe that the halt in assessments is due to the cuts in the education budget. The Minister for Education and Science has already inflicted devastating cuts on the teaching profession. From January onwards, some 2,000 teachers will lose their jobs. As with those who have contacted Deputy Kehoe, those who have contacted me wish to qualify as teachers. They seek the qualification to allow them to teach while travelling in another jurisdiction, country or continent.

These people entered the profession in good faith. They have a legitimate expectation that the Department would carry out its obligations. The students are willing to complete their studies in the normal manner, regardless of what follows. I appreciate the Minister will cut 2,000 teaching jobs in January. I am conscious time is limited and we could debate the matter throughout the night, but I imagine the former leader of Fianna Fáil, Mr. Eamon de Valera, would be turning in his grave were he aware of what is happening in the State at present. Mr. de Valera once said that "no longer will our children, like our cattle, be brought up for export". Unfortunately, the trainee teachers of the country, along with the 2,000 who will lose their jobs in January, have no option. Will the Minister for Education and Science put a process in place whereby those in training at present for a higher diploma in education be afforded the opportunity to qualify and receive the diploma?

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** I will reply to this matter on behalf of my colleague and Minister for Education and Science, Deputy Batt O'Keeffe.

I am glad to have this opportunity to update the House on the current position of the probation of primary teachers. As a result of the very significant increase in teaching posts that the Department has provided to primary schools in recent years, the number of applicants for

probation as primary teachers has increased significantly from 1,000 in the school year 2001-02 to 2,639 in the 2007-08 school year.

The Department of Education and Science undertakes a range of activities to ensure that newly qualified teachers are informed about the probationary process. Department inspectors make presentations to all final year students in colleges of education each year. Guidelines for probationary teachers have been published and are widely disseminated among probationary teachers. They are also available on the Department's website. In conjunction with the education centre network, probationary teachers are invited to seminars to inform them of the probationary process in September each year.

Revised application procedures for probation were introduced in 2006. All primary schools are now advised in June each year to notify the Department regarding teachers who may be eligible for probation. A series of dates are nominated for submission of applications. The due date for round one is by the end of June, round two by the middle of September, round three by the beginning of November and round four by the middle of January.

The parameters surrounding the probationary process are outlined in the Department of Education and Science circular 0140/2006. There are two dimensions to the probationary process, namely, service and professional. Normally, probation is completed within a school year. However, circumstances may arise where there is a need to extend the process, whether because of concerns regarding the teacher's competence, or because he or she is absent from school for prolonged periods. While on probation, a teacher is visited by an inspector who provides two reports on the teacher's work and makes the judgment whether the teacher's work is satisfactory. Satisfactory completion of probation is currently a condition required for full registration with the teaching council.

**Deputy Tom Sheahan:** The inspectors are not calling, that is the problem.

**Acting Chairman:** The Minister of State without interruption, please.

**Deputy Máire Hctor:** With regard to the 2008-09 school year, the position is that some 2,445 of a total of 2,537 teachers who registered for probation during rounds one, two and three have been deemed eligible. Of the total number of teachers, some 1,953 have been assigned to inspectors. Priority was first given to the very small number of applicants from the last school year whose probation could not be processed and to the 235 cases from within last year's total where probation was extended or deferred. Priority was then given, as far as possible, to those who had registered in accordance with the various stages of the application process.

The unassigned cases are mainly in the greater Dublin and the east coast areas and this situation has arisen because of the concentration of probationary teachers in newly developing areas. Arrangements are being made at present to assign the remaining 492 cases and it is expected that all the teachers concerned will be notified within the coming weeks.

While a newly qualified teacher has a period of five years to become probated, the Department of Education and Science requires all eligible teachers to register for probation as soon as they take up a teaching post.

The Department of Education and Science keeps the requirement for probation under review from time to time and is doing so at present in the context that the teaching council, established under the Teaching Council Act of 2001, will have responsibility for probation. The teaching council will establish procedures and criteria for probation when the relevant section of the Act is commenced. I thank the Deputies again for giving me the opportunity to update

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the House on the current position of probation of primary teachers and I am pleased to allay the concerns of new primary teachers in Kerry, Wexford and other areas on their participation in the probation process this year.

**Deputy Paul Kehoe:** The concerns will not be allayed.

The Dáil adjourned at 10.40 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 26 November 2008.

## Written Answers.

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**The following are questions tabled by Members for written response and the ministerial replies as received on the day from the Departments [unrevised].**

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 3, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 4 to 66, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 67 to 74, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Infectious Diseases.**

75. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if 68 patients contracted *C. difficile* in Beaumont Hospital in the period 1 July 2008 to 31 October 2008; the number of persons who died solely as a consequence of contracting *C. difficile*; the number of persons who died as a consequence of their condition being complicated by *C. difficile*; the reason no public warning was issued to prospective patients regarding the extent of the outbreak; the action taken by the hospital to address this problem; if the hospital poses a risk to patients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42176/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Every outbreak of a serious infection such as *Clostridium difficile* is a cause of concern and I would like to express my sympathy to any patient and/or family who has been affected by the outbreak. Health Care Associated Infections (HCAIs) continue to be a challenge for healthcare systems worldwide. Ireland is not unique in this regard and tackling HCAIs here, including *C. difficile*, continues to be a priority for the government and for the Health Service Executive (HSE).

I have been informed that, in the period referred to, there were 68 cases of *C. difficile* in Beaumont Hospital. It is known to have been the primary cause of 3 deaths. Of the 68 patients who tested positive, there were 19 deaths from a variety of causes, not necessarily *C. difficile*. Of these patients 7 had *C. difficile* recorded on the death certificate as a contributory cause. In a number of cases the cause of death, including the possible contribution of *C. difficile* infection, is a matter yet to be determined by the Coroner's Court. It is not possible, therefore to say at this time what role *C. difficile* played in those deaths.

Effective measures were taken by the hospital and the outbreak was brought under control as quickly as possible. The outbreak control team monitored the situation. The Public Health Section of the HSE was kept fully informed of the incident and the outbreak was managed by

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Beaumont with strict adherence to the Infection Control Guidelines. All *C. difficile* symptomatic patients in Beaumont Hospital were isolated and their relatives informed of the infection and advised of suitable precautions to prevent its spread. There has also been a programme of intensive cleaning of wards and restrictions on the use of certain antibiotics that may predispose to the 027 strain of *C. difficile*.

Beaumont Hospital issued a public statement by way of a widely circulated press release on 16th September in which it gave detailed information on the outbreak. While accepting that not all HCAs are preventable, I am satisfied that significant steps are being taken to reduce the rates of HCAs generally and to treat them promptly when they occur. I have every confidence in the Infection Control team working at Beaumont Hospital and in the management of that hospital.

### **Hospital Services.**

76. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on the fact that 756 beds in acute hospitals are inappropriately occupied by patients awaiting post-acute step-down, rehabilitative or long-term care; if one of the main reasons these patients are inappropriately placed is due to home care packages being frozen in certain parts of the country; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42506/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor):** The HSE will provide about 4,600 home care packages in 2008, benefiting some 11,500 people. About 8,700 people are in receipt of home care packages at any one time. Home care packages are a relatively new and innovative development and the number of packages has increased very substantially since 2005. Despite this, the demand for home care packages can still exceed the number of packages that can be provided. As with other services, the HSE has to manage the provision of home care packages within the resources available and other competing service demands. A recent HSE analysis of the delays in patients being discharged from acute hospitals showed that 8 patients were on a waiting list for a home care package and a further 35 patients were having their application for a home care package processed.

### **Health Services.**

77. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on proposals by a group (details supplied) to treat this illness more effectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42458/08]

88. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on recent media reporting of the findings of the COPD report, which state that medical care for people with chronic respiratory disease is haphazard, with inconsistent access to essential services in both the community and in hospitals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42542/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 88 together.

I met with the Asthma Society of Ireland recently to hear their proposals for the development of an asthma management programme in Ireland. The proposals included details of successful international initiatives and how they might be applied in this country. My Department has arranged a meeting to include the HSE and the Asthma Society of Ireland to develop the Society's proposals further.



The Health Service Executive (HSE) is currently developing a strategy on Respiratory Disease, including Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and asthma. Work is well advanced on developing a model of care which should reduce the impact of respiratory disease on individuals, their carers and the health system. Currently, there is variation across the country as to how respiratory disease services are provided. The proposed strategy will provide a framework for the delivery of services in line with best international practice to all with respiratory disease regardless of diagnosis or geographic location. The majority of patients with respiratory disease can be managed in primary care, especially if diagnosed early, and the HSE has indicated that the roll-out of Primary Care teams throughout the country will support early diagnosis within the community and primary care setting.

There are a number of examples of effective COPD programmes in Ireland that reflect the management of patients within primary care, hospital care and rehabilitation settings and that emphasise self care and responsibility. Examples of such programmes are to be found at St. James's and Beaumont Hospitals in Dublin, at Cork University Hospital and at Mullingar General Hospital where patients with COPD sustain a better quality of life while reducing hospital admissions. The proposed strategy will build on these initiatives.

### **Medical Cards.**

78. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health and Children when she will publish legislation to remove medical cards from over 70 year olds as a matter of right; the position of those who will have a valid card but who are above the income threshold; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42428/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I intend to publish legislation to withdraw automatic entitlement to a medical card from persons aged 70 or over as soon as possible and to have it enacted during this Dáil session. The vast majority of people aged 70 or over will still qualify for a medical card. All those with gross incomes of €700 a week in the case of a single person or €1,400 a week in the case of a couple will qualify for a medical card. People whose gross income is above these limits may, depending on their personal circumstances, still qualify for a medical card or a GP visit card under the standard means-testing arrangements. All matters relating to this will be dealt with in the legislation.

### **Vaccination Programme.**

79. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will proceed with the introduction of the cervical cancer vaccination programme in view of the fact that it was recommended by the national immunisation advisory board and the Health Information and Quality Authority, who estimate that 52 deaths per annum could be averted by its use; the reason she is no longer confident that the Health Service Executive could procure this vaccine on a cost effective basis; the reason the figure of €100 per vaccine is costed by HIQA yet newspaper reports indicate a cost of €39 per dose in Portugal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42536/08]

128. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children when she will introduce the HPV vaccine for cervical cancer for 12 year old girls in a school-based programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42437/08]

273. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the opinion of a number of eminent consultants and general practitioners that her recent proposal to defer the cervical cancer vaccination programme for 12 year olds is a retrograde step with serious health implications at a time when great emphasis is placed on

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early detection and prevention; that a combination of screening and vaccination is essential in a properly co-ordinated programme; that the proposed saving of €10 million is likely to be eroded by more expensive remedial measures in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42783/08]

274. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on whether the best interests of the taxpayer and medical care are best served by meeting restrictive financial targets or dealing with health requirements in the first instance with particular reference to her recent decision to save €10 million by deferring the cervical cancer vaccination programme which will require increased corrective expenditure in due course; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42784/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 79, 128, 273 and 274 together.

As I have already indicated, I accept fully the expert advice provided to me in support of the introduction of a cervical cancer vaccination programme. However, I also have a responsibility as Minister to consider this and many other competing priorities within the overall resources available to the health services. My immediate responsibility in relation to cervical cancer is to women who have already been exposed to HPV and who may already have precancerous changes or undetected cervical cancer. Vaccination is a long term investment which will deliver improved health outcomes and treatment savings in 15 to 30 years. All of the clinical advice available to me indicates that the national roll-out of a cervical screening programme should be my number one priority. The National Cervical Screening Programme, CervicalCheck, is being implemented with effect from September of this year. The full year cost of this programme is €35m.

In relation to the cost of the vaccine, it is a matter for the Health Service Executive to go through the normal procurement procedures to select an appropriate supplier who can make the vaccine available at the most advantageous price. In its assessment HIQA quoted an estimated figure of €390 per person for the provision of the three-course vaccination programme. The HSE in its report to me estimated the cost at €16m in a full year, assuming purchase cost of the vaccine of €11m and the balance being pay and other administrative costs. The actual purchase price in Ireland can only be established when the HSE has completed the procurement process. I am fully committed to keeping the introduction of a HPV vaccination programme under active review as we proceed to implement the National Cancer Programme.

### **Hospital Services.**

80. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will request the Health Information and Quality Authority to investigate cancer misdiagnoses in Louth and Meath in view of the fact that information is missing from the report of the review of chest X-rays and CT scans (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42473/08]

207. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will request the Health Information and Quality Authority to investigate cancer misdiagnoses in Louth and Meath in view of the fact that information is missing from the report of the review of chest X-rays and CT scans (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42895/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 80 and 207 together.

I will not be requesting a further investigation into this matter, as I am satisfied that the review just completed was thorough and comprehensive. It is not correct to say that significant pieces of information are missing from the report. The review took the form of a clinical look-back. It was carried out to identify any possible ongoing patient safety issues and to provide reassurance to those patients whose chest X-rays and CT scans were assessed by the consultant concerned. The aim was to identify any ongoing harm or disadvantage to patients and ensure delivery of any additional care or treatment required. It is important to note that all of the patients whose diagnosis was delayed had already been diagnosed with cancer before the review began. No further cases of delayed diagnosis were identified as a result of the review.

The reasons for the delay in carrying out the review are set out in the report. An audit of this nature had never been undertaken in these hospitals, and it took time to identify the appropriate approach and deal with the logistics of what would be required. The issue of missing x-rays is dealt with in the report. The report notes that despite extensive searches 29 out of almost 6,000 X-rays and CT scans could not be found. It outlines how these patients were followed up. In some cases, a subsequent similar radiograph was examined. In the remaining cases, patients were offered new examinations. One person who was not an Irish resident could not be traced from the contact details held by the hospital.

In relation to the 23 barium studies that were reviewed, four were deemed “incomplete studies” by the expert reviewing Radiologists. I understand that these patients’ tests are now almost concluded and they are receiving the appropriate follow up care as recommended by the external Consultant Gastroenterologist. At the time of publication, the report noted that this work was ongoing. Rather than delay publication of the review, the report indicates that it will be the subject of an addendum publication as soon as possible.

### **Departmental Bodies.**

81. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will provide details on her decision to dismantle the structure of the Health Service Executive into nine regional health authorities; the advice she has taken on the matter; the reasons for making this change; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42517/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The HSE was set up to manage and deliver health and personal social services. One of the core objectives of the health reform programme was to provide clear lines of accountability and to simplify structures. I have made it clear on many occasions that I want to see health and personal care provided to patients on an integrated basis. I have also made it clear to the HSE that there needs to be accountability for performance throughout the system from the ground up. Reform on this scale is a dynamic process. There must be accountability throughout the system to deliver on national policies and standards. This will not happen unless there is real delegation of authority and accountability to regional and local level.

The HSE has informed the Government that it is proposing to put in place a regional model, within the national structure, to drive operational performance and accountability on the ground. It has not yet finalised its proposals for such a model. This is as much about good governance and consistent delivery as structures. It does not mean a dismantling of the existing structure; on the contrary it is about building on the progress to date in reforming the old health board delivery system. It means that, within a national structure, authority for operational performance is delegated to regional level. It means that people at regional level will be accountable for the resources provided and the services delivered at that level. It means better clinical leadership at national and local level. I believe that people working within the system must know what is expected of them and also have the authority to do their jobs properly.

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I hope it is clear from what I have said that there will not be any regional authorities or any other autonomous structure within or instead of the HSE. There is ongoing discussion between my Department and the HSE about the planned structural changes. I want to be satisfied that the changes improve operational performance and accountability and that they are compatible with the configuration of other public services at local level.

### **Health Service Staff.**

82. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the proposed voluntary retirement scheme for staff of the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42485/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Last July the Government decided that a targeted voluntary early retirement/redundancy scheme would be introduced for the HSE. This decision was reaffirmed by the Minister for Finance in his Budget speech on 14 October. The scheme will initially be concentrated on surplus management and administrative staff. This will be extended to other staff. It will apply to staff at corporate HSE and also to staff at hospital and community level. Discussions are currently underway on the development of such a scheme.

The HSE announced plans in July to modify its structures, including merging the existing hospital and community pillars at national and regional level. The purpose of this is to have clear lines of authority and accountability for delivering services to patients from national to local level, and between hospital and community services. Initiatives which will lead to improved efficiencies and the reduction of administrative duplication at all levels of the HSE will be part of the scheme. One such example is a plan to create single unified organisation structures between a number of hospitals. The aim of this model is to ensure that health service delivery is planned and organised on the basis of a single entity thus optimising the use of resources, streamlining decision making, harvesting the benefits of critical mass and avoiding wasteful duplication.

It makes sense that if two hospitals are going to operate as a unified entity then they do not need duplication of payroll, personnel, IT offices and many other backroom services. This will lead to efficiencies of between 10% — 20% in administration costs. Similar initiatives at community level will also lead to equivalent efficiencies. As we continue to bring together services through primary care teams, this provides an opportunity to reduce levels of administration and to facilitate more clinician to clinician engagement regarding the care of patients. I support the rationale for this model of shared services and believe it is very much in line with the Health Reform Programme.

### **Hospital Services.**

83. **Deputy Kieran O'Donnell** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on the concerns raised by the Irish Cancer Society that average waiting times for colonoscopies could be seven to nine months and that more recent media reporting shows that more than 240 patients are waiting longer than a year for a colonoscopy test; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42498/08]

101. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to address the long waiting times for public patients to have colonoscopies in various hospitals around the country; if she will treat this issue as a matter of priority; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42427/08]

206. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the plans she has to address the long waiting times for public patients to have colonoscopies in various hospitals around the country; if she will treat this issue as a matter of priority; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42596/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 83, 101 and 206 together.

Patients who require colonoscopies are prioritised on the basis of information about their symptoms provided by their GP. Those where cancer is suspected are dealt with on an urgent basis. Accordingly, longer waiting times apply only to patients in which an urgent clinical need has not been identified by their GP. Waiting times for colonoscopies have improved in the last 12 months but I accept there is need for further improvement. In the year to November 2008, there has been a reduction of two thirds in the number of patients waiting for longer than 12 months, and a 31% reduction in the overall number of patients waiting longer than 3 months. The pattern of lengthy waiting times is confined to a small number of hospitals.

I have discussed this with the CEO of the HSE who last week instructed all hospitals where patients are waiting over 3 months for a colonoscopy to refer these patients to the National Treatment Purchase Fund. The NTPF has said that it will quickly arrange colonoscopies for patients who are referred to them. I expect to see a substantial improvement over a short period of time.

#### **Mental Health Services.**

84. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has reconsidered the decision to move the Central Mental Hospital to Thornton Hall in view of the opposition to such a move; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42457/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** In May 2006 the Government approved the development of a new national forensic mental health facility at Thornton Hall, Co. Dublin. The decision was taken in light of the recommendation of the Project Team, that the hospital be relocated to a new purpose built facility in the greater Dublin area, and with regard to the lack of appropriate alternative sites in the Dublin area. The Project Team to progress the re-development of the Central Mental Hospital (CMH) was established in 2003 by the then Minister for Health and Children, and comprised a broad range of stakeholders including the Department of Health and Children, the Health Boards, the National Development Finance Agency, the Irish Prison Service, the Clinical Director and other staff of the CMH, and was chaired by the then East Coast Area Health Board.

While I am aware that concerns have now arisen regarding the proximity of the hospital to the prison, the position is that the redevelopment of the CMH will constitute a separate capital development project, independent of the prison complex to replace Mountjoy, and will be owned and managed by the Health Service Executive. The new hospital will be built on its own campus and will retain its identity as a distinct therapeutic health facility with a separate entrance and address to the prison complex. The new hospital facility will provide a therapeutic, forensic psychiatric service to the highest international standards, in a modern, purpose built building.

The decision to relocate the hospital is consistent with “A Vision for Change” — the report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, which recommends that the CMH should be replaced or remodelled to allow it to provide care and treatment in a modern, up-to-date humane setting and that capacity should be maximised. In the circumstances there are no proposals to revisit the Government Decision of May 2006.



### Medical Cards.

85. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the projected annual administration costs for the new medical card system in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42167/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Health Service Executive has advised my Department that it does not envisage any significant additional annual administration costs for the revised arrangements for eligibility to a medical card for persons aged 70 and over.

### Care of the Elderly.

86. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the way she expects the resource capping of the new nursing home scheme, currently under consideration in the Houses of Oireachtas, will be applied; the position of those who qualify for the scheme but for whom there are no resources; if their rights under the Health Act 1970 will prevail in such circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42453/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hackett):** The existing requirement on the HSE, under the 1970 Health Act as amended, to make available long-term residential care is subject to the overall resources available to the HSE. The new Scheme will also incorporate a resource limit. However, establishing a dedicated and transparent funding stream for the new Scheme will have a number of benefits. The Government will have the opportunity each year to allocate whatever resources it considers appropriate to meet the needs of applicants under the Scheme. It will ensure there is an incentive to seek value for the taxpayer when agreeing prices for nursing home places in both public and private nursing homes. It will highlight the need to avoid inappropriate admissions to long-term care and the importance in that context of continuing to develop and fund alternative community-based support services. It will also allow us to plan better for the long-term care demographic costs facing us as a society.

The resource limit could give rise to waiting lists in a given year but this is also the case with the existing system. The HSE is establishing a central Nursing Home Support Scheme Unit to manage funding for the Scheme and to maintain a national waiting list, if and as necessary. Individuals may also have to wait for a nursing home place for other reasons, for example because they want a particular nursing home or need a particular level or type of care and a suitable bed is not immediately available. The new Nursing Homes Support Scheme will, for the first time, make the arrangements governing financial support for people who need long-term care clear, comprehensive and coherent.

### Hospital Services.

87. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has received a report from the Health Service Executive on contingency plans for the removal of all acute inpatient services from Monaghan General Hospital as confirmed to a meeting of staff on 23 October 2008; if she will intervene to reverse this plan which will remove this health facility for the people of County Monaghan and place pressure on staff and patients at Cavan General Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42459/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I am aware of the initiatives being taken by the Health Service Executive (HSE) to reconfigure hospital services across the Cavan/Monaghan Hospital Group and in the North East Region generally in order to improve safety and standards of care for patients. I understand that as part of the implementation

process senior HSE management briefed staff at Monaghan Hospital along with union and staff representative bodies on the intended changes on 23rd and 24th October last.

The HSE has previously indicated that it plans to transfer acute in-patient services from Monaghan to Cavan and to develop additional services at Monaghan. It is working to ensure that the changes planned are introduced in a structured manner. This requires that specific measures are put in place and bedded down prior to, or in parallel with, the planned transfer of acute care to Cavan General Hospital. In particular it is necessary to establish a Medical Assessment Unit (MAU) at Cavan to help manage an anticipated increase in activity arising from the transfer of acute care. Enhancements in pre-hospital care in the Cavan/Monaghan area are also required, including the development of an enhanced ambulance and pre-hospital thrombolysis service. Alternatives to acute inpatient care are required through the provision of additional packages of care in the Cavan/Monaghan community care area.

A proposed date of 30th November 2008 for the transfer of acute medical care from Monaghan was subject to a number of these dependencies being in place, in particular the establishment of an MAU at Cavan and the development of an enhanced ambulance and pre-hospital thrombolysis service. The HSE now expects these developments to be in place in December 2008 and on that basis it now intends the change-over to take place two months after the Medical Assessment Unit opens. This will remain under review and the transfer will be announced in due course once these key elements have been delivered.

The existing Medical Wards at Monaghan General Hospital will in the future provide rehabilitation and step down services. There will be 26 such beds including 13 for rehabilitation and 13 beds for step down care. This will be in addition to day surgery, outpatient and minor injury services.

*Question No. 88 answered with Question No. 77.*

89. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason the regional orthopaedic unit for the north east is to close; the duration for which it will close; the number of patient procedures that will be affected by the withdrawal of this service; the number of these patients who will end up on National Treatment Purchase Fund treatment lists; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42502/08]

103. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on the closure of wards and services, such as the orthopaedic services in Navan, due to budget shortages; her views on transferring funds from the National Treatment Purchase Fund in order to allow such services to continue where staff are already in place and being paid rather than have the same procedures carried out elsewhere at a higher unit cost; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42447/08]

121. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will intervene to restore services at the north-east regional orthopaedic unit at Our Lady’s Hospital, Navan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42461/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 89, 103 and 121 together.

The Health Service Executive (HSE) indicated earlier this year that it was reviewing the need for cost containment measures to year end to ensure that expenditure across the Louth/Meath Hospital group, including Our Lady’s Hospital, Navan, is managed within the approved budget. The HSE indicated that savings would need to be achieved in a number of

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areas including overtime, on call, agency and locum costs and that it may be necessary to reduce elective activity.

The HSE has been working to maintain elective orthopaedic services as far as possible and funding was reprioritised in this context. Hospital staff were advised by the HSE that with effect from week commencing 6th October 2008 the orthopaedic theatres in the Hospital would not be in use on Wednesdays and Fridays. In addition, as in previous years the Orthopaedic Department was due to close from 12th December 2008 to 31st December 2008. The HSE considered that the revised budget was sufficient to treat those patients already listed for the current year and to allow for additional priority cases to be treated.

Approximately 250 patients had procedures completed in the Orthopaedic Unit between September and 14th November. This level of activity was higher than anticipated and accordingly the HSE has decided that the Unit should close until the 5th of January. Those patients who remain on the treatment schedule will be advised of new treatment dates. The HSE's main focus is to protect emergency work at the Hospital and to ensure that the quality of emergency and other services that are provided is not compromised. Consultants have the opportunity during this period to address outpatient department waiting lists. The HSE has advised that it is not expected that the waiting lists for adult elective in-patient orthopaedic procedures in the North East will breach the national target limit of 6 months.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) is funded from the Vote for my Department. The Fund receives an annual allocation from which it arranges a quantum of in-patient treatments and out-patient appointments for the year, in line with an agreed service plan. The Fund is obliged to adhere to a direction from me to source at least 90% of the treatments it arranges in the private hospital system. The NTPF may purchase a maximum of 10% of its overall capacity from the public hospital system where this does not adversely affect core services. The purchasing of such capacity is necessary in order not to exclude patients whose surgical needs are best met within the public hospital system. There is no provision for the NTPF to transfer funds to the HSE on any other basis.

It has been possible to increase the allocation to the NTPF every year since its inception in 2002 and the numbers of persons who have benefited from the Fund have also risen. From an allocation of €5m in 2002, to €100 million in 2008, the total to date now amounts to €413 million. In 2002, the Fund treated less than 2000 patients. Early in 2008, it reached the milestone of its 100,000th client. This figure represented a combination of approximately 78,000 in-patients and 22,000 out-patients. In 2008, it is planned that 37,000 public patients will benefit under the Fund.

The NTPF has assured my Department that one of its core principles is to secure value for money. The prices paid by the Fund are influenced by factors such as prevailing insurance prices, capacity availability, complexity requirements and geographic considerations. The NTPF negotiates overall prices for procedures with individual private hospitals which includes pre and post operative consults, consultant fees and hospital costs, etc. Reference points used by the NTPF in compiling prices are public hospital casemix costs, estimated insurers' prices, consultant fees and prices proposed by peer hospitals.

90. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children the steps being taken to implement the decision of 26 July 2008 on the reconfiguration of services at Roscommon County Hospital and Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe, County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42172/08]

130. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans for the development of services at Portiuncula Hospital, County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42170/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 90 and 130 together.

The Government is committed to ensuring the delivery of the best quality health services possible, in an effective and efficient way. Ensuring patient safety is of paramount importance, so that people can have confidence in the services and that the best possible patient outcomes can be achieved. It is essential that we prioritise patient safety and quality and that we organise and manage services accordingly. The priority is to provide safe services as close as possible to where people live.

In the past, Roscommon County Hospital and Portiuncula Hospital Ballinasloe have operated independently, with two consultant general surgeons in each hospital. The difficulties faced by Roscommon and Portiuncula in maintaining surgical services independently, and the need for closer co-operation between them, were highlighted by the former Comhairle na nOspidéal in March 2006. Advances in clinical care and ever-increasing levels of specialisation mean that the present model of care faces important practical difficulties, which must be addressed. In the light of these factors, the best way of retaining and developing services at Roscommon and Portiuncula hospitals is for these hospitals to work closely together.

The Health Service Executive has advised that it is proceeding with the proposal for a Joint Department of Surgery and Anaesthesia at Roscommon County Hospital and Portiuncula Hospital, Ballinasloe. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the detailed information sought provided directly to the Deputy

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

91. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to introduce regional structures and integration of acute and PCCC care in these regions; the timeframe for same; the addition or reduction of managerial staff that will result; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42449/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The HSE was set up to manage and deliver health and personal social services. One of the core objectives of the health reform programme was to be provide clear lines of accountability and to simplify structures. I have made it clear on many occasions that I want to see health and personal care provided to patients on an integrated basis. I have also made it clear to the HSE that there needs to be accountability for performance throughout the system from the ground up. Reform on this scale is a dynamic process. There must be accountability throughout the system to deliver on national policies and standards. This will not happen unless there is real delegation of authority and accountability to regional and local level.

The HSE has informed the Government that it is proposing to put in place a regional model, within the national structure, to drive operational performance and accountability on the ground. It has not yet finalised its proposals for such a model. This is as much about good governance and consistent delivery as structures. It means that, within a national structure, authority for operational performance is delegated to regional level. It means that people at regional level will be accountable for the resources provided and the services delivered at that level. It means better clinical leadership at national and local level. I believe that people work-

ing within the system must know what is expected of them and also have the authority to do their jobs properly.

The internal structural changes proposed for the HSE will be considered by the Government when they are finalised and submitted to me by the Board of the Executive. The Government will want to be satisfied that the proposed changes will improve operational performance and accountability, and that they will sit comfortably with the configuration of other public services at local level.

The purpose of the structural changes is to optimise operational capability and to have clear lines of authority and accountability for delivering services to patients from national to local level. The new structure in the HSE will be leaner and there will be a focus on de-layering and more efficient working at all levels. I firmly believe, and I have said this before, that a managed voluntary early retirement/redundancy scheme will have an important role to play in helping to streamline management within the HSE and, as a result, in improving the delivery of health and personal social services to patients and other users of our public system. The HSE is working on a value for money assessment of the case for/impact of such a scheme along with an indication of its expected scale and timing.

### **Health Services.**

92. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the pilot programme to include the services of a dietitian in the regional health centres of three north-west counties, namely, Donegal, Sligo and Roscommon, will be extended to all other counties; and the strategy for the provision of dietitian's services in the community health centres nationwide. [33357/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace): The Health Strategy 2001 sets out a new direction for primary care as the central focus of the delivery of health and personal social services in Ireland. It promotes a team-based approach to service provision which will help to build capacity in primary care and contribute to sustainable health and social development.

The re-configured Primary Community and Continuing Care (PCCC) services will deliver health and social care services that are population based. The model will comprise multi-disciplinary Primary Care Teams (PCTs) providing needs assessed services, both existing and enhanced, to local communities of approximately 8000 people. The PCTs will be supported by Health and Social Care Networks (HSCNs) serving 30 — 50,000 people and will deliver the required services to the client. Both PCTs and HSCNs will have important functions with regard to health promotion, population health and early intervention. These functions will be linked to specific disease and health promotion strategies, with a particular focus on chronic disease management.

The aim of the Community Nutrition & Dietetic Service is to improve the nutritional status of the population belonging to the primary care teams and networks and reduce the incidence of nutrition-related disorders through all life stages. This service is uniquely equipped to achieve a balance between health promotion, population health and primary care services in chronic disease prevention and management.

It is envisaged that dietitians will work at HSCN level and be aligned to specialist teams. It is important for the future that dietitians are fully integrated in the provision of services and are not 'stand alone' or in hospitals. They will be part of multi-disciplinary teams undertaking specific targeted objectives, disease programmes etc. In this regard it may be that the local



health needs assessment will indicate a particularly targeted intervention programme in a specific geographic area and dietitians will be assigned over a number of PCTs. A detailed national mapping exercise was carried out which identified the future Primary Care Teams and Health and Social Care Networks. In addition, each PCT will carry out a local health needs assessment to determine the services required in each team population.

I wish to advise that 14.5 dietetic posts were identified for recruitment as part of the 2006 development posts of which 12.5 posts have been filled. In addition, 13.5 dietetic posts have been identified for recruitment for primary care in 2009. These posts will complement the reconfigured dietetic posts to provide an essential service to Primary Care Teams and Networks.

*Question No. 93 answered with Question No. 74.*

### **Hospital Services.**

94. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the action she has taken or proposes to take to prevent the recurrence of misdiagnosis in respect of cancer patients, including misreading of reports, X-rays and scans; if provisions have been made to deal with these issues thereby restoring public confidence in a most sensitive area of the health service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42468/08]

280. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the steps she has taken to address the ongoing issue of early diagnosis and thorough examination of X-rays, scans or other tests with a view to improving cancer and/or other services generally; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42790/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 94 and 280 together.

An accurate initial medical diagnosis is the foundation upon which all subsequent healthcare decisions are based. Unfortunately, research studies and experience have demonstrated the extent to which misdiagnosis in cancer cases occurs. It is important to note that radiology and other diagnostic procedures used to identify the presence of cancer are not precise, error-free scientific techniques. International studies suggest that the incidence of discrepancies and errors in general radiology practice lies between 2% and 20%. This range of errors is a worldwide phenomenon and includes all radiology departments.

The health service is taking very seriously all cases of misdiagnosis and is implementing measures to minimise their recurrence. Clinical governance within healthcare systems reduces the likelihood of errors occurring and increases the likelihood of detecting those errors which do occur. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is fully committed to driving change and, in partnership with its clinical staff, doing all it can to enhance patient safety at all levels. It will recruit a new National Director of Clinical Care in 2009 to oversee this process.

A number of other actions are underway drawing on the experience of previous reviews. These include assuring compliance of service providers with key performance indicators, especially in the area of breast cancer, for which there are national quality assurance standards. The HSE put in place national guidelines in May this year regarding the level and recruitment of locums. These guidelines will continue to be reviewed and monitored. While errors in radiology cannot be eliminated, the HSE will monitor radiology practice to ensure that appropriate standards of practice are in place and the risk of misdiagnosis is minimised.

### **Cancer Screening Programme.**

95. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Health and Children when BreastCheck will be rolled out in the remaining counties in the south and west that do not have the screening programme. [42436/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Deputy's specific question in relation to the roll out of BreastCheck to the remaining counties in the South and the West is the responsibility of the National Cancer Screening Service. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Chief Executive Officer of the Service to respond directly to the Deputy in this regard.

### **Accident and Emergency Services.**

96. **Deputy P. J. Sheehan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a culture of acceptance of trolley waits in hospital accident and emergency departments exists within her Department; the reason hospitals have not met trolley waiting time targets as set out in the ED task force report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42557/08]

116. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the steps she has taken or proposes to take to relieve the overcrowding at hospital accident and emergency departments and admissions during the winter months; if it is intended to augment front line staff in these areas; if she has in mind proposals to provide extra beds in line with seasonal requirements; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42467/08]

278. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the action she has taken to ensure the availability of sufficient bed accommodation and accident and emergency facilities at all hospitals throughout the country with particular reference to increased requirements of the winter months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42788/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 96, 116 and 278 together.

I do not agree that a culture of acceptance of trolley waits exists. We have made considerable improvements since 2005 in improving the delivery of services in Emergency Departments. For example, the average daily number of patients awaiting admission at 2 pm fell from 179 in 2005 to 92 in 2007. The figures over the first ten months of 2008 show an increase to 103 in the numbers awaiting admission. Patient waits of longer than 24 hours, following a decision to admit, have been totally eliminated in the case of 21 of the 34 hospitals, while a further 8 have infrequent waits of that duration. In addition, the vast majority of hospitals (25) are fully or substantially compliant with the revised 12 hour target introduced in October last year.

The main problems are confined to a small number of hospitals and the HSE continues to work closely with those hospitals to address the underlying issues and to effect improvements. Hospitals need to improve their admission and discharge processes, to ensure that people are appropriately admitted and that their care is efficiently managed, both during their hospital stay and their follow up care in the community. Steps are being taken to ensure that patients have an expected date of discharge within 24 hours of admission, that patients can be discharged in a more proactive manner at weekends and that communication between the hospital system and primary care services is improved. Implementation of a new Code of Practice on Discharge Planning has commenced. This should help to deliver further improvements in overall bed utilisation.

As part of the Winter Initiative, Hospital Managers have been asked to develop an action plan to reduce the average length of stay in hospital of patients, based on the findings of the Bed Utilisation Study and to increase the rate of Day Surgery in line with best international practice. The HSE is also working to increase long-stay capacity and to free up beds in acute hospitals over the Winter period. This is being matched by an intensive focus on improved processes and efficiency.

I believe that setting clear targets for improvement and measuring performance against these targets helps to drive further improvements in services. My Department has asked the HSE to set a revised maximum waiting time target of no more than 6 hours from registration to admission or discharge in 2009 for all patients attending Emergency Departments. The HSE has also been asked to introduce a measurement system in 2009 to record the total waiting time for all such patients. My Department has asked the Executive's Parliamentary Affairs Division to reply directly to the Deputies on the additional issues raised.

### **Medical Cards.**

97. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the projected net annual cost of the new medical card system for over 70 year olds; the net budgetary savings introduced by the new system; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42168/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Government's proposal, to be effected in legislation, is that, with effect from 1st January 2009, the income thresholds for entitlement to a medical card for those aged 70 and over will be €700 (gross) per week for a single person and €1,400 (gross) per week for a couple. It is expected that 95% (or 19 out of 20) of those aged 70 or over will continue to hold a medical card under the new arrangements announced by the Government. It is estimated that this will result in a saving of approximately €20 million in 2009, taking account of GP capitation fees, drug costs, superannuation costs, etc.

In relation to the introduction of a single GP capitation rate, the Government appointed Mr. Eddie Sullivan to make recommendations on a new single annual capitation fee to be paid to general practitioners in respect of medical card holders aged 70 and over in the community. Mr. Sullivan recommended a single capitation fee of €290, which would come into effect, subject to the proposed legislative changes, from 1st January 2009. Mr. Sullivan's recommendations were accepted by Government on 29th October 2008. Mr. Sullivan estimated that this would generate savings of the order of €16 million in 2009.

The Government believe that there is potential for significant savings of at least €64 million in drug costs, without compromising on patient care. Accordingly, it has decided to establish a process under the chairmanship of Dr. Michael Barry, to develop recommendations for good practice which will secure safe and effective prescribing for patients, while maximising the potential for economy in the use of public funds. The initial report from Dr. Barry will be prepared by 1st December 2008. The most recent figures provided to my Department by the Health Service Executive show 351,203 persons aged 70 and over with a medical card as at 31st October, 2008. The current estimated average cost of a medical card for a person aged 70 or over is approximately €2,360 per annum.

### **National Drugs Strategy.**

98. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the growing number of people here who are dependent on methadone programmes; if she has plans to provide more alternatives for those who are addicted to illegal drugs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42443/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): A methadone protocol was introduced in Ireland in 1998 to address the problem of opiate addiction, particularly addiction to heroin. Methadone maintenance is internationally recognised as a valid and successful part of an integrated response to the drug problem. At the end of September 2008 there were 8,670 opiate users on the Central Treatment List (CTL) for methadone substitution treatment compared to 8,398 clients in September 2007.

The HSE has been working to increase the number of places available for treatment, in order to reduce the waiting time for those seeking treatment in line with a recommendation in the Mid Term Review of the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008. For example, the HSE has been seeking to increase the number of general practitioners (GPs) and pharmacists involved in the methadone treatment protocol in order to provide a locally based client centred service. Currently, there are 255 GPs and 456 pharmacists involved in the delivery of services under the methadone treatment protocol compared to 242 GPs and 425 pharmacists involved in September 2007.

The drugs Subutex and Suboxone, which contain buprenorphine, can be used as alternatives to methadone for the treatment of opiate dependency. A feasibility study on the prescribing and dispensing of these drugs in certain specialist addiction clinics and in a selected number of community settings will commence shortly. Prescribing and dispensing at the study sites will be evaluated before a decision is made on whether to extend the use of these drugs to the entire community.

In line with recommendations in the Report of the Working Group on Drugs Rehabilitation published by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the HSE is in the process of appointing a national rehabilitation co-ordinator who will chair the National Drug Rehabilitation Implementation Committee which is being established. These developments will facilitate the roll-out of further actions in the Rehabilitation Strategy to support drug users along their care pathway towards re-integration into their community.

### **Departmental Staff.**

99. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has plans to reduce the number of staff within her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42456/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Administrative Budget for my Department in 2009 has been set at €43.10m which represents a reduction of 8% (€3.8m) over the original allocation for 2008. This reduction consists of a 4% cut in payroll costs, a 24% cut across general administrative budget areas such as office premises expenses and training and a 50% cut in Departmental consultancy costs for 2009. Management of this budget will require control of all costs associated with running a Department and there are a number of options available to achieve payroll and other administrative savings. In the staffing area, this may include intentionally delaying the filling of vacancies, the non-filling of certain vacancies, reviewing all temporary contract and seconded staff agreements and reviewing the internal organisation of work processes to ensure the best allocation of existing resources.

### **Proposed Legislation.**

100. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to introduce legislation to regulate stem cell research; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42439/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): At present there is no legislation in Ireland governing the intervention in the natural process of creating human life; instead, medical practice is governed by guidelines issued by the Medical Council. My Department is developing an appropriate regulatory framework for the area of Assisted Human Reproduction, which will also encompass the area of human embryonic stem cell research. This work involves, inter alia, examining the approaches to regulation in other jurisdictions and considering the ethical and legal issues that arise. It will also take into account the report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children on this area — when completed — and any judgment of the Supreme Court in the RvR (frozen embryo) case.

*Question No. 101 answered with Question No. 83.*

### **Services for People with Disabilities.**

102. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 248 of 21 October 2008, when the national rehabilitation strategy group will hold the public consultation on the policy framework for rehabilitation and the provision of rehabilitation services; the average waiting time for accessing rehabilitation services provided in the National Rehabilitation Hospital; the number of people in acute hospital beds across the country who are awaiting admission to the National Rehabilitation Hospital and the length of time they have been waiting; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42470/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): Public contribution from individuals, organisations and professional bodies to the policy and strategy development process will be invited through the media in the coming month. Information regarding average waiting times for accessing rehabilitation services and the number of people in acute hospital beds around the country relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004.

I have been advised by the Health Service Executive that the average waiting time for accessing rehabilitation services provided in the National Rehabilitation Hospital is 70 days. This figure relates to people discharged from inpatient services at the hospital during the first three quarters of 2008. The Health Service Executive also reports that there are currently 153 people on the waiting list for admission to the National Rehabilitation Hospital. These are people who have been referred, assessed and deemed ready for admission by a consultant. The waiting list does not distinguish between patients referred from the acute hospital setting, home or nursing homes.

*Question No. 103 answered with Question No. 89.*

### **Hospital Services.**

104. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Health and Children the proposals that have been brought to her attention to transfer maternity hospitals in Dublin to the campuses of acute general hospitals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42433/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I take it that the Deputy is referring to the findings of the independent review of maternity services in the Greater Dublin Area, undertaken for the Health Service Executive, by KPMG. That review was completed recently and the findings have been presented to the Joint Standing Committee of the three Dublin Maternity Hospitals. The report indicates that optimal patient outcomes can best be achieved by locating maternity services with adult acute services. The Report also supports the



location on the one site of adult, paediatric and maternity services to give better access to on-site paediatric services when fetal, neonatal surgery and other interventions are required.

The study concluded that services at the Rotunda Hospital should move to the Mater Hospital campus, services at the Coombe should move to Tallaght and services at the National Maternity Hospital should move to St Vincent's University Hospital. The National Hospitals Office recently met with the Chief Executive Officers of the relevant Dublin Academic Teaching Hospitals (Mater, St Vincent's and Tallaght) to discuss the implications of the report for their sites.

The Report will now be presented to the Boards of these three hospitals. A presentation of the findings of the report is also scheduled for next month for a wider group of stakeholders that engaged with KPMG during the review, including the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and consumer groups. The HSE intends, following further feedback sessions, to publish the report on its website.

### **General Practitioner Services.**

105. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of general practitioners per head of population here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42465/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The number of General Practitioners (GPs) who are in active practice is about 2,500. This equates to approximately 0.5 GPs per 1000 of the population, a ratio that is low by comparison with other EU and OECD countries. I recognise there is a need to increase the number of GPs to take account of the projected growth in population, the ageing of the population and the ageing of the GP workforce.

The Government has taken a number of initiatives to address this. In February 2006 we announced that the number of medical school places for EU students would be more than doubled from 305 to 725. The number of 305 places had been in place since 1978 through successive governments. There is now a new graduate entry stream providing an additional 240 places and increasing the number of EU undergraduate places by 180. A total of 265 extra medical school places have been provided between 2006 and 2008 for Irish/EU students in the existing undergraduate courses and in the new graduate entry programme.

In 2004, it was agreed with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP) that the number of GP vocational training places should be increased from 84 to 150 on a phased basis over three years. I am informed by the HSE that to date, 36 of the additional 66 places have been provided, bringing the total number of training places annually to 120. The further increase to 150 places is being kept under review by the HSE in the light of the current budgetary situation.

There are currently 12 GP vocational training programmes in the State and these programmes are accredited by the ICGP. In July 2008, the number of trainees participating in these programmes increased from 376 to 449. The HSE has indicated that there have been capacity issues within these training programmes and that this is the principal reason that it has not been possible to increase the number of training places as quickly as had been hoped. The HSE continues to work with the ICGP with a view to addressing these issues.

A joint Department of Health and Children / HSE working group on workforce planning was established in June 2006. It also includes representatives of the Departments of Finance and Education and Science, and the Higher Education Authority. Research is currently being

undertaken by FÁS on behalf of the joint working group. This research will analyse the labour market for 12 healthcare grades and professions, including GPs, and will help determine future GP training needs. FÁS is expected to complete its work in February 2009 when it will report its findings to the joint working group.

### **Hospital Services.**

106. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the hospital services which have been curtailed or suspended due to end of year cutbacks or budget over-runs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42462/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

107. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has emergency plans to provide step-down beds in order to enable acute hospitals to discharge the estimated 756 patients who are ready for discharge but have no suitable place to go; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42438/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): Over the past number of years, my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children, has been working on a number of initiatives to enhance long-stay capacity and, by extension, to facilitate the timely discharge of patients from the acute sector. Firstly, the long-term residential care fast-track initiative, which commenced in 2007 and is continuing until 2010, aims to provide 860 new intermediate and long-term residential care beds. The latest information received from the Health Service Executive indicates that 188 beds were provided in 2007 and that 233 and 422 are to be provided in 2008 and 2009 respectively. The final 17 beds will be provided in 2010. Of the 860 beds, 75 are in the HSE West, 316 are in the HSE South, 242 are in the HSE Dublin North East and 227 are in the HSE Mid-Leinster.

Secondly, the Minister is committed to introducing a new system of financial support for those in need of long-term residential care. The new Nursing Homes Support Scheme will ensure that nursing home care is affordable for those who need it regardless of whether they enter a public or private nursing home. This is significant as information provided by the acute sector indicates that the single biggest reason for delayed discharges from acute settings relates to a patient or their family requesting a publicly-funded bed. The new scheme should ensure that private nursing home care will be affordable and accessible for such patients and their families. The Minister is currently bringing the legislation to provide for the new scheme through the Houses of the Oireachtas with a view to implementing the scheme in 2009. These initiatives are in addition to significant investment since 2006 in community-based long-term care supports.

With regard to the immediate position, the HSE is working to increase long-stay capacity to free up beds in acute hospitals over the winter period. However, the increase will be limited and is being matched by an intensive focus on improved processes and efficiency. Hospitals need to improve their admission and discharge processes, to ensure that people are appropriately admitted and that their care is efficiently managed, both during their hospital stay and their follow up care in the community. Steps are being taken to ensure that patients have an

expected date of discharge within 24 hours of admission, that patients can be discharged in a more proactive manner at weekends and that communication between the hospital system and primary care services is improved. Implementation of a new Code of Practice on Discharge Planning has commenced. This should help to deliver further improvements in overall bed utilisation.

### **Proposed Legislation.**

108. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to amend the Competition Act 2002 in order to be able to engage more effectively with groups (details supplied) and other such representative bodies; her proposals to amend the Act in place; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42452/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): On 21st October 2008, the Government announced its intention to pursue appropriate amendments to Section 4 of the Competition Act 2002 to enable the representative body of GPs, the Irish Medical Organisation, to represent its members in negotiations with the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health and Children in respect of the services provided to the public health service in a manner consistent with the public interest. The legal provision to be made will be subject to consistency with EU competition rules.

The case of adopting a similar approach to other professional representative bodies would need to be examined in the light of public interest considerations, if any, arising for other professional groups and the scope to adopt such an approach within the confines of EU competition law. Work is underway between my Department and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on the issue of amending Section 4 of the Competition Act 2002, in a manner consistent with EU competition law and national policy.

### **Medical Cards.**

109. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children the costings that have been done on the proposal for a common capitation fee to general practitioners in respect of all medical card patients who are over 70 years old; the way that this differs from the overall cost for such patients prior to the changes proposed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42431/08]

122. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the outcome of discussions with representatives of general practitioners on proposals to agree a fee for all over 70 year old patients instead of the current arrangement whereby they are paid a higher capitation payment for those who qualified through automatic right than for those who qualified through a means test; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42430/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 109 and 122 together.

A capitation rate of €640 per annum is currently paid to GPs for the provision of service under the GMS contract for each person who qualifies for a medical card for the first time, on the basis of being aged 70 years and over in the community. In respect of persons aged 70 years and over in the community who had at some time previously held a medical card, the GP is paid a rate varying between €139.59 and €244.64 depending on the cardholder's gender and distance from the GP's surgery.

Following the Government decision to withdraw automatic entitlement to a medical card from persons aged 70 and over with effect from 1st January 2009 and to raise the income thresholds for persons in that age cohort, the Government appointed Mr. Eddie Sullivan to make recommendations on a new single annual capitation fee to be paid to general practitioners in respect of medical card holders aged 70 and over in the community, which would come into effect on 1st January 2009. Having considered in excess of seventy submissions from interested parties, including the Irish Medical Organisation, and taking into account the existing fees and cost structure, Mr. Sullivan recommended a single capitation fee of €290, which he estimated would generate savings of the order of €16 million in 2009. Mr. Sullivan's recommendations were accepted by Government on 29th October 2008 and his report has been published.

### **Medicinal Products.**

110. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has plans to address the growing problem of addiction to legal drugs here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42444/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Medical Products (Control of Placing on the Market) Regulations, 2007 (SI No. 540 of 2007) requires that all medicinal products (drugs) must be authorised by the Irish Medicines Board prior to being placed on the market in Ireland. During the assessment of a medicinal product, the IMB determines the appropriate classification and route of sale. Medicinal products that, if used incorrectly, are likely to present a substantial risk of abuse or to lead to addiction are confined to prescription control.

In addition, the Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations 2003 (SI No. 540 of 2003, and amendments) regulate the prescription and dispensing of medicinal products. Under these Regulations, the product information (summary of product characteristics [SPC] and package leaflet [PL]) for medicinal products must contain detailed information, including relevant warnings and precautions relating to the use of the product. For example, the benzodiazepine class of drugs including Valium (diazepam) are subject to prescription and the PL states that prolonged use may lead to tolerance. The PL also states that Valium is intended for short term treatment (2-4 weeks) and that it is not suitable for long term use. Using the drug in this way reduces the risk of dependence.

In relation to medicinal products that are available without a prescription i.e. over the counter, (OTC) medicines, these also include detailed information regarding their use and relevant warnings and precautions in the PL provided with the product. In the case of OTC medicines which can carry a risk of dependence, the PL must include explicit warning statements regarding the risk of physical and psychological dependence (addiction). The IMB has highlighted the importance of doctors and pharmacists discussing the use of all medications, including non-prescribed medicinal products, with patients/consumers, including the need to strictly adhere to the recommended dosage and duration of use and to avoid prolonged use, which is associated with dependence.

The Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 and 1984 and the Regulations made thereunder regulate the prescription and dispensing of controlled drugs. Following concerns about over prescribing of a category of controlled drugs, the Benzodiazepine Working Group reported in 2002. Good Practice Guidelines for GPs on the prescribing of benzodiazepines were circulated and GPs can now monitor their own prescription of benzodiazepines against prescription by their peers. In addition the Irish College of General Practitioners has a training module on the prescribing of benzodiazepines in place.

### Care of the Elderly.

111. **Deputy Michael D’Arcy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she plans to allow a full debate on the legislation for the proposed fair deal scheme for funding nursing home care; when it is planned to do same; when the scheme will be implemented in view of the fact that the uncertainty surrounding the scheme is causing anxiety to elderly people; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33024/08]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor): Both my colleague, the Minister for Health and Children, and I intend to allow a full debate on the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Bill 2008. The Minister introduced the Second Stage of the Bill in the Dáil on 13 November and it is her intention to progress the legislation through the Houses of the Oireachtas with a view to implementing the scheme in 2009. As the introduction of the scheme is contingent upon the successful passage through the Houses, and enactment of the legislation, it is not possible to be more specific at this stage. Finally, it should be noted that, following enactment of the legislation, the National Treatment Purchase Fund will have to agree prices with private nursing home providers prior to the full implementation of the scheme.

### Hospital Staff.

112. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Health and Children the plans there are to increase the number of paediatric surgeons here in view of the small number currently employed in comparison to similar countries; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42442/08]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### Long-Term Illness Scheme.

113. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Health and Children the progress that has been made in the review of the long-term illness scheme; her views on including other suitable illnesses within the terms of the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42434/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Under the 1970 Health Act, the Health Service Executive may arrange for the supply, without charge, of medicines and medical and surgical appliances to people with specified conditions, for the treatment of that condition, through the Long Term Illness Scheme (LTI). The LTI does not cover GP fees or hospital co-payments. The conditions are: mental handicap, mental illness (for people under 16 only), phenylketonuria, cystic fibrosis, spina bifida, hydrocephalus, diabetes mellitus, diabetes insipidus, haemophilia, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophies, parkinsonism, conditions arising from thalidomide and acute leukaemia. There are currently no plans to extend the list of eligible conditions.

### Food Labelling.

114. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regard-



ing the development of national food labelling legislation; the action being taken to create common nutrition guideline labelling across the food industry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [37494/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace):** At present general EU food labelling legislation is harmonised by Council Directive 2000/13/EC, while nutrition labelling is covered by Directive 40/96. Both have been transposed into Irish law. The former requires that the labelling of pre-packaged foodstuffs must be clear and must not mislead the consumer. The nutrition labelling legislation makes allowance for nutrition labelling on a voluntary basis only, although it becomes compulsory when a nutrition or health claim is made in the labelling, presentation or advertising of a foodstuff or when vitamins or minerals are voluntarily added to foods.

In January 2008, the European Commission presented its proposals on the updating and harmonising of labelling legislation. The draft proposal consolidates and updates general food and nutrition labelling. The main points of the proposal are mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling (for energy value, amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrates with specific reference to sugars and salt), allergen labelling, alcohol labelling (excluding wine, beer and spirits, which are being dealt with separately), text size, allowance for use of GDAs or Traffic Lights labelling, Country of Origin labelling and a provision for National Schemes.

Ireland submitted its position paper on the proposal to the European Commission on 5th November 2008. This paper took into account the views of key stakeholders including the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, consumers, industry and health professionals. The paper outlined the Irish position on key issues. With regard to the nutrition labelling section of the proposal, Ireland

- supported the use of “per portion” expression alone in certain cases;
- did not support the proposal for a minimum font size of 3mm for display of mandatory particulars; and
- supported the inclusion of trans fats, fibre, folic acid, calcium, iron and vitamin D in the mandatory nutrition declaration.

A European Union Working Group on Foodstuffs has held a number of meetings since March 2008, to discuss the proposal. Irish representatives will continue to attend meetings of this Group to ensure that Ireland’s position on this proposal is taken into account.

While no formal timeframe has been set for this work, it is expected that the formulation of a Regulation will not be finalised during 2008.

#### **National Treatment Purchase Fund.**

115. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there has been a value for money audit carried out on the National Treatment Purchase Fund; the outcome of same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42448/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has assured me of its commitment to ensuring value for money so that as many patients as possible are treated from the funding allocated to it. To this end the NTPF compares the prices which it pays with treatment costs in public hospitals and, where known, the prices being paid by health insurers to private hospitals.

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The financial statements of the NTPF are subject to audit by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C & AG) on an annual basis. The Dáil Committee of Public Accounts, in its Third Interim Report on the 2006 Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General, noted that the C & AG has access to information (which cannot be disclosed publicly because it is commercially sensitive) about the prices paid by the NTPF for procedures undertaken in private hospitals. The Committee noted also that the C & AG has agreed to carry out a review of these areas as part of his ongoing audit of the NTPF's expenditure. In the circumstances I have no plans to undertake a separate value-for-money exercise in respect of the NTPF.

*Question No. 116 answered with Question No. 96.*

### **Mental Health Services.**

117. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the timeframe for implementing the recommendations in A Vision for Change; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42426/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy, 'A Vision for Change', provides a framework for action to develop modern, high quality mental health services over a seven to ten year period. Implementation of 'A Vision for Change' is primarily the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. Earlier this year, the HSE approved an Implementation Plan which sets out six key priorities for 2008 and 2009. They include:

- Catchment Area Definition and Clarification
- Modernisation of the Mental Health Infrastructure
- Community Based Mental Health Teams
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Teams
- Mental Health Services for People with Intellectual Disability
- Mental Health Information Systems

A more detailed implementation plan for the period 2009 and beyond is being developed by the HSE and will be submitted to me before the end of this year.

In January 2008, the Office for Disability and Mental Health was established. The Office will bring a new impetus to the implementation of the Report through working in partnership with the HSE and other stakeholders to achieve implementation of agreed targets.

118. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a survey commissioned by a support group (details supplied) ascertained that parents of children with attention deficit hyperactive disorder wait an average of four years before securing a diagnosis for their child and that as a consequence there is a substantial delay in providing appropriate services for such children; and the steps she will take to ensure that such assessments and diagnoses are more speedily undertaken and essential services provided. [42173/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** I am not aware of the particular survey referred to by the Deputy. As the rest of the question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the

responsibility of the Health Service Executive, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to have the matter investigated and a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services.**

119. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the Teamwork report on hospitals in the mid-west will be published; the reason it has not been published; if it has been approved by the board of the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42425/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Health Service Executive commissioned Horwath Consultants in association with Teamwork Management Services in February 2007 to examine the arrangements for the provision of acute hospital services in the Mid West with a view to identifying the best configuration of such services in the region including arrangements for A&E, critical care, acute medicine and surgery, together with diagnostic services so that the highest quality of care can be delivered to the population of the region.

The work of the consultants will act as one of the inputs to decisions on how best to reconfigure acute services in the Mid West region. The Government and the Executive are committed to ensuring that the approach to re-organisation of services is carried out in consultation with the key stakeholders and that each element is progressed incrementally. I believe that it is important to work with health professionals and other interested parties to secure an increasing set of improvements over time. This approach will, I am confident, produce the best outcome for patients. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to provide the detailed information sought directly to the Deputy.

### **Mental Health Services.**

120. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the planned new child and adolescent psychiatric beds will be in place by the end of 2008; the plans in place for 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42451/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. The Executive, therefore, is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

*Question No. 121 answered with Question No. 89.*

*Question No. 122 answered with Question No. 109.*

### **Hospitals Building Programme.**

123. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health and Children the timeframe for a new major acute hospital for the north east; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42446/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The report of a consultancy firm, commissioned by the HSE to carry out an independent study on a possible location for a new Regional Hospital in the North East, was considered by the Board of the HSE last April. The

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contents of the report were noted by the Board. No decision has been taken to date by the Government or by the HSE on the location of the new hospital. The HSE has advised that the resource implications of a new Regional Hospital are under consideration.

### **Health Services.**

124. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health and Children the progress that has been made on commitments given on the provision of dedicated beds and other care services for people with cystic fibrosis; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42450/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** In 2006 and 2007, additional revenue funding of €6.78 million (€4.78m in 2006, €2m in 2007) was provided to the Health Service Executive (HSE) to develop services for people with cystic fibrosis. The Department is advised that 44 additional staff dealing with cystic fibrosis have been appointed to date across a number of hospitals, including St Vincent's, Beaumont, Temple Street, Crumlin, Tallaght, Cork University Hospital, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. The necessary funding was provided to facilitate the recruitment of a further 37 staff nationally.

The HSE was asked to place a particular focus on the development of services at the National Adult Tertiary Referral Centre at St. Vincent's Hospital. A number of capital projects have recently been completed at the hospital and have helped to improve facilities. These include a new ambulatory care centre, the refurbishment of St. Camillus Ward, and a new Accident and Emergency Department which includes single room accommodation. The refurbishment of accommodation to provide eight single en-suite rooms for patients with cystic fibrosis has also been completed and the beds are now operational. In the longer term, a new ward block is to be built and will include 120 replacement beds in single en-suite accommodation. The new facility will accommodate cystic fibrosis patients and will include appropriate isolation facilities.

Beaumont Hospital operates as a regional centre in providing services to adults with cystic fibrosis. In the 2008 Budget, a special allocation of €2.5m capital funding was provided to enable Beaumont hospital to provide out patient facilities for cystic fibrosis patients. The HSE advise that this facility is scheduled for completion in the second quarter of 2009. Patients with cystic fibrosis will also benefit from additional single room capacity in the new Medical Admissions Unit at Beaumont Hospital which is due for completion shortly.

Specialist paediatric services for children with cystic fibrosis are provided at the National Tertiary Centre at Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin. Temple Street Hospital, which provides additional services in this area, is currently developing a dedicated respiratory unit for the ambulant care of cystic fibrosis and respiratory patients. It will include a new respiratory laboratory, treatment room, consulting rooms and walk in access to clinical nurse specialists. The unit is due to open in early 2009.

Paediatric services for persons with cystic fibrosis are also provided at other centres e.g. Tallaght, and on a regional basis at centres including Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and Drogheda. The majority of paediatric cystic fibrosis care is delivered on an ambulatory care basis. I expect that there will be further improvements in services for people with cystic fibrosis in 2009.

### **Services for People with Disabilities.**

125. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on statements contained in the Comptroller and Auditor General Annual Report 2007 that disability and mental health areas contributed €53 million to budget overruns in the hospital sector of the Health Service Executive; the efforts she is making to ensure that all funding allocations

in respect of disability related services under the multi-annual investment programme are used for these services; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42469/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** I understand that the HSE have replied directly to the Deputy on this matter.

### **Departmental Capital Projects.**

126. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health and Children the capital projects being planned within her Department for commencement within the next five years; if she has had discussions within her Department or with the Health Service Executive on the possible postponement of planned capital projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42445/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The revised health sector capital funding provision for the remainder of the National Development Plan 2007-2013 was indicated in the 2009 Estimates for Public Services and Summary Public Capital Programme which was published in October. The process of reviewing and agreeing plans for capital expenditure over this period, including all necessary communication between officials of my Department and the health agencies, is currently progressing. Details regarding the projects to be progressed by the Health Service Executive will be made available when this process is complete.

### **Nursing Education.**

127. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will engage with the Department of Education and Science on the proposed reduction in places in higher education nursing courses to find ways in which these places can be retained; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42441/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The O.E.C.D. Public Management Reviews: IRELAND — Towards an Integrated Public Service (2008) in its case study: Reconfiguration of the Health Services notes—

“One statistical characteristic of Ireland is its very large number of practising nurses (15.2 per 1,000), which is twice the OECD average, just below Norway (15.4) but much higher than UK (9.1) or France (7.7). The number of nurses graduating every year is also high (14.4), above Norway (10.1), UK (8.6) or France (5.9). This contradicts the universal perception of a “shortage” of nurses, held by health actors in Ireland who were interviewed by the OECD. Partial explanations come from the fact that some 40% of nurses in Ireland work part-time (as compared for example with 26% in France for nurses working in hospitals).”

In outlining the detail of the 2009 Estimates for the health services, I announced that the H.S.E. is to deliver economy savings of €115m as part of Budget 2008. Among other matters, this includes a reduction in nurse training expenditure in 2009. The total cost of nurse education to the health services, both undergraduate and post-registration, is currently in excess of €117 million per annum.

The number of places on the undergraduate nursing degree programmes will be reduced by 310 places from next year. This reduction was finalised following consultation between my Department and the Department of Education and Science. From next year we will be providing 1,570 undergraduate places in the following courses:



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	Number of Places
General Nursing	860 places
Intellectual Disability Nursing	180 places
Psychiatric Nursing	290 places
Midwifery	140 places (no reduction)
Children's and General Nursing Integrated	100 places (no reduction)
Total	1,570

The reduction in places, which will result in savings of €1.65 million approximately in 2009 and €3.3 million from 2010 onwards, will be effected mainly in those areas that are not experiencing nurse shortages.

Nurses trained under the apprenticeship and diploma models undertaking part-time degree courses have been able to apply to their employer to have their course fees paid in return for a service commitment to the public health service. This initiative has been in operation since 2001 and was due for completion before now. It will no longer be available for new entrants from 1 January 2009, resulting in a saving of €2m next year and about €3.8m per annum from 2010 onwards. Further savings of €1.35m in 2009 will be achieved by reducing places on the various post-registration courses in specialist clinical practice. These three cost saving measures will produce savings of €5m in 2009 and €8.45m in future years, and I have no plans to alter this decision.

The investment in the undergraduate nursing degree programmes is a substantial and significant element of health service expenditure. My Department in cooperation with the HSE is initiating a study to review the clinical, educational, contractual and financial arrangements in place for the general, psychiatric and intellectual disability pre-registration nursing programmes established in 2002. (The undergraduate midwifery and integrated children's and general nursing programmes are outside the terms of the review as they are relatively new programmes.)

The review will assess the VFM achieved from monies allocated and utilised in the degree programme and will inform the scope for alternative approaches to nurse education. The review will also provide a systematic analysis of what is actually being achieved by expenditure under both capital and revenue headings and will provide sound evidence and a critical analysis of the preparation of nurses for practice. The findings will provide a basis to inform decision makers on the future direction of pre-registration nursing education programmes in Ireland. The review will be carried out in the context of nursing recruitment and retention patterns, future workforce projections and the overarching health service reform agenda.

*Question No. 128 answered with Question No. 79.*

### **National Drugs Strategy.**

129. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the recruitment of a senior rehabilitation co-ordinator and the establishment of the national drugs rehabilitation implementation committee; the estimated time scale for the delivery of both; the priorities of both the co-ordinator and the committee upon establishment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33555/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility

of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

*Question No. 130 answered with Question No. 90.*

### **Medical Cards.**

131. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health and Children the administrative and other arrangements that have been put in place to implement the changes to the over 70 year olds medical card entitlement announced in budget 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42463/08]

210. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Minister for Health and Children when she will introduce the changes she proposes to medical card eligibility for those over 70 years; if she will contact all those who hold a medical card; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42124/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 131 and 210 together.

The Government's proposal, to be effected in legislation, is that automatic entitlement to a medical card for persons aged 70 and over will end on 31st December 2008, and with effect from 1st January 2009, the income thresholds for entitlement to a medical card for those aged 70 and over will be €700 (gross) per week for a single person and €1,400 (gross) per week for a couple. I intend to publish legislation to withdraw automatic entitlement to a medical card from persons aged 70 or over as soon as possible and to have it enacted during this Dáil session. My Department is in consultation with the Health Service Executive (HSE) with regard to the provision of appropriate information to persons aged 70 and over. It is intended that the HSE will write to all concerned shortly after the publication of the Bill.

### **Infectious Diseases.**

132. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the new products that have been developed that would help in the control of hospital-borne infections such as *C. difficile* and MRSA; if her Department has carried out research into the efficacy of such products; if there is consideration of the use of such products here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42435/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The monitoring and control of Health Care Associated Infections (HCAIs) is and continues to be a priority for this Government and the Health Service Executive (HSE). Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services is provided in its annual vote. Therefore the particular questions raised by the Deputy are a matter for the HSE and my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **General Medical Services Scheme.**

133. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health and Children her intentions with regard to reducing the cost of drugs to medical card patients to save some of the €100 million targeted under this heading in budget 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42440/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The cost of supplying prescribed medicines under the GMS Scheme (ingredient costs, pharmacy fees and VAT) was €1,048 million in 2007, an increase of 11.5% from 2006. The number of items prescribed under the GMS scheme increased from 40.5 million in 2006 to 44.4 million in 2007 (an increase of 9%). The average cost per item increased from €20.80 in 2006 to €23.27 in 2007 (an increase of 2%). The Government is of the view that the cost of pharmacy services under the GMS and other community drugs schemes is not sustainable and must be reduced to a more reasonable level.

My Department and the Health Service Executive (HSE) have been reviewing the pharmaceutical supply chain with a view to seeking value for money in the cost of drugs and medicines to the State, consistent with patient safety and continuity of supply. Since September 2006, new agreements with pharmaceutical manufacturers are providing increased value for money for the State and the consumer through a reduction in the price of off-patent drugs and medicines and through the use of a wider basket of countries for pricing new drugs and medicines under the schemes.

It has been decided to introduce a range of further measures in 2009 to slow the rate of increase in these schemes and generate savings of €175m. These measures include increasing the threshold for the Drug Payment Scheme from €90 to €100 a month; new guidelines on the prescribing of nutritional supplements; and other measures to reduce drug costs. Other savings required by the 2009 budgetary framework will be achieved through the ending of automatic entitlement to a medical card for those with incomes in excess of the new threshold and through economies in drug usage.

In this regard, I have also established a group under the chairmanship of Dr Michael Barry, National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics, to consider efficient and cost-effective prescribing in the GMS and community drugs schemes. The group has been asked to recommend efficiencies and savings through more rational and cost-effective prescribing at GP level or otherwise; advise on the information and educational or training initiatives, or standards and protocols, that might be used to support more efficient and cost effective prescribing; identify areas where inappropriate use of certain drugs could be reduced; and consider the capacity for increased generic prescribing by GPs. The initial report from Dr Barry will be prepared by 1st December.

### **Hospital Services.**

134. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children the action she proposes to take to address the situation at Cavan General Hospital due to inadequate bed numbers, resulting in a record 45 people waiting on trolleys for bed allocation on 17 November 2008, a situation set to worsen with the threatened ending of acute inpatient services in Monaghan General Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42460/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Cavan General Hospital experienced a significant rise in the level of medical attendances at the Emergency Department over the weekend commencing 14th November, with an increase of over 40% in the admission rate. This resulted in 45 patients awaiting admission by Monday 17th November. A contingency plan was activated to ensure that all patients were managed and treated.

As part of the reconfiguration of acute services across the Cavan/Monaghan Hospital Group a new Medical Assessment Unit (MAU) at Cavan is scheduled to open in December. It will be staffed by 19 people including an additional consultant physician, an additional consultant radiologist, nurses, radiography and support staff. It will open 12 hours per day 7 days per

week. The MAU is expected to reduce the demand for admission by providing full assessment and initiation of treatment without the need to admit all patients. In addition, a new observation ward is due to open in December 2008, which is hoped will also reduce the need for some patients to be admitted to beds on the wards.

### **National Cancer Control Programme.**

135. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will provide a breakdown of the budget 2009 allocation for cancer care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42464/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Additional funding of €15 million has been allocated to the Health Service Executive (HSE) National Cancer Control Programme for 2009. During 2009 the Programme will continue with the centralisation of cancer services in the eight designated cancer centres. This will include further transfer of breast cancer services to the eight cancer centres. The Programme also intends to focus on a range of other service areas in 2009 including lung, prostate and pancreatic cancers. The breakdown of the allocation will be outlined in the HSE National Service Plan for 2009. This Plan has recently been adopted by the Board of the HSE and has been submitted for my approval as required under the Health Act 2004. This additional funding builds on the €21.9 million already available to the Programme in 2008 and around €50 million available to the National Cancer Screening Service for the implementation of the BreastCheck and CervicalCheck Programmes.

### **Health Reports.**

136. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has received a copy of the all-Ireland study on health inequality published by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland and the Combat Poverty Agency in August 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42466/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The report to which the Deputy refers is the joint Institute of Public Health/Combat Poverty Agency publication “Tackling Health Inequalities: An-All Ireland Approach to Social Determinants” which was published on 28 August 2008. The report examines the influence of social, economic and environmental factors on health, such as poor housing, nutrition and education, across the island of Ireland and advocates a whole-of-Government approach across a range of policies to address and tackle inequalities in health among low income groups. It draws on a range of national and international research — including research published in 2002 by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Northern Ireland.

Addressing health inequalities is a common challenge for health systems across the world. As with many other countries, the Irish health sector is strongly committed to implementing a range of measures aimed at tackling and reducing health inequalities. Measures taken include the establishment, in late 2005 as part of the health reform process, of a dedicated Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Health and Children to co-ordinate the Department’s work on health inequalities and policies in relation to vulnerable groups.

An important element of the work of this Unit is to develop policy and services aimed at addressing the specific health needs of vulnerable groups such as Travellers, the homeless, drug users, prisoners and asylum seekers. An additional, and equally important, element of the Unit’s work, is to co-ordinate measures across other health policy areas that seek to promote

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greater social inclusion and equity in health generally. Actions are being pursued in conjunction with a range of stakeholders both within and outside the health services and with local communities. In addition, social inclusion-relevant aspects of existing health strategies and plans feature in the social partnership agreement, *Towards 2016*, published in June 2006 and in Ireland's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion, *Building an Inclusive Society 2007-2016 (NAPinclusion)*, published in February 2007 which details a number of health commitments aimed at tackling and reducing health inequalities and improving the health status of the more vulnerable members of our society.

The health sector also strongly supports the social determinants approach to tackling health inequalities. One way in which it seeks to advance a more integrated approach to policy on key cross-cutting social issues is through the Department of Health and Children's participation in the Senior Officials Group on Social Inclusion which operates under the aegis of the Department of the Taoiseach.

### **Hospitals Building Programme.**

137. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to review the proposals for co-located hospitals on the grounds of public hospitals in view of the deteriorating finances of the State and the high amount of tax that will be foregone by the Exchequer in the context of these proposals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42429/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The aim of the acute hospital co-location initiative is to make available additional public acute hospital beds for public patients by transferring private activity, with some limited exceptions, from public acute hospitals to co-located private hospitals. Each co-location project is required to demonstrate value for money for the State, taking into account its comprehensive benefits, as well as the cost of tax allowances and private bed revenue currently accruing to public hospitals.

I do not accept that, relative to its value, a high proportion of tax will be forgone by the Exchequer in respect of co-location projects. The scheme of tax allowances under the Finance Act 2001 means that, for each €100 million of qualifying capital expenditure, the cost of tax relief to investors (assuming a marginal tax rate of 41% for those investors) will be some €41 million in gross terms, spread over 7 years. Additional revenues would accrue to the Exchequer from the extra activity generated by the construction of the hospitals, the employment arising and the related services provided on which taxes will be paid.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to carry out an independent review of the co location initiative following completion of the current programme of developments. In accordance with this commitment, my Department will make the necessary arrangements to commission a review in due course.

*Question No. 138 answered with Question No. 72.*

### **Departmental Bodies.**

139. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Taoiseach the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42226/08]



**The Taoiseach:** There are no organisations or agencies under the remit of my Department which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to recent budgetary measures.

### Consultancy Contracts.

140. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Taoiseach the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42583/08]

**The Taoiseach:** Details of the amount of expenditure on consultancy by my Department in the years 2006 and 2007, the numbers of consultants engaged and the names of the consultancy companies is set out below. In 2007, my Department and the Bodies under the aegis of my Department, engaged 19 consultants at a cost of €570,258. The breakdown is as follows.

Body	Total Expenditure	Consultants Engaged
Department	€ 278,248	
		Goodbody Economic Consultants Grant Thornton Indecon PA Consulting Group Marie Halpin and Associates PA Consulting Group Fitzpatrick Associates QTS Limited
National Forum on Europe	166,435	
		Caroline Erskine Fitzpatrick Associates
Taskforce on Active Citizenship	6,050	
		Caroline Erskine
All Party Committee on the Constitution	33,030	
		Gail Nohilly Jim O'Donnell
Change Management Fund, Department of Finance	86,495	
		RA Consulting ESRI Fitzpatrick Associates Goodbody Economic Consultant Ipsos Mori Isolde Goggin and Gillian Lauder

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In 2006, my Department engaged 17 consultants at a cost of €387,383. The names of the consultants are as follows:

Body	Total Expenditure	Consultants Engaged
Department	€ 45,109	Fitzpatrick Associates Watson Wyatt
Change Management Fund, Department of Finance	212,368	Etain Doyle Economic and Social Research Institute Fitzpatrick Associates Goodbody Economic Consultation Institute of Public Administration Ipsos Mori Ireland HCM Consultants & Acturaries John Sweeney
National Forum on Europe	55,780	Caroline Erskine Brendan Lynch
Taskforce on Active Citizenship	66,685	Olivia McEvoy Caroline Erskine Mary Higgins
NESDO	7,441	Xperidox Achilles Procurement

Spend by my Department on Consultancy services is minimal. However, where it is necessary to engage consultants in order to avail of their particular expertise or experience, the procurement of consultancy services is subject to Public Procurement Guidelines and, where applicable, EU procurement rules and guidelines, with selection criteria geared to select the most economically advantageous tender. It is also our policy that skills-transfer from consultants to Departmental staff takes place as an integral part of all consultancy engagements. The purpose of this is to increase the knowledge and expertise of Departmental staff and to reduce and, if possible, eliminate further dependence on consultants in the areas concerned.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

141. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Taoiseach the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same.

[42630/08]

**The Taoiseach:** The total spend on mileage allowances for my Department in 2007 was €46,756. A breakdown of each of the categories is detailed in the table below.

Category Details	Number of Claimants in each category	Amount spent on each category
Vehicles up to 1,200cc up to 4,000 miles	4 Claimants	€1,042
Vehicles between 1,201cc and 1,500cc up to 4,000 miles	14 Claimants	€10,866
Vehicles above 1,500cc up to 4,000 miles	30 Claimants	€32,699
Vehicles up to 1,200cc exceeding 4,000 miles	0 Claimants	€0.00
Vehicles between 1,201cc and 1,500cc exceeding 4,000 miles	0 Claimants	€0.00
Vehicles above 1,500cc exceeding 4,000 miles	2 Claimants	€2,149
Totals	50 Claimants	€46,756

### Departmental Bodies.

142. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Taoiseach the names, affiliations and addresses of the census advisory group; its term of office; the name of the chairperson; the procedure that was used for their appointment; if any organisations or institutions within the State were asked for nominations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42727/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Pat Carey):** The Census Advisory Group consists of the following members.

#### 2011 Census Consultation — Census Advisory Group

Organisation	Representative	Designation
Department of An Taoiseach	Mr. Aedan Hall	Assistant Principal, Economic & Social Policy
Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs	Ms. Susan Scally	Principal, Corporate Co-ordination Division
Department of Education and Science	Ms. Nicola Tickner	Statistician
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Mr. Fergus Doyle	HEO, Planning Unit
Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government	Mr. Frank Donohoe	Assistant Principal, Housing Policy Unit
Department of Finance	Ms. Anne Donegan	Assistant Principal, Budget, Economic & Pensions Division
Department of Health and Children	Mr. Hugh Magee	Senior Statistician
Department of Social and Family Affairs	Mr. Paul Morrin	Senior Statistician
Department of Transport	Mr. Ken Jordan	Statistician
Dublin Transportation Office	Mr. Frank McCabe	Technical Director — Research and Analysis
Economic and Social Research Institute	Dr. Dorothy Watson	Senior Research Officer
Equality Authority	Mr. Laurence Bond	Head of Research
Irish Business and Employers Confederation	Mr. Fergal O'Brien	Senior Economist
Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Mr. Conor Farrell	Research Officer — Social Affairs
Local Government Management Services Board	Mr. David O'Connor	County Manager, Fingal County Council
National Disability Authority	Ms. Mary Van Lieshout	Head of Research & Standards Development
Regional Authorities Directors' Association	Mr. John Byrne	Secretary (Director — Mid-East Regional Authority)

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Organisation	Representative	Designation
UCD	Prof. Tony Fahey	Professor of Social Policy
NUI Maynooth	Prof. Rob Kitchin	Director — National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis
Central Statistics Office	Mr. Gerry Brady	Senior Statistician — Social Statistics Integration
Central Statistics Office	Mr. Dermot Corcoran	Statistician — Census
Central Statistics Office	Ms. Deirdre Cullen	Senior Statistician — Census
Central Statistics Office	Mr. Brian King	Statistician — Census
Central Statistics Office	Mr. Shaun McLaughlin	Statistician — Census
Central Statistics Office	Ms. Catriona Power (Secretary)	HEO — Census
Central Statistics Office	Mr. Aidan Punch (Chair)	Director — Census
Central Statistics Office	Mr. Declan Smyth	Statistician — Census

Nominations were received from the 17 organisations indicated above who were invited to participate in the work of the group. The two university representatives were approached directly. The group has now concluded the first phase of its work in recommending the questions to be included in a pilot study to be carried out in April 2009. The group will reconvene in September 2009 and assist the CSO in making its recommendation to Government in relation to the proposed content of the 2011 census form and the outputs to be produced.

#### Ministerial Staff.

143. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Taoiseach the number of persons employed in his private office; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each person; the expenses paid to persons in his constituency office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42909/08]

**The Taoiseach:** A total of 11 staff are employed in my Private Office in Government Buildings. A total of 8 staff are employed between my Constituency Offices in Government Buildings and my Tullamore Office.

	*2008 Salaries	Expenses (1/1/08 31/10/08)
	€	
Constituency Office	355,147.00	
Private Office	590,647.00	1,378.00

\*1/09/08 pay scales.

#### Departmental Expenditure.

144. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Taoiseach the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43227/08]

**The Taoiseach:** My Department is paying a monthly rate of 39c per box (inclusive of VAT) for the off site storage of 318 Bankers Boxes.

#### Employment Rights.

145. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment when she proposes to introduce legislation to implement the temporary agency workers'

directive; if she has proposals for amending the posting of workers directive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42204/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** I have no proposals to seek amendment of the Posting of Workers Directive, nor am I aware of any proposals to introduce amendments to the Directive which, in any case, is a matter for consideration by Ministers of the EU-27 at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council in conjunction with the European Parliament and the European Commission. The European Parliament by way of its legislative Resolution, of 22nd October 2008, have approved the Council common position for adopting a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on temporary agency work. I welcome the fact that the Parliament, in Plenary, accepted the Council common position without amendment. This matter will now be scheduled for the next meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, on 17th. December, when consideration of this dossier will be concluded. This will conclude the final element in the process of its adoption, and publication in the Official Journal.

Under the terms of the agreement reached by EU Ministers and approved by Parliament, there will be a three year period in which Member States will be required to transpose the Directive, following its adoption, into national legislation. The Deputy will recall that following the welcome developments in the European Parliament, I invited the Social Partners to discussions with my Department. These discussions will aim at agreeing a framework within which agency workers in Ireland would achieve equal treatment within an agreed timeframe having regard also to the need for flexibility in enterprises. The proposed Review and Transitional Agreement 2008-2009 concluded by the Social Partners contains a commitment to developing such a framework.

146. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the maximum amount of time that an employer is permitted to keep a person on a three day a week before they are offered full-time work again or redundancy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42705/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** A person may be put on reduced working hours by their employer e.g. a three day week or a 4 day week, where there is a reduction in the amount of work available. If an employee temporarily accepts a substantial reduction in his remuneration or his/her hours of work and such reduction is not less than half his/her normal working hours or remuneration (e.g. a 3 day week, or a 4 day week) such temporary acceptance for a period not exceeding 52 weeks shall not be taken to be an acceptance by him/her of an offer of suitable employment.

Similarly, if the employee never accepted the reduced working hours as his/her “normal” hours and was constantly seeking to be put back on full time working, he/she could then be deemed not to have accepted his/her reduced hours as normal. In such circumstances, an employee could request a statutory redundancy payment from his/her employer as the hours worked are not regarded as suitable or normal employment. It is up to the employer concerned in the first instance to determine whether or not there is in fact a redundancy situation. Disputes in this regard can be referred to the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) for adjudication.

Where a person is put on reduced working hours by their employer e.g. a three day week or a 4 day week, the redundancy entitlement is calculated on the basis of a full week, provided the employee was put on reduced hours within one year (52 weeks) before being made redundant. If made redundant after the first year of reduced working hours and if it is clear that the



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employee fully accepted the reduced working hours as being his/her normal working week, never requesting a return to a full time week, the employee is deemed to have accepted the reduced hours as his/her normal week. In this situation, the gross pay for redundancy purposes is based on the reduced working hours. Where an employee, for his/her own reasons, requests to be placed on reduced working hours and the employer agrees, the redundancy entitlement is based on the reduced hours.

### **Job Protection.**

147. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if she will make a statement on the threat to jobs at a plant (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if her Department is involved in efforts to save the 800 jobs at the plant. [42140/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** I am informed by IDA Ireland that Kostal Ireland GmbH plan a reduction in job numbers in Mallow and a change to working arrangements at their Mallow and Abbeyfeale plants. These steps are deemed necessary by the company to offset a drop in sales demand. Kostal will be terminating the employment of 29 temporary employees in Mallow, closing both the Limerick and Mallow plants for three working days in November and closing both plants for three full weeks at Christmas. I understand that the company will also move to short time working during 2009.

In general the automotive industry has seen a dramatic fall off in demand in recent months and in early October many of the leading automotive companies, adjusting to the fall in demand, announced temporary plant shut-downs, short-term working and lay-offs. In October, overall U.S. auto sales fell by 32 percent to their lowest level since February 1983 and the European market is also suffering with industry wide sales falling some 20% on the corresponding period last year. This has necessitated immediate corrective action by automotive supply companies to ensure that production matches the automakers' production schedules. Automotive supply companies in Ireland are not insulated from these effects and steps are being taken to prepare for reduced volumes and intensified economic and competitive pressure in the coming months.

I understand that an internal company consultation process has just commenced at Kostal. Following completion of this process FÁS employment Services Management will meet with Kostal management and staff representatives to formulate a plan of action to deliver FÁS services and supports to all 29 staff being made redundant as well as to all staff being out on short time in 2009. Such services and supports will include: on-site presentations on FÁS services and supports; one to one registration and guidance interviews, setting-up a resource centre to facilitate staff in the career guidance needs and job search activities, and provision of a range of pre-redundancy and post-redundancy training courses to assist all staff in achieving relevant skills updating.

### **Work Permits.**

148. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of work permits issued each year for each of the years 1997 to 2007, and for each month to date in 2008. [42208/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** Set out below are the figures as requested by the Deputy.

## Employment Permits Issued from 1997-2008 (up to 21/11/2008)

Year	Month	New	Renewals	Group	Total
2008		7,902	4,831	0	12,733
	Jan	1,080	1,096	0	2,176
	Feb	785	821	0	1,606
	Mar	620	503	0	1,123
	Apr	760	443	0	1,203
	May	705	385	0	1,090
	Jun	759	324	0	1,083
	Jul	962	266	0	1,228
	Aug	701	294	0	995
	Sep	560	263	0	823
	Oct	572	250	0	822
	Nov	398	186	0	584
2007		10,103	13,420	13	23,536
2006		7,309	16,583	958	24,850
2005		7,632	19,517	816	27,965
2004		10,418	23,348	801	34,567
2003		22,329	25,111	560	48,000
2002		23,306	16,547	431	40,284
2001		29,542	6,475	357	36,374
2000		15,329	22,46	298	17,873
1999		4,323	1,652	269	6,244
1998		3,589	1,886	239	5,714
1997		2,668	1,617	259	4,544

**Departmental Bodies.**

149. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number and names of organisations or agencies under her auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42219/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** Insofar as my Department is concerned, Budget 2009 announcements included the merging of the National Consumer Agency and the Competition Authority. As both bodies were established under statute, it will be necessary to give effect to the newly merged body by way of primary legislation. Whilst I am committed to introducing this legislation as soon as possible, it is not possible at this early stage to give a precise date as to when the necessary legislation will be published. Similarly, whilst it is expected that the synergies arising from the merger of the two bodies will result in savings to the exchequer, particularly in areas such as shared services, it is not possible to precisely quantify the amount of savings involved at this stage.

**Departmental Grants.**

150. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of grants provided by her Department, or agencies of her Department, which are available to redundant construction workers in relation to sustainable energy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42278/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):**

There are no specific grants available from my Department in relation to sustainable energy. Financial and non-financial assistance may be available through Country Enterprise Boards (CEB) to projects meeting the standard requirements, though such assistance is more generally provided to projects in the manufacturing or internationally traded service sectors. However, any viable business proposal coming forward for the establishment of a commercial enterprise will be assessed against the Boards' normal range of evaluation criteria.

All of the CEB operate to the same criteria in relation to the assistance which they can offer i.e. they can support the establishment and/or the development of enterprises provided that the projects, which should generally be in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sector, have the capacity to achieve commercial viability and which over time may develop into strong exporting entities. In addition, the CEB deliver a range of non-financial supports to improve management capability development within micro-enterprises designed to help new and existing enterprises to operate effectively and efficiently so as to last and grow.

Support available for redundant construction workers in relation to sustainable energy is mainly provided in the form of training/retraining through FÁS. FÁS are providing retraining opportunities for construction workers regarding energy efficiency and other similar areas. Specifically they provide training programmes in the installation and maintenance of sustainable energy systems (eg solar, biomass, geo-thermal heating). FÁS will also provide retraining opportunities for redundant construction workers in emerging areas within the construction sector, including environmental activity and compliance and regulatory work.

**FÁS Training Programmes.**

151. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of courses available for redundant construction workers, excluding apprentices, being provided free of cost by FÁS; the number of places on these courses; the training centres at which they are taking place; the number of places that are envisaged for these courses in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42279/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):**

FÁS currently offers three courses specifically aimed at redundant craft workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the downturn in the construction sector. These courses are all related to training in the field of sustainable energy and are at present available at FÁS centres in Dublin and Cork. Each course is for one week's duration and is designed to accommodate 12 students at a time. In addition to this, a new building energy rating assessor programme, also designed to target redundant construction craft workers, is being finalised at the FÁS training centre in Cabra and is due for roll out in December 2008. A number of other courses, currently in development, are due for roll out in 2009. As discussions involving budgetary allocations for each FÁS labour market programme are currently taking place it is not possible at this stage to give an accurate estimate on the number of training places envisaged for 2009.

152. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if her Department or agencies of her Department are offering upskilling courses by night for construction workers; if she will provide details of the courses; the number of places on each; if they will be available in 2009; if any will be introduced in 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42280/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):**

My Department's two main training providers with responsibility for the provision of training

courses to upskill those in the work force are FÁS and Skillnets. FÁS training centres offer a wide range of evening class programmes for employed persons that allow them to enhance their skills and prepare for progression to higher level roles and occupations. A full list of course titles is appended below. While not all on that list would be of direct interest to construction workers, such workers are entitled to apply for all courses on that list.

As an immediate opportunity to upgrade their skills and certification levels for re-entry to the jobs markets, such courses will be expanded and offered free of charge to those who have recently been made redundant. An additional 16,000 such places will be made available in 2009. Each region will be allocated places in accordance with local demand. This demand will be identified by reference to the outcome of guidance interviews with redundant construction workers that are administered by the FÁS Employment Services at regional and local levels. There will be flexibility in capacity to vary the FÁS course schedule in accordance with demand for particular courses.

Skillnets for their part operate the Training Networks Programme and under this programme the Construction Industry Training Alliance (CITA) Skillnet and the Western Homebuilders Skillnet provide up-skilling courses for construction workers by night. In 2008, the CITA Skillnet is providing evening courses in ECDL and Building Energy Ratings to 96 participants, while the Western Homebuilders Skillnet has delivered evening courses to 123 participants in Accounting/Financial Skills and in technical processes for Building Energy Ratings, Renewable Energy Installation, and Access for the Disabled. As all Skillnets networks are currently revising training plans for next year, details for 2009 are not yet available. However, training programmes in 2009 are likely to be broadly similar to those provided in 2008.

Evening Courses on Enquiry and Development Database

	Course Code	Course Title
1	XXQ24	Introduction to Computers — Evenings
2	XXQ23	ECDL Ver 4 — Evenings
3	XXQ42	Clerical/Receptionist Skills — Evenings
4	XXQ21	Computerised Accounts — Evenings
5	XXQ25	Start your Own Business — Evenings
6	XXQ01	Safety Health & Welfare at Work — Evenings
7	XXQ04	Web Page Design (Intro) — Evenings
8	XXQ58	AutoCad (Introduction) — Evenings
9	XXQ68	Arc Welding (Basic) — Evenings
10	XXQ71	Occupational First Aid — Evenings
11	XXQ74	Manual Accounts & Payroll — Evenings
12	XXQ09	Interior Design — Evenings
13	XXQ64	Digital Imaging Using Photoshop — Evenings
14	XXQ101	Manual Handling — Evenings
15	XXQ19	ILM Cert in Mgt. (Intro) — Evenings
16	XXQ59	Programmable Logic Controllers — Evenings
17	XXQ65	Welding — Evenings
18	XXQ87	Preparation for ECDL — Evenings
19	XXQ93	Computerised Accounts Level 2 — Evenings
20	XXQ26	MS Office Specialist (Word Core) — Evenings
21	XXQ27	MS Office Specialist (EXCEL Core) — Evenings
22	XXQ29	ILM Cert in Management — Evenings
23	XXQ56	PC Maintenance & Repair — Evenings

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	Course Code	Course Title
24	XXQ70	Sales Rep. & Customer Care — Evenings
25	XXQ82	Introd. to Internet/E-mail — Evenings
26	XXQ98	Rigid Truck Driving — Evenings
27	XXQ06	Oil Burner Servicing — Evenings
28	XXQ103	MS Office Specialist (Excel Expert) — Evenings
29	XXQ121	Roofing Techniques — Evenings
30	XXQ123	Bus Driving D Licence — Evenings
31	XXQ124	Welding Intermediate — Evening Course
32	XXQ125	Welding Advanced — Evening Course
33	XXQ142	Introduction to Basic Car Care — Evenings
34	XXQ17	Electronics (Basic) — Evenings
35	XXQ28	MS Office Specialist (ACCESS Core) — Evenings
36	XXQ43	Plumbing (Basic) — Evenings
37	XXQ48	Hairdressing (Basic) — Evenings
38	XXQ52	Gas Welding — Evening Course
39	XXQ83	Roofing — Cutting & Calculating — Evenings
40	XXQ86	Machine Tool Operating — Evenings
41	XXQ88	Gas Welding Basic — Evenings
42	XXQ96	Gas Installation — Safety — Evenings
43	XXQ10	Programming in Java (Intro) — Evenings
44	XXQ102	The Digital Darkroom Retouch Tech — Evenings
45	XXQ104	SBA Electrician P2 T1 Revision — Evenings
46	XXQ105	SBA Electrician P2 T2 Revision — Evenings
47	XXQ109	ILM Introduction in Teamleading — Evenings
48	XXQ11	2 Dimensional C.A.D — Evenings
49	XXQ110	ACCA Paper 1 CAT — Evenings
50	XXQ111	ACCA Paper 2 CAT — Evenings
51	XXQ112	ACCA Paper 3 CAT — Evenings
52	XXQ113	ACCA Paper 4 CAT — Evenings
53	XXQ114	Bookkeeping Module A — Evenings
54	XXQ115	Bookkeeping Module B — Evenings
55	XXQ116	Principles & Practice 2D CAD Level 1 — Evenings
56	XXQ117	Principles & Practice 2D CAD Level 2 — Evenings
57	XXQ118	Principles & Practice 2D CAD Level 3 — Evenings
58	XXQ119	ACCA Paper 5 CAT — Evenings
59	XXQ120	ACCA Paper 6 CAT — Evenings
60	XXQ122	Artic Driving EC Licence — Evenings
61	XXQ126	ECDL Part 1 — Evenings
62	XXQ127	ECDL Part 2 — Evenings
63	XXQ130	ECDL PART 3 — EVENINGS
64	XXQ132	Small Business Accounts
65	XXQ140	ACCA Paper 7 CAT- Evening
66	XXQ141	ACCA Paper 10 — CAT Evenings
67	XXQ15	Mini Bus Driving — Evening Course
68	XXQ18	MS Office Specialist (PowerPoint Core) — Evenings
69	XXQ32	ECDL Word Processing Advanced — Evenings
70	XXQ33	ECDL Spreadsheet Advanced — Evenings



	Course Code	Course Title
71	XXQ36	TIG Welding (Basic) — Evenings
72	XXQ40	MS Office Specialist (Word Expert) — Evenings
73	XXQ51	Photoshop (Advanced) — Evenings
74	XXQ53	Electrical (Basics) — Evenings
75	XXQ55	Car Maintenance (Basic) — Evening Course
76	XXQ57	Hydraulics/Pneumatics — Evenings
77	XXQ67	Supervisory Management — Evenings
78	XXQ69	Mig Welding — Evenings
79	XXQ76	Jewellery Stone Setting — Evenings
80	XXQ84	SAGE Accounts and Payroll — Evenings
81	XXQ85	Computer Appreciation — Evenings
82	XXQ89	Web Design — Evenings
83	XXQ92	Woodturning Level 1 — Evenings
84	XXQ97	Safepass — Evenings
85	XXQ02	Mechanical Drawing (Basic) — Evenings
86	XXQ07	Lift (Counter Balance) — Evenings
87	XXQ08	Office Skills — Evenings
88	XXQ100	Introduction to Computer Network Evenings
89	XXQ106	Best Practice Procurement — Evenings
90	XXQ107	Introduction to Public Relations-Evening
91	XXQ108	Adv Digital Imaging — Photoshop CS — Evenings
92	XXQ12	Desktop Publishing Level 2 — Evenings
93	XXQ128	3D Computer Aided Design Level 4 — Evening
94	XXQ129	3D Computer Aided Design Level 5 — Evening
95	XXQ13	Wood Turning Level 2 — Evenings
96	XXQ131	Rigid Truck Driving with Theory — Evenings
97	XXQ133	IPass Foundtion Course in Payroll — Evenings
98	XXQ134	PLC Part II Advanced — Evenings
99	XXQ135	Multi Media Basics — Evenings
100	XXQ136	Childminding Professional Practice — Evenings
101	XXQ137	Play and Early Education — Evenings
102	XXQ138	After-School Care — Evenings
103	XXQ139	Children With Additional Needs — Evenings
104	XXQ14	Craft Calculations — Evenings
105	XXQ143	ACCA Paper 8 Evening Course
106	XXQ144	First Aid, Patient Handling & Hygiene for Carers — Evening
107	XXQ145	Care Practice — Evening Course
108	XXQ146	Project Management — Evenings
109	XXQ147	Career Planning — Evenings
110	XXQ148	Legal Accounts — Evenings
111	XXQ149	Advanced Web Design — Evenings
112	XXQ150	Telesales — Evenings
113	XXQ151	Dictaphone Typing — Evenings
114	XXQ16	Teacher's Dip in I T (JEB)- Evenings
115	XXQ20	Macromedia Flash (Intro) — Evenings
116	XXQ22	Desktop Publishing Level 1 — Evenings
117	XXQ30	Communication Skills — Evenings
118	XXQ31	Electronic Servicing Part 1 — Evenings

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

	Course Code	Course Title
119	XXQ34	IC‡ Internet Comp Core Cert — Evenings
120	XXQ35	CNC Basic — Evenings
121	XXQ37	Centre Lathe Operating — Evenings
122	XXQ38	Vehicle Spray Painting (Basic) — Evenings
123	XXQ39	Vertical Milling Machine Ops — Evenings
124	XXQ41	MS Office Specialist (OUTLOOK) — Evenings
125	XXQ44	Computerised Payroll — Evenings
126	XXQ45	CV and Interview Preparation — Evenings
127	XXQ46	Joinery (Basic) — Evenings
128	XXQ47	Cabinet Making (Basic) — Evenings
129	XXQ49	Tiling (Introduction) — Evenings
130	XXQ50	Business Applications Using MS Office — Evenings
131	XXQ54	Electrical Level 2 — Evenings
132	XXQ60	Mathematics For Apprentices — Evenings
133	XXQ61	Leadership Coaching for Results — Evenings
134	XXQ62	Computer Aided Design (Basic) — Evenings
135	XXQ63	Drawing for Apprentices — Evenings
136	XXQ66	Cert in Training&Development — Evenings
137	XXQ72	Warehouse Management — Evenings
138	XXQ73	Introduction to Stores Management — Evenings
139	XXQ75	Photography — Evenings
140	XXQ77	Building Technology 1 — Evenings
141	XXQ78	Powerpoint, Email & Internet — Evenings
142	XXQ79	Word Processing Advanced — Evenings
143	XXQ80	ECDL Database Advanced
144	XXQ81	Stainless Steel TIG Welding — Evenings
145	XXQ90	ECDL Presentation Advanced — Evenings
146	XXQ91	Computers for Beginners — Evenings
147	XXQ94	Improver Welder — Evenings
148	XXQ95	3Phase Motor Ctrl — Elec&Fitter — Evenings
149	XXQ99	Extensible Markup Language (XML) Evenings

### Polasaí Fiontair.

153. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** den Tánaiste agus Aire Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta cad iad na forbairtí ó thaobh polasaithe iomaíochta agus nuálaíochta de a bhfuil an Roinn Fiontar, Trádála agus Fostaíochta ag tabhairt fúthu chun an Ghaeilge, agus nithe sainiúla cultúrtha atá in Éirinn nach í, a chur chun cinn agus a fhorbairt mar dhíol spéise sainiúil na hÉireann (nó Ireland's unique selling point) chun fiontraíocht agus gnó a mhealladh chun na hÉireann i bhfianaise thuairim an Ollaimh Fionnbarra Ó Brolcháin go mbraitheann Buntáiste Iomaíoch Inbhuanaithe, BII, na hÉireann ar an bpobal a bheith difriúil agus uathúil agus go bhfuil ár dteanga dhúchais ina dlúthchuid den bhuntáiste sin; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [42324/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** Tá sí mar aidhm ag Straitéis Fiontair an Rialtais forbairt gheilleagair eolas-bhunaithe a chur chun cinn ionas gur féidir leis an tír dul in iomaíocht go náisiúnta agus go hidirnáisiúnta araon d'infheistíocht dhíreach iasachta agus d'fhorbairt comhlachtaí áitiúla. Tá sé mar chroílár na

straitéise seo infheistiú inár ndaoine agus a chinntiú go bhfuil na scileanna acu atá riachtanach chun maireachtáil agus obair sa gheilleagar eolas-bhunaithe domhanda.

Tá an Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta i bhfeighil ar dhul chun cinn éifeachtach na Gaeilge agus trí Údarás na Gaeltachta, forbairt fiontair laistigh de limistéir na Gaeltachta. Faoi réir ranna eile an Rialtais, tacaím leis na hiarrachtaí sin agus aithním gur féidir le sainiúlacht chultúrtha, i roinnt cásanna, ról a bheith aici chun infheistíocht a mhealladh mar aon le fiontar a chruthú.

Tá tacaíochtaí fiontair i limistéir na Gaeltachta á soláthar ag Údarás na Gaeltachta a thagann faoi choimirce mo chomhghleacaithe, an tAire Ó Cuív, Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta. Seasann oibríochtaí gheilleagair de chuid an Údaráis do bhrainte na Straitéise Fiontair iomláine, agus mar sin tá siad á dtreorú ag a chuid prionsabal. Ar bhonn straitéiseach náisiúnta déanann Fiontraíocht Éireann comhordú le hÚdarás na Gaeltachta trí mheán cruinnithe pleanála idirghníomhaireachta rialta agus trí Údarás na Gaeltachta a chur san áireamh ar roinnt coistí, mar shampla an Coiste Taighde & Forbartha a dhéanann Deontais R&D a fhaomhadh. Is féidir le comhlachtaí lonnaithe sa Ghaeltacht atá dírithe ar phoist mharthanacha a fhorbairt i margáí iasachta leas a bhaint as na seirbhísí á dtairiscint ag líonra oifige iasachta de chuid Fiontraíochta Éireann agus páirt a ghlacadh in imeachtaí ghrúpa spreagtha atá eagraithe ag Fiontar Éireann.

Tá se de dhíth ar Éire mar gheilleagar oscailte beag a bheith in ann freagairt go tapa d'athruithe i dtimpeallacht eacnamaíochta agus teicneolaíochta níos domhandaithe. Tá sé tábhachtach go dtógaimid foinsí nua de bhuntáiste iomaíoch bunaithe ar ár gcuid eolais agus saineolais. Is é ceann de phríomh-thascanna mo Roinne, ná chun a chinntiú go bhfanann Éire mar áit mhealltach chun gnó a dhéanamh inti, agus chun tacaíocht a thabhairt d'fhorbairt inniúlachtaí eacnamaíochta níos airde suas an slabhra luacha. Chuige seo, leanaimid ar aghaidh ag obair chun ár gcoinníollacha iomaíoch creatlaí a choinneáil agus a leasú, agus chun réimsí nua de bhuntáiste iomaíoch a chur ar aghaidh trí ár mbonn R&D a fhorbairt, trí infheistiú i mbonneagair fhisiciúla agus cumarsáide criticiúla, agus oideachas treasach agus foghlaim fadsaoil a chur chun cinn, de réir an Phlean Forbartha Náisiúnta agus Cláir an Rialtais.

Tá iomaíocht, d'infheistíocht agus do tháirgí agus seirbhísí sa timpeallacht eacnamaíochta domhanda ina fheidhmíonn gnó Éireannach, níos géire ná riamh. Le linn na haeráide eacnamaíochta neamhchinnte reatha, tá sé níos tábhachtaí ná riamh go nglacaimid le pé bearta atá oiriúnach chun a chinntiú go bhfanaimid iomaíoch agus mealltach mar shuíomh chun gnó a dhéanamh ann.

### Work Permits.

154. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of work permits granted by her Department in 2008; if she will tabulate the nationalities of the workers in receipt of these work permits; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42359/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** The Employment Permits Section informs me that a total of 12,733 employment permits have been issued up to the 21st November 2008. 7,902 of these are new permits and 4,831 are renewals. Set out in the table are the figures broken down by Nationality, as requested by the Deputy.

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

## Employment Permits granted in 2008 by Nationality

Nationality	New Permits	Renewals	Issued
India	2,164	953	3,117
Philippines	955	1,130	2,085
United States of America	678	126	804
South Africa	397	286	683
China	383	235	618
Brazil	357	226	583
Malaysia	350	153	503
Ukraine	203	241	444
Australia	285	98	383
Pakistan	200	152	352
Bangladesh	119	147	266
Thailand	102	127	229
New Zealand	154	58	212
Canada	159	43	202
Moldova	77	120	197
Russian Federation	84	75	159
Nigeria	90	56	146
Belarus	38	92	130
Romania	116	6	122
Turkey	70	33	103
Zimbabwe	65	37	102
Israel	90	8	98
Sri Lanka	51	29	80
Egypt	35	40	75
Japan	42	19	61
Mauritius	42	10	52
Morocco	34	17	51
Croatia	28	22	50
Korea (Republic of (South))	32	9	41
Nepal	29	9	38
Vietnam	24	11	35
Argentina	27	7	34
Algeria	12	21	33
Indonesia	10	18	28
Mexico	20	8	28
Yugoslavia (Federal Republic of)	12	16	28
Hong Kong	15	11	26
Singapore	22	2	24
Botswana	18	5	23
Bulgaria	21	0	21
Iran	11	10	21
Jordan	15	6	21
Albania	2	18	20
Bosnia Herzegovina	3	17	20
Myanmar (Formerly Burma)	10	7	17

Nationality	New Permits	Renewals	Issued
Tunisia	10	7	17
Kenya	13	2	15
Serbia	12	2	14
Kosovo	2	11	13
United Arab Emirates	12	1	13
Latvia (Alien)	1	11	12
Trinidad & Tobago	11	1	12
Bahrain	10	1	11
Syria	8	3	11
Chile	6	4	10
Colombia	10	0	10
Latvia	5	5	10
Lebanon	6	4	10
Kazakhstan	6	3	9
Venezuela	5	4	9
Iraq	5	3	8
Malawi	7	1	8
Samoa (USA)	6	2	8
Zambia	7	1	8
Cuba	4	2	6
Georgia	4	2	6
Ghana	5	1	6
Kyrgyz Republic	5	1	6
Mongolia	2	4	6
Tonga	6	0	6
Uruguay	3	3	6
Armenia	4	1	5
Kuwait	5	0	5
Sudan	4	1	5
Uzbekistan	1	4	5
Cameroon	1	3	4
Ethiopia	2	2	4
Fiji	3	1	4
Jamaica	1	3	4
Oman	3	1	4
Uganda	3	1	4
Azerbaijan	3	0	3
Barbados	2	1	3
El Salvador	3	0	3
Macedonia (FYR)	3	0	3
Mauritania	2	1	3
Nicaragua	3	0	3
Palestine	3	0	3
Peru	0	3	3
St Vincent and the Grenadines	3	0	3
Taiwan	2	1	3



[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

Nationality	New Permits	Renewals	Issued
Bhutan (Kingdom of)	1	1	2
Congo (Democratic Republic of)	1	1	2
Costa Rica	2	0	2
Ecuador	1	1	2
Grenada	2	0	2
Guatemala	0	2	2
Honduras	0	2	2
Korea (Democratic Peoples Republic of (South))	1	1	2
Libya	1	1	2
Tibet	2	0	2
Western Samoa	1	1	2
Yemen	2	0	2
Belize	1	0	1
Brunei	1	0	1
Burma	1	0	1
Cape Verde	0	1	1
Congo Republic of	1	0	1
Guyana	1	0	1
Haiti	0	1	1
Korea (Democratic Peoples Republic of (North))	1	0	1
Maldives	0	1	1
Namibia	1	0	1
Niger	1	0	1
Paraguay	1	0	1
San Marino	1	0	1
Senegal	0	1	1
Sierra Leone	1	0	1
Taiwan (Republic of China)	1	0	1
Tanzania	0	1	1
Timor East	1	0	1
Turkmenistan	1	0	1
West Indies	1	0	1
Benin	0	0	0
Cambodia (Kampuchea)	0	0	0
Cyprus	0	0	0
Guinea	0	0	0
Ivory Coast	0	0	0
Macau	0	0	0
Panama	0	0	0
Saudi Arabia	0	0	0
Solomon Islands	0	0	0
Swaziland	0	0	0
The Republic of Togo	0	0	0
Totals 2008	7,902	4,831	12,733

Note: Figures up to the 21st November 2008.

### Consultancy Contracts.

155. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the amount of expenditure on consultancy by her Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by her Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by her Department in these years and for the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42582/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** The information requested by the Deputy in so far as my Department is concerned is set out in the table. My Department operates to detailed guidelines when commissioning outside expertise from our consultancy or research budgets. In that regard, the figures provided relate to consultancies as defined in the Department of Finance December 2006 “Guidelines for the Engagement of Consultants and Other External Support by the Civil Service”.

The guidelines state, inter alia, that “the requirements for external consultancies and/or research projects should arise only where appropriate skills, knowledge or expertise are not available within the Department, where a particular need arises that cannot be addressed within the resources available, and/or where expertise available in other Government Departments and Offices, e.g., obtaining legal advice from the Chief State Solicitors Office in preference to engaging external consultants, cannot be used”. Furthermore, in order to maximise the effectiveness of the consultancy and research budgets, all proposals for funding must present a strong business case to my Department’s Management Board for consideration and approval.

In evaluating each business case my Department examines: whether the project is designed to tackle a problem of sufficient importance to the Department relative to the costs, both in terms of financial and staff resources involved; whether the business case has been properly identified, prepared and is convincing, and the links to the Department’s Strategy Statement. The Guidelines also set out the specific information required in each application for funding which includes an evaluation of possibilities other than engaging external consultants to carry out the project.

2006

Name of Consultant	Purpose of Expenditure	Total
		€
Brindley	Advertising production for increase in the National Minimum Wage	23,635
Q4 Public Relations	Media and communications advisor in respect of Interim NCA	108,900
Farrell Grant Sparks	Ex-ante evaluation of the Human Capital Investment OPt	41,050
Deloitte & Touche	Professional Fees for a periodic review/update of the financial returns spreadsheet of the Productive sector OP	4,110
Kilroy Solicitors	Legal Advice	54,496
Indecon International Economic Consultants	Study of efficiency and effectiveness of vocational Training Services	45,779
Nathan Reilly	Legal Analysis	22,208
John Hennessey BL (Legal Advice)	Investigations under Section 19 of the Companies Act 1990	10,527

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

Name of Consultant	Purpose of Expenditure	Total
		€
Matthias Kelly QC (Legal Advice)	Investigations under Section 19 of the Companies Act 1990	143,399
Carr Communications	Effective communications with CRO clients	33,123
Lansdowne Market Research	Market Research	20,450
Brian Murray	Legal Advice	7,720
Caroline Costello	Legal Advice	1,513
Conor Bourke	Legal Advice	3,025
Declan Murphy	Legal Advice	7,381
Eileen Barrington	Legal Advice	363
Eoghan Fitzsimons	Legal Advice	43,146
Epsilon Consulting	Legal Advice	605
John McCarroll	Legal Advice	454
Michael M Collins	Legal Advice	605
Milward Brown	Market Research	30,650
Michael Cush	Legal Advice	424
Pricewaterhouse Coopers	Company Investigations	151,250
Tom Walsh	Production of revised Health and Safety legislation	77,160
Indecon	Economic Impact Assessment on the impact of health and safety legislation on competitiveness and the economy.	39,688
ESRI	National Survey on Workplace Bullying	190,138
ESRI	Assessment of recommended min. wage increases	15,000
Language	Design of Posters for WLB day 2006	11,416
Mayson, Hayes and Curran	Table of derivations for Companies Acts	49,263
Fredericka Sheppard	Evaluation of pilot teleworking scheme	16,154
Envirotrain	Presentation to Management Board on Strategic Environmental Assessment	650
O' Mara, Geraghty, McCourt	Provision of legal services/advice	85,114
Cathy Maguire	Legal Services/advice	5243
Elizabeth Cogan	Legal Services/advice	10,963
Erwan Mill-Arden S.C	Legal Services/advice	4,235
Gerald Meaney	Legal Services/advice	2,662
James W Houlihan	Legal Services/advice	1503
Kathryn E. Keane	Legal Services/advice	1365
Rory Hayden	Legal Services/advice	1029
Mairéad Carey B.L.	Legal Services in connection with functions of the Labour Court	6,000

2007

Name of Consultants	Purpose	Amount Earned
Leo Burnett	Advertising increase in National Minimum Wage	50,163
Corporate Risk Strategies Ltd (CRS)	The Consultants were engaged to prepare a Health and Safety report on each of the Department's buildings together with the appropriate Safety Statements.	24,200
ESRI	National Survey on Workplace Bullying	84,232
Tom Walsh	To provide advice to the Department on the development of occupational health and safety policy and legislation	81,493
Arup Consulting Engineers	To support the Department in its review of Review of Dangerous Substances legislation	28,814.40
Indecon Economic Consultants	To prepare a report on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.	30,000
Indecon Consultants	Prepare a Report — Value for Money Review of Science Foundation Ireland	111,244
The Media Group	To devise, implement and manage a national promotion and advertising campaign across a range of media for the ICT Audits Programme for Small Business in Ireland	135,000
Noel J. Travers BL	Drafted a legal instrument	8,440
RITS	To prepare a series of reports. (IT Security)	118,928
Version 1	To prepare a report on the Insolvency BPR	7,187
Work Research Co-operative Social & Economic Consultants	Acquired Disability and Job retention report	26,632
Goodbody Economic Consultants	Review of Wage Subsidy Scheme	23,595
Farrell Grant Sparks	Ex-ante evaluation of the Human Capital Investment OP 2007-2013	66,671
Indecon Economic Consultants	Study of efficiency and Effectiveness of Vocational Training Services	5,087
DHR Communications	Dissemination of EQUAL programme (public relations)	28,305
Tom Ferris	To carry out six case studies investigating the administrative burdens arising due to regulation and to prepare a report	2,997
Dan Flinter	To facilitate two business workshops, examining the burdens of regulation on business, and make recommendations	8,643
Nathan Reilly	Review of consumer legislation	7,053
Keating and Associates	Communications Strategy for ODCE	32,670
Millward Brown IMS	Market Research for ODCE	44,790
Cyril O'Neill	Legal Costs Assessment for ODCE	13,273
Connolly Lowe	Legal Costs Assessment for ODCE	2,588
Carr Communications	Carry out work (Effective communications with CRO clients)	45,372
Millward Browne	Carry out work (Market Research)	27,062
Grant Thornton	Carry out work (Consultancy on Public Procurement and Business Solutions)	57,521
O' Mara, Geraghty, McCourt	Provision of legal services and advices	35,086
Q41	Public relations services/advice	18,150

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

Name of Consultants	Purpose	Amount Earned
Owens DDB1	Advice on advertising and placing of same in various media	128,566
DKM Economic Consultants	Research on multi-unit developments	1,210
RPS Consultants	Research on energy policy	9,575
Vision Consulting Ltd	Consultants were engaged to carry out a review of the operation of NERA Information Services and to make recommendations on the structures, processes and systems that should operate in the Unit in order to achieve the highest possible standard of excellence in terms of meeting customer needs.	95,711
Keating and Associates	To provide NERA with PR Consultancy Services in the development of a new communications strategy.	46,462
Mason Hayes & Curran	NERA (Legal)	16,611
Ellard Browne	NERA (MIF)	7,550
Price Waterhouse Coopers	NERA (Management)	30,189
Vision Consulting	NERA (Communications)	186,334
Cawley Nea Ltd	NERA (Advertising Media)	181,335
Design Tactics	NERA (Advertising Media)	6,285
McCann Fitzgerald	Provision of legal advice under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts (CRO)	18,184
Millward Browne	Market Research for CRO	42,144
DNM Technology	VMWare advice on the use of software to run virtual PCs	4,840
S.F.Hughes & Co	Legal Services/advice	938
James W. Houlihan	Legal Services/advice	1,210
James Dwyer	Legal Services/advice	1,815
John Hennessy BL	Legal advice — investigations under Section 19 of the Companies Act 1990	126,324
Matthias Kelly QC	Legal advice — investigations under Section 19 of the Companies Act 1990	162,742
Form Creative Ltd	Advertising campaign for WLB day 2007	52,398
Form Creative Ltd	Advertising for Panel of Consultants 2007	8,673
Helm Corporation Ltd	Consultancy Service Oracle Review –Finance Unit	8,146
European Commission	Engagement of consultants to carry out National Evaluation of the impact of the European Employment Strategy in Ireland	4,973
Mazars	Engagement of a consultant to undertake 2 audits from the Department's 2006 Audit Plan (Finance Unit and Personnel Unit) (continued from 2006)	10,482
Mairéad Carey B.L.	Legal Services in connection with functions of the Labour Court	6,050
John Gleeson S.C.	Legal Services in connection with functions of the Labour Court	960

### Departmental Expenditure.

156. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and



Employment the estimated spend on mileage allowances for her Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42623/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** It is not possible, from my Department's computerised travel records, to provide details of mileage allowances in the categories specified by the Deputy. Moreover, two different sets of mileage allowances applied in the course of 2007 — one set of allowances applied from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2007, and a second set applied from 1 July 2007 to 31 December 2007. However, details are provided in the table regarding my Department's total expenditure on mileage in 2007, the total number of miles claimed, the total number of claimants and the number who claimed in excess of 4,000 miles.

It should be noted that the total expenditure provided includes an element of cost on bus and rail travel and some other travel-related expenses which are aggregated with mileage allowances on my Department's accounts system. It is not feasible to identify these costs separately, as this exercise would require every expenses claim processed by my Department in 2007 to be reviewed. No claims were paid by my Department in respect of a bicycle allowance in 2007.

Total mileage expenditure in 2007 <sup>1</sup>	Total car miles claimed	Total number of car miles claimants	Number of claimants who exceeded 4,000 miles in 2007
€851,994.48	827,043 miles	460	73

*Note:* <sup>1</sup>Includes an element of bus and rail costs and some other travel-related expenses.

### Community Employment Schemes.

157. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment if community employment participants aged 60 years are having their appointments terminated; if this is in line with her Department's policy in relation to the review of people over 55 years and duration of community employment schemes; when that review will be finalised; if persons aged 55 years or over should be retained until such time as that review has taken place; and if there is a seven year duration limit on community employment placements. [42653/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** Community Employment (CE) is an active labour market programme designed to provide eligible long term unemployed people and other disadvantaged persons with an opportunity to engage in useful work within their communities on a fixed term basis. CE helps unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to a work routine and to assist them to enhance/develop both their technical and personal skills.

In April 2000 the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment introduced capped limits on the amount of time that a person could participate on CE (3 years total time on CE from 3rd April, 2000 — participation on CE before this date is disregarded). CE capping was introduced to facilitate the movement of participants through the programme, allowing new participants who may not otherwise have such an opportunity, avail of the programme. To cater for older workers in particular, in November 2004 Minister Micheál Martin revised the 3-year CE capping to allow those of 55 years of age and over to avail of a 6-year overall period on CE (based on participation since 3rd April 2000). This was in recognition of the fact that older participants may find it more difficult to progress into employment. Community Employ-

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

ment participants aged 60 years are not having their participation on CE terminated, except where they have completed their eligibility to participate on the programme.

The aim of CE still remains as an active labour market programme with the emphasis on progression into employment. There is a wide range of client groups which need access to CE — lone parents, persons with disabilities, stabilised substance abusers and unemployed persons. FÁS at all times is obliged to accommodate the needs of all these groups in terms of participation on Community Employment. The programme is managed within this context, with consideration to the availability of resources and the needs of participants and the community. In conclusion then, I would say that this Government will continue to support into the future the positive role of CE in meeting the needs of long-term unemployed persons while at the same time providing essential services to communities. In this regard, we are keeping the operation of the Scheme under constant review.

### **Work Permits.**

158. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the reason a work permit was refused for a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42696/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** The Employment Permits Section informs me that it has no record of a work permit being refused in this case and that a work permit issued in respect of the above named on the 21st November 2008.

159. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of work permits issued to date in 2008; the number of work permits that have been renewed in 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42713/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Billy Kelleher):** A total of 12,733 employment permits have been issued up to the 21st November 2008. 7,902 of these are new permits and 4,831 are renewals.

### **Consumer Protection.**

160. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the reason the National Consumer Agency does not address the issue of the serious anomalies between sterling prices and euro prices for goods available in shops here; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42724/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** Concerns in relation to the differential in the prices charged for some goods in this jurisdiction as against the prices charged in Northern Ireland and the UK have been expressed by a number of commentators, not least the National Consumer Agency. These concerns have focused on the recent significant increase in value by the Euro against sterling and the belief that the benefits of this appreciation are not being passed on to consumers. The National Consumer Agency, for its part, earlier this year conducted a survey of the price of a range of branded and own-brand goods charged by a number of prominent retailers operating both north and south of the Border. The survey found that customers in the Republic were being charged up to 31% more than customers in Northern Ireland in respect of certain branded products and up to 17% more in respect of own brand items.

Given these concerns I initiated an engagement with the retail sector as to the reasons why the benefits of the Euro's appreciation were not being passed on to consumers. In my discussions and contacts with the retail sector, retailers responded to the effect that while the retail price of goods imported from the UK had lagged exchange rate movements due to factors such as the forward purchase of goods and currency, there had already been reductions in the price of some goods and further reductions were in the pipeline. Retailers also advised that one of the main reasons for the price differential was that the cost of doing business in Ireland was significantly higher than that in the UK. In the light of these responses, I requested Forfás to carry out an analysis of the relative cost of doing business in a number of locations in the Republic, Northern Ireland and the UK.

It is my firm view that where retailers are charging significantly different prices for goods to their customers in this jurisdiction when compared with prices charged to their customers in other jurisdictions such as Northern Ireland and the UK, those retailers have a duty to their customers and to the economy to explain why they are charging such price differentials. I expect to receive Forfás' analysis of the situation shortly following which I intend to pursue this matter with the retail sector.

### **Job Creation.**

161. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of jobs created by the Industrial Development Authority in Mayo for the years 2006, 2007 and to date in 2008; the location of these jobs in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42737/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** The Forfás Annual Employment Survey reports on job gains and losses in companies that are clients of the industrial development agencies. Information is aggregated on an annualized basis at county level. The information is provided by companies on a confidential basis for statistical purposes only. It is not possible to provide information for individual locations throughout the country. Figures for 2008 will not be available until early 2009.

The numbers of new jobs created by IDA supported companies in Co. Mayo in 2006 and 2007 are shown on the tabular statement.

Year	2006	2007
Number of Jobs Created	37	114

Figures for 2008 will not be available until early 2009.

### **Ministerial Staff.**

162. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the number of persons employed in her private office and her constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42902/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** The tables below show the number of staff employed in my private office and constituency offices. The tables also show: (a) the total of the annual salaries payable to the staff in question, based on their current salary points; (b) the amounts paid in travel and subsistence costs since I took up office as Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment on 7 May 2008; (c) miscellaneous expenses paid in respect of my offices since 7 May 2008.

[Deputy Mary Coughlan.]

Private Office:

No. of staff employed	Total annual salary costs based on current salary points	Travel & Subsistence cost paid from 7 May 2008 to 21 Nov. 2008 <sup>1</sup>	Miscellaneous expenses
11	€589,654.44	€18,648.82	€1,540.49

Constituency Offices:

No. of staff employed	Total annual salary costs based on current salary points	Travel & Subsistence cost paid from 7 May 2008 to 21 Nov. 2008 <sup>1</sup>	Miscellaneous expenses
6.8	€261,043.03	€2,471.27	0

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Figures are based on travel and subsistence costs paid by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment since 7 May 2008, including air travel costs paid in respect of the Tánaiste and staff of her offices. The figures also include some payments in respect of charges incurred prior to 7 May in respect of the offices of the previous Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment. It is not feasible, in the time available, to identify these costs separately.

### Departmental Expenditure.

163. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment the costs involved in off-site rental storage of her departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43234/08]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (Deputy Mary Coughlan):** My Department uses off site rental storage facilities for storing Department documents in a number of designated document storage centres. The cost to date in 2008 (up to the end of October) amounts to €229,007 and this includes the costs associated with collection, coding and retrieval services as well as storage costs. The current cost per “banker box” varies from a rate of €0.36 per month to €0.48 per month.

### Tax Code.

164. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the €200 levy on parking spaces will be payable by those who start work at 7 a.m. and therefore have no access to public transport at that time of the morning. [42604/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** The amount of the levy is reduced in the case of shift workers. Anyone starting or finishing work after 9 o'clock in the evening or before 7 o'clock in the morning will have the part of the year during which they are on shift work disregarded for the purposes of calculating the levy. For example, someone doing such shift work for 3 months of the year would be liable to pay €150 (i.e. €200 less  $\frac{1}{4}$  excluded because of shift work).

I would also remind the Deputy that I have already indicated that the levy will only apply to employer-provided parking facilities in the major urban centres of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford. The specific areas in which the levy will apply will be designated by Ministerial Order following consultation with the five city councils.

**Tax Collection.**

165. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the delays in supplying P21 statements to families seeking such forms for education grant application purposes; and his plans to address the problem. [42131/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they are not aware of any delays in the supplying of P21 balancing statements where the applicant has supplied all the necessary information for it to be issued. I am further advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the instructions they issue to their staff for dealing with these types of requests include an explicit reference to the effect that “Revenue Districts should ensure that requests from grant applicants for P21s or Notices of Assessment should be dealt with as quickly as possible to enable parents with limited means to have greater certainty as to eligibility under these schemes.”

Over the last couple of years the Revenue Commissioners have liaised with the Department of Education and Science, the Local Authorities and the VECs to provide information and to encourage grant applicants to request their P21 via the dedicated on-line facility for PAYE taxpayers, — PAYE Anytime — which is accessible via the Revenue website [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie). Using the online facility results in a quicker turnaround time for P21 applications. There has been a good take-up of this facility over the last year and Revenue will continue to advise customers about this quick and easy option.

166. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance the records of an application for a P21 by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42133/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the person’s Income Tax Return for the year 2007 was received on 30 September 2008. As the return was not complete a request for additional information was issued on 20 October 2008. A corrected return was received by Revenue on 30 October 2008. A Notice of Assessment for 2007 will issue to the person next week. (As the person is registered for income tax the appropriate statement is a Notice of Assessment rather than a P21). All returns received by Revenue where a taxpayer has indicated that a Notice of Assessment is required urgently are processed on receipt, where possible. In this case the person did not notify Revenue of the urgency of the matter.

**National Partnership Agreement.**

167. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance if the State may avail of the inability to pay clause of the national pay agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42139/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** The specific provision of the Agreement for dealing with a claim of inability to pay relates to the private sector only. Where inability to pay is claimed, the onus is on the employer to convince the union of the case. If the parties still disagree, the matter is referred to the Labour Relations Commission (LRC). At LRC stage, assessors may be appointed to examine the economic, commercial and employment circumstances of the employment involved. In the event of no agreement being reached at the LRC, the matter is referred to the Labour Court and the onus is on the employer to convince the Court of their case.



[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

It is a matter for the Court to determine whether the employer can or cannot pay the terms of the Agreement and the parties are bound to comply with the findings. I do not consider that an arrangement along these lines would be appropriate in the case of the public finances, where Government alone has an obligation to prioritise spending across a range of policy areas, from within available resources, on the basis of provisions voted by the Dáil.

As the Deputy will be aware, the agreement already provides for a pay pause of 11 months in the public service from the expiry of the last agreement on 30 September 2008. This compares to a pause of 3 months in the private sector. Therefore, no increase will arise in the public service until 1 September 2009. I am, of course, keeping public service pay under ongoing review.

### Tax Yield.

168. **Deputy P. J. Sheehan** asked the Minister for Finance if the Revenue Commissioners will give an estimate of additional taxes collected, for the relevant years concerned on a year by year basis, which accrued to the Exchequer following the Committee of Public Accounts deposit interest retention tax inquiry and report; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42152/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information available relates to the additional yield of Deposit Interest Retention Tax which resulted from the look-back audits of financial institutions by the Commissioners, and the additional yield from income and other taxes arising from their follow-up investigations of bogus non-resident deposit accounts. The yield to the Exchequer from these projects in each year from 1999 onwards is set out in the table. For completeness the yield for the 10 months to the end of October 2008 is also included.

Yield to the Exchequer

Heading	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 (to 31 October)	Total
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
DIRT — Audits of Financial Institutions	4.0	216.0	—	1.0	1.0	3.0	—	—	—	—	225.0
Bogus Non-Resident Accounts	—	—	227.2	112.0	138.8	84.2	47.0	15.5	10.1	3.3	638.1
Totals	4.0	216.0	227.2	113.0	139.8	87.2	47.0	15.5	10.1	3.3	863.1

It is not possible to estimate the precise impact of these enquiries on the subsequent yield from other specific enquiries, or general tax revenue. The information gathered in addressing the DIRT and bogus non-resident issues provided helpful evidence and the basis of a suitable approach to take in pursuit of individuals who used offshore assets and insurance policies as a means of concealing tax liability. In addition, these activities provided a clear purpose for extending Revenue's investigative powers so as to facilitate the best general approach to be taken in the pursuit and investigation of tax default generally.

### Tax Code.

169. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance if tax relief can be claimed on fees charged at third level which are due to having to repeat the year at college. [42185/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** Section 473A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 provides, subject to certain conditions, for tax relief at the standard rate of income tax for tuition fees up to a maximum of €5,000 paid by an individual in respect of a third level education course including a postgraduate course. Section 473A TCA 1997 does not contain any specific prohibition as regards to tax relief claimed on fees charged at third level that are due to an individual having to repeat an academic year at college.

170. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance if customers on whom deposit interest accrues twice yearly will be given the benefit of a lower rate of DIRT tax on the interest which was in effect earned prior to 1 January 2009. [42187/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** The increased rate of Deposit Interest Retention Tax will apply to interest paid or credited on or after 1 January 2009. Any interest paid or credited before this date will be chargeable at the lower rate.

171. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance the mileage allowances granted on vehicles used by public servants on official business; and the way this compares with comparable arrangements in the private sector. [42188/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** The travel rates, payable per kilometre, in the civil service to reimburse officers for the expenses incurred when they are required to use their own car on official business are as follows:

Rates per kilometre effective from 1 July 2008

Official Motor Travel in a calendar year	Engine Capacity up to 1200cc	Engine Capacity 1201cc to 1500cc	Engine Capacity 1501cc and over
Up to 6437 km	52.16 cent	61.67 cent	78.76 cent
6438 km & over	28.29 cent	31.49 cent	37.94 cent

The civil service travel and subsistence rates are published on the Department of Finance's website. The rates are reviewed annually on a basis agreed between the Department and the staff unions under the auspices of the Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme. The expenses that are incorporated into the formula can be divided into two types of costs. Firstly, there are the running costs which include petrol, oil, tyres, maintenance and servicing and secondly there are the overhead costs which include replacement costs, insurance, road tax and licence. Arrangements similar to those in the civil service apply in other areas of the public service although some elements of other schemes may differ from those in the civil service scheme.

I understand that there are varying arrangements in the private sector. This could include the provision of cars, annual allowances and mileage rates. However, the Revenue Commissioners accept that the civil service schedule of rates no more than reimburse actual costs incurred and, accordingly, may be paid free of tax. Amounts up to these rates may also be paid free of tax by employers in the private sector.

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

172. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether the Parliamentary Draftsman's office should have its own Accounting Officer in view of the fact that its work is separate in nature from the advisory role of the Attorney General's office

[Deputy Richard Bruton.]

and requires financial independence to allow it to be innovative and achieve best value for money. [42189/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** By virtue of Article 30.1 of the Constitution and section 6 of the Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924 and the ninth part of the schedule to that Act, the Attorney General has control and responsibility for the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government. The function of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel is to draft Government Bills and Government Orders. The Office also drafts many but not all Statutory Instruments on behalf of Ministers of the Government, Ministers of State and certain State Authorities. The Office is an integral part of the Office of the Attorney General. Accordingly, I see no need to alter the current arrangements for accountability.

#### **Tax Collection.**

173. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Finance the reason for the delay in processing the P21 for a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42196/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that Form P21 for the year 2007 will issue to the Taxpayer within 7 working days. The Revenue Commissioners have no record of any previous requests from this taxpayer.

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

174. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Finance the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42221/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** In response to the Deputy's question there are no organisations or agencies under the remit of my Department which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to recent budgetary measures.

#### **Departmental Offices.**

175. **Deputy Brendan Kenneally** asked the Minister for Finance if the VRT office (details supplied) is being closed; if so, the reasons for this closure; the implications it will have on travel and distance for those who will have twice the journey to make; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42229/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Revenue's Border Midlands West Region has the largest geographical spread of all Revenue regions. The number of small offices located in this region is a legacy of the prior existence of Customs and Excise stations which, since 1993, are no longer needed in the context of the Single Market. Generally, only limited services are delivered from these small offices.

The functions carried out in the Lifford office have been reviewed and it has been established that there is an overriding business case to integrate these functions into other nearby Revenue locations in Co. Donegal. This position is made more urgent by the condition of the building in Lifford. The structure has serious health and safety issues and would, in any event, require total rebuilding in a different location. The decision has therefore been taken that the reasonable option is to close Lifford and to move the functions elsewhere. The Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) functions are moving from Lifford to Donegal Town. Revenue's on-line facilities

(ROS) have greatly reduced the demand for service at their Vehicle Registration Offices. All new vehicles can be registered using ROS. Indeed, each of the main dealers in Co. Donegal currently uses ROS for this purpose. No attendance at a Vehicle Registration Office (VRO) is necessary.

In addition, a valuation enquiry facility is available on the Revenue website, allowing all customers to obtain VRT quotations for second-hand vehicles on-line. The registration process for second-hand vehicles has been simplified and it is no longer necessary to physically examine all such vehicles as had been the case previously. There is also a facility for Customers to register vehicles by post without the need to bring their vehicles to a Revenue office. These initiatives have greatly assisted the successful consolidation of vehicle registration services into the larger Revenue centres.

In order to register a vehicle on-line, the VRT must be paid at the time of registration. A deferred payment or FACT (Flexible Accounting of Cash Transactions) facility is available to dealers for this purpose. The deferred payment account is maintained by the dealers in their own bank. The FACT account is a payment account maintained with Revenue. Amounts due in respect of VRT are debited automatically from those accounts at the time of vehicle registration. Lodgements can be made by dealers to their FACT accounts by cheques presented in person or received by post at the VRO. Electronic funds transfer is another method by which dealers can lodge money to their FACT accounts. Staff at the VRO are available to assist members of the motor trade in arranging the payment method best suited to their business requirements.

Based on service demands, the alternatives available and the need for Revenue to make effective use of resources, the consolidation of vehicle registration services into Donegal town is reasonable and will not cause undue difficulty for Customers in the county.

#### **Flood Relief.**

176. **Deputy Edward O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding a project (details supplied) in County Cork. [42299/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh):** The Minister for Finance has now formally confirmed the Munster Blackwater (Fermoy North) Drainage Scheme as required by the Arterial Drainage Acts. Following a direction from the Department of Finance, the Office of Public Works is in the process of re-tendering for a Civil Engineering Contractor for the Scheme works under the new (fixed-price) Government conditions of contract for construction works. OPW hopes to appoint a contractor early in 2009, with construction works to commence shortly after that appointment.

#### **Tax Code.**

177. **Deputy Brian O’Shea** asked the Minister for Finance the proposals he has to address the concerns of a group (details supplied) in regard to the changes announced in budget 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42313/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** A response has issued from my Department, in relation to correspondence received, to the group referred to by the Deputy. The response addresses the issues raised in the correspondence and refers the group in question to the relevant provisions as set out in the Finance Bill.

#### **Tax Yield.**

178. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance the number of public servants

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earning amounts (details supplied); if he will provide an estimate of the average PAYE and PRSI take for each band; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42344/08]

179. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance the number of individuals earning amounts (details supplied); if he will provide the average PAYE and PRSI take for each income band; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42345/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 178 and 179 together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the latest relevant sector-based information available on employees taxed under the PAYE system is derived from income tax returns filed for the income tax year 2005 and representing about 96 per cent of all returns expected at the time the data were compiled for analytical purposes. On this basis the information requested by the Deputy is set out as follows.

Income Tax Year 2005

Range of Gross income	Public Sector Employees		All Employees	
	Total Number	Average Liability	Total Number	Average Liability
€		€		€
€0 – €10,000	52,466	3	414,814	2
€10,001 – €20,000	60,709	168	375,237	227
€20,001 – €30,000	66,801	1,442	333,581	1,534
€30,001 – €40,000	66,967	4,050	223,035	3,870
€40,001 – €50,000	43,671	7,386	133,755	6,882
€50,001 – €75,000	51,747	11,797	154,087	11,278
€75,001 – €100,000	17,226	19,103	49,335	19,576
€100,001 – €150,000	8,732	30,639	24,416	31,938
€150,001 – €300,000	855	56,062	4,961	60,297
Over €300,000	14	159,465	332	204,264
Totals	369,188	5,302	1,713,553	3,637

*Notes:*

The figures for average tax liability were obtained by dividing the total tax liability for each income range by the corresponding total numbers in each range.

The sector identifier used on the tax records is based on the 4 digit NACE code (Rev. 1) which is an internationally recognised economic activity code system.

The information provided in relation to public sector employees is based on activities which are classified in the NACE code system as Public administration and defence; compulsory social security, Education and Health and Social work but excluding the categories of Driving School Activities, Dental Practice Activities and Veterinary Activities as being more appropriate to the private sector.

A married couple which has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

The source of the information provided in relation to numbers and tax is the P35 end year returns filed by employers in respect of their employees but does not include the corresponding



figures relating to PAYE taxpayers who are required to return an income tax return form 11 where non-PAYE income is greater than €3,174.

The Revenue Commissioners do not have any information on the income distribution of PRSI liability which is a matter for the Minister for Social and Family Affairs.

#### **Tax Code.**

180. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties created for public transport operators, particularly in rural areas, with the ending of the excise fuel rebate in recent weeks; his plans to replace this rebate; the assistance he intends giving these companies to enable them to continue providing bus services, particularly for rural and peripheral areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42364/08]

197. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Finance the steps that have been taken by his Department to put in place an internal mechanism for transport operators to replace the excise duty refund for public transport services, which terminated on 31 October 2008 and in view of assurances given if same has now been attended to and a scheme worked out with the relevant Departments to put in place an appropriate alternative refund mechanism, which would comply with EU legislation and which is operated with other EU member states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42720/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 197 together.

As the Deputies are aware, the fuel duty rebate was withdrawn with effect from 1 November 2008 following the ending of a special derogation under the EU Energy Tax Directive 2003. A similar situation affects all Member States who had derogations under the Directive. The Department of Transport and other relevant Departments, in conjunction with my Department, examined and considered alternative options at length. In the end, it was not found feasible to introduce an alternative non-tax scheme on a cost-neutral basis and within EU rules.

However, in general recognition of the pressures being experienced by public transport providers and road hauliers it was decided not to increase excise on diesel fuel, for the fifth consecutive Budget. In addition, despite our present difficult Budgetary conditions, I have been able to continue to provide very considerable resources to the Minister for Transport for public bus services throughout the country.

#### **School Services Staff.**

181. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Finance the progress made on establishing a forum to determine the terms and conditions on which school secretaries and caretakers operate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42371/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** As the new Partnership Agreement has now been ratified by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, arrangements to establish the forum are now in train. All relevant parties have been invited to attend an initial meeting scheduled for early December.

#### **Urban Renewal Schemes.**

182. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for Finance if he received approval from the European Commission for the new tax incentive scheme announced to facilitate the relocation of facilities (details supplied) as part of budget 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42378/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** In my Budget speech on 14th October, I announced the introduction of a new tax incentive scheme to facilitate the removal and relocation of Seveso-listed industrial facilities which hinder the residential and commercial regeneration of Docklands in urban areas. The EU Seveso Directive seeks to protect public safety by placing land-use restrictions on new residential and commercial development near locations where potentially dangerous activities are undertaken. The Deputy will also be aware that I indicated in my speech that this scheme will be subject to clearance by the European Commission from a State Aids perspective.

I understand that there were some initial discussions with the EU Commission on the possible use of tax incentives to assist the regeneration of the Cork Docklands, but that these were undertaken by officials from a number of Departments represented on the Cork Docklands Development Forum and involved matters relating to the work of that Body. However, they did include the possibility of incentivising the removal and relocation of Seveso-listed industrial facilities, but this was only discussed in a general manner and did not cover specific proposals to secure their removal and relocation.

Discussions have not taken place on the incentive announced in my Budget speech and detailed in the Finance Bill which was published on 20th November. It is expected that officials from my Department will engage shortly with the EU Commission on the provisions contained in the Finance Bill. It should be noted that these provisions are of general applicability and are, therefore, wider than the narrower focus of the earlier, preliminary, discussions which focussed on Cork only.

#### **Tax Yield.**

183. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue Government gains from increasing the taxi fare introduced by the regulator, based on the current number of taxis available. [42384/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** In accordance with the Taxi Regulation Act 2003, the setting of fares is a matter for the Commissioner for Taxi Regulation, who is appointed by my colleague the Minister for Transport. Transport charges, including taxi fares, are exempt from value added tax. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to estimate the proportion of certain price increases on individual items (such as taxi fares) that would convert into tax revenue.

#### **Interest Rates.**

184. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Finance the positive effects of the recent drop in interest rates on the Irish economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42400/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** As part of a coordinated move with other central banks, the European Central Bank reduced its policy interest rates by 50 basis points on 8th October 2008. The ECB cut rates by another 50 basis points at its Governing Council meeting on 6th November. These interest rate cuts should have a positive impact upon the Irish economy if fully passed on at the retail level. The main channel is through a reduction in the repayment burden for the servicing of existing debt by households and businesses, thereby boosting real disposable incomes.

#### **Oil Prices.**

185. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Finance the positive effects of the recent

drop in crude oil prices for the Irish economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42401/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** Oil prices have eased recently on global commodity markets. This is primarily due to a fall in demand arising from a weakening in the international economic outlook. This development will have a number of positive impacts upon the Irish economy. Measured in euros, the wholesale price of oil has fallen by over 40 percent from its peak reached during July. This decline has led to a fall in the price of transport fuel and home heating oil in Ireland in recent months and has placed downward pressure on overall inflation thereby supporting real disposable incomes.

#### **Financial Institutions Support Scheme.**

186. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance the itemised and ancillary and administrative costs, including consultancy and advisory costs, with respect to the bank guarantee scheme; if these costs are to be absorbed by the State or if they are to be passed on to the covered institutions; the way they are to be allocated between the covered institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42404/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** As regards the cost incurred by my Department, all internal work associated with the Scheme is being carried out by the reallocation of existing staff so that any associated costs are being met from within the Department's allocated administrative budget. In addition, legal advice has been obtained from both the Attorney General's Office, within their existing allocation, and from a private sector law firm. Costs of the latter are not yet to hand. Furthermore, the Deputy will be aware that a particular company has been retained for an initial fee of €2 million to exclusively assist the Government by providing general, strategic and specific technical advice on the Irish banking sector over the two year period of the contract.

This fee, and other costs, should be considered in the context, not only of the potentially serious situation being dealt with, but also of covered institutions paying fees of €1 billion over the period of the guarantee. The thinking behind the Charging Model is set out in some detail in the Annexe to the Scheme. Paragraph 16 of the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme 2008 comprehensively sets out the charge that is to be paid by each covered institution that benefits from the Guarantee, including any administrative costs incurred by the State in the process of the Guarantee. This is amplified in the Guarantee Acceptance Deed executed by each covered institution, which provides that covered institutions shall reimburse certain legal and other costs incurred in the process of the Guarantee. While the detailed costs are not determined at this stage, these will be recouped from the covered institutions in due course.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

187. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the costs involved in off-site rental storage of departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [42419/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** The cost of storage in designated document storage centres may vary on a monthly basis depending on the number of boxes in storage. In the case of my own Department there are some 11,516 held in rented storage for the month of November 2008. The storage cost per box stored varies depending on the cubic capacity of the box in question. The cost per cubic meter for storage in the month of November amounted to €0.3570 per cubic meter of space occupied. The cubic quantity of space occupied amounted to 14,498.23 which resulted in a cost of storage for November 2008 of € 5,175.87 exclusive of 21%

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

VAT. The Office of Public Works manage arrangements for the off site storage of documents for a number of Government departments. I have been informed that they will respond directly to Deputy McGrath on this matter.

### **Tax Collection.**

188. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare has received all of their entitlements in relation to tax rebates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42563/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that, on the basis of the information available, all tax rebates due have been made to the person.

189. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a breakdown by both age and income tax band of the numbers of people claiming tax relief at source on private health insurance payments. [42564/08]

190. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of people aged over 50, 60, 70 and 80 years respectively paying income tax at the standard 20% rate who are availing of tax relief at source on private health insurance payments. [42565/08]

191. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Finance the number of people aged over 50, 60, 70 and 80 years respectively paying income tax at the marginal 41% rate who are availing of tax relief at source on private health insurance payments. [42566/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 to 191, inclusive, together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that information on the ages or the marginal income tax rates of individual claimants is not required or captured for the purpose of administering tax relief for medical insurance premia in the Tax Relief at Source (TRS) System. There is, therefore, no statistical basis on which the information requested by the Deputy could be provided.

### **Consultancy Contracts.**

192. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42576/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** In 2006 my Department issued the Guidelines on the Engagement of Consultants and Other External Support in the Civil Service. These guidelines require that external support is procured only where it is necessary and that value for money is obtained. My department requires that each office and department confirms regularly that these guidelines are applied.

In addition, all Departments and Offices have been instructed that they must halve expenditure on consultancies and provision for such services has been similarly curtailed in the 2009 estimates. The following tables set out details of expenditure on consultants, the numbers and

names of consultants engaged by my Department and the offices under its aegis (with the exception of the Office of the Revenue Commissioners) in the years 2006 and 2007.

2006	Office	No. of Consultants	Amount Paid
			€,000
2006	Commission for Public Service Appointments	11	173
2006	Comptroller & Auditor General	10	297
2006	Department of Finance	8	1,249
2006	Office of Public Works	9	142
2006	Ombudsman	7	38
2006	Public Appointments Service	26	389
2006	State Lab	4	44
2006	Valuation Office	5	74

2007	Office	No. of Consultants	Amount Paid
			€,000
2007	Commission for Public Service Appointments	8	227
2007	Comptroller & Auditor General	6	170
2007	Department of Finance	20	1,657
2007	Office of Public Works	10	258
2007	Ombudsman	5	47
2007	Public Appointments Service	15	231
2007	State Lab	3	70
2007	Valuation Office	5	68

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Non-Revenue Contractors 2006-2007

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Accuvest Investment Advisors (Department of Finance)  
 Advanced Organisation & Management Development Ltd (PAS)  
 Agtel the media element (PAS)  
 Amarach Consulting (Valuation Office)  
 Animo (PAS)  
 Anne Butler (OPW)  
 Artemis Consulting Ltd (PAS)  
 Brian O'Cleirigh (CPSA)  
 Brooker Consulting (OPW)  
 Brookhill Ltd (G&AG)  
 Calyx Software Ltd (formerly Mentec Int Ltd) (PAS)  
 Cara Data Processing Ltd (PAS)  
 Cassin Scott Associates Ltd (CPSA)  
 Cassin-Scott Associates (PAS)  
 Catalysto Limited (PAS)  
 Clare O'Meara (State Lab)  
 Communiqué International (PAS)  
 Complete Network Technology (OPW)

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Non-Revenue Contractors 2006-2007

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Cornamona Health and Safety (Department of Finance)  
Cornwell Management Consultants (G&AG)  
Crowleys DFK (Ombudsman)  
Crowleys DFK (PAS)  
Curley Smith (Valuation Office)  
DalRiada (PAS)  
Dell Computer (Ireland) (PAS)  
Delve Research (Ombudsman)  
Diarmaid Mc Guinness SC (PAS)  
DLA Piper Rudnick (Department of Finance)  
DRS Data Services Ltd (PAS)  
Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) (Department of Finance)  
Eirtrade Services Ltd (PAS)  
Empower Solutions (PAS)  
Epsilon Consulting (G&AG)  
Ernst & Young (Department of Finance)  
Ernst & Young (G&AG)  
Escat (OPW)  
Europus (CPSA)  
Fujitsu Services (OPW)  
Golden & Associates (G&AG)  
Goodbody Economic Consultants (Department of Finance)  
Goodbody Economic Consultants (Department of Finance)  
Grant Thornton (OPW)  
Graphics IT (PAS)  
Graphics IT (PAS)  
Halley and Associates (Valuation Office)  
Hay Group Ireland (Department of Finance)  
Hays IT (Valuation Office)  
Helm Corporation Limited (OPW)  
Horwath Consulting Ireland Ltd (Department of Finance)  
Indecon (Ireland) (Department of Finance)  
Indecon International Economic Consultants (Department of Finance)  
Ingrebourne Limited (PAS)  
Institute for Employment Studies (PAS)  
Institute of Public Administration (CPSA)  
Institute of Public Administration (G&AG)  
Institute of Public Administration (Valuation Office)  
IPMA-HR (PAS)  
IT Force Ltd (PAS)  
Ita Mangan (Ombudsman)  
Jennifer Armstrong (CPSA)  
Jenny Smyth & Associates (Department of Finance)  
Jenny Smyth & Associates (Department of Finance)  
JLS Technology (PAS)  
Lan Communications (OPW)  
Lansdowne Market Research Ltd (PAS)

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**Non-Revenue Contractors 2006-2007**

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Life Strategies Ltd. (Department of Finance)  
Lisney Limited (G&AG)  
Liz Early (CPSA)  
Major C B Holden (PAS)  
Mary Southwell Byrne (CPSA)  
Matheson Ormsby Prentice (CPSA)  
Matheson Ormsby Prentice (G&AG)  
Maureen Caufield (OPW)  
McGarry Ni Eanaigh (OPW)  
Media Group (Valuation Office)  
Mentec (CPSA)  
Mentec (State Lab)  
Mercer Consulting (Department of Finance)  
Most Consultants (Valuation Office)  
Nifast (Department of Finance)  
Nifast (Ombudsman)  
Nifast (PAS)  
Nifast (State Lab)  
Noel Ryan & Associates (CPSA)  
Norcontel (G&AG)  
Pat Firth (State Lab)  
Paul Allen & Associates (PAS)  
Petrus Consulting (Department of Finance)  
Petrus Consulting (G&AG)  
Polaris (State Lab)  
Price Waterhouse Coopers (Department of Finance)  
Price Waterhouse Coopers (Valuation Office)  
Price Waterhouse Coopers (PAS)  
Prof. J. Heywood (PAS)  
Professional Solutions Ltd. (OPW)  
Prospectus (Ombudsman)  
Redacteurs (Valuation Office)  
RITS (OPW)  
Russell Brennan Keane (Ombudsman)  
Safety Solutions Limited (Department of Finance)  
SHL (Ireland) Ltd (PAS)  
Social & Market Research (Ombudsman)  
Sogeti (OPW)  
Sureskills.Com (PAS)  
Symbiant Consultancy Services Ltd (CPSA)  
Terminal 4 (OPW)  
TerminalFour Solutions (Ombudsman)  
The Performance Partnership (PAS)  
The Reward Partnership (Department of Finance)  
Tierney & Associates (PAS)  
Unit 4 Agresso Security Solutions (PAS)

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Non-Revenue Contractors 2006-2007

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University of Glasgow (G&AG)  
 Valerie Judge (CPSA)  
 Version 1 (OPW)  
 Visibility Europe (OPW)  
 Willis Risk (State Lab)  
 Wilson Hartnell Public Relations (Ombudsman)  
 XML Workshop Ltd (Ombudsman)

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193. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of expenditure on consultancy by the Revenue Commissioners in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by Revenue Commissioners in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by the Revenue Commissioners in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42589/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the number of consultants engaged by them in 2006 and 2007 were 38 and 31 respectively. The names of these consultants are set below.

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Consultants engaged by Revenue 2006 and 2007

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20:20 Vision  
 Accenture,  
 Achilles Procurement Serv.  
 Actons Solicitors  
 Alchemy Films Ltd  
 AMAS Ltd  
 Arthur Nowlan  
 Ballycotton Marine Services.  
 Bearing Point  
 Bennis Design  
 Bull Inform. Systems Irl.  
 C. Moore & Associates  
 Carlisle Advisory Services  
 Catalysto Ltd.  
 Cedardata Software Ltd  
 Ciaran Feighery,  
 Computer Associates  
 Conlon Crotty Murray & Co  
 Copper Reed Studio Ltd.  
 Costello Commercial  
 Creative A.D.  
 Culturewise  
 DeBurca Rare Books  
 Deloitte consultants.  
 DeVeres

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Consultants engaged by Revenue 2006 and 2007

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Devlin Editing  
Douglas Bennet  
Dublin university  
Enterprise Ireland  
Frontend  
Gamma Ltd,  
Gartner Group Irl. Ltd.  
Gerard O'Leary  
Gerry McMahon  
Goodbody Economic Consultants  
H.M. Revenue & Customs  
Innovative Systems Incorp  
Interactive Innovation Ltd.  
IQ Content Ltd.  
James Adam, Fine Art Auctions  
James Nash  
Liam O'hAodha  
Luminary Solutions  
Mealys  
Media Market,  
Michael McGrath BCL  
Migration Solutions,  
Ms. Marie Armah Kwantreng  
Niamh Brodie  
Polaris HR Ltd.  
Psychological Consultancy Services Ltd.  
Rational Commerce  
Royal Irish Academy  
Sean Mc Cormack,  
SHRC Ltd  
Sysnet Ltd, Knocklyon,  
Tony Fitzpatrick  
Trutz Haase,  
Whyte & Sons Auctioneers

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Expenditure on consultants in 2006 amounted to €27.678m and in 2007 amounted to €0.317m.

Up to and including 2006, Information Technology Expenditure in relation to outsourced software development was funded from Subhead A7 — Consultancy Services. Since 2007 this expenditure is captured as IT External Service Provision under Subhead A5- (Office Machinery and other Office Supplies and Related Services). This expenditure is incurred in developing and providing support for critical Information and Communications Technology (ICT) projects, as well as the maintenance and enhancement of underlying application frameworks — their back-office Integrated Taxation Services and the public-facing Revenue On-Line Services. These external resources are not consultants who 'advise and recommend', but who help develop tangible assets, in the form of software, which are recognised by the C&AG in the

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

annual appropriation accounts. Expenditure on IT External Services Provision in 2007 amounted to € 25.975m.

In December 2007 an independent Value For Money Review was completed into the Revenue Commissioners' expenditure on external resources in 2006. The overall conclusion of the review was that expenditure on ICT external resources was well managed and delivered value for money. The report also described the measures that Revenue was taking and is continuing to take to reduce the expenditure on external resources. These measures, which are incorporated into Revenue's current ICT Strategy, include:

- Adopting a formal multi-sourcing strategy as regards external resources to maximise value;
- Growing back internal ICT capacity by recruitment of ICT staff at Administrative Officer and Executive Officer levels;
- Exploiting a judicious blend of in-house resources and multiple external sources to deliver results;
- Setting up a specialized procurement and vendor management unit to drive out value for money.

Revenue strictly follows the Department of Finance's Guidelines on the Engagement of Consultants and Other External Support in the Civil Service. These guidelines require that external support is procured only where it is necessary and that value for money is obtained. As for all Departments and Offices, Revenue has been instructed to halve expenditure on consultancy in 2009.

#### **Departmental Properties.**

194. **Deputy Chris Andrews** asked the Minister for Finance if the regulations governing Iveagh Gardens could be reviewed in view of a number of recent incidents of local children being ejected from the park for playing football in the recessed area which was originally formally laid out for tennis and bowling courts. [42592/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh):** The Iveagh Gardens were laid out as exhibition gardens during the 19th century, with many unusual and unique garden features such as the Maze, Rosarium, Cascade, the Grottoes and the Sunken Archery Grounds. On account of its designation as a National Historic Park, its small size and the fact that its features are designed primarily for passive recreation, it is not proposed to facilitate any active sporting activities in the Iveagh Gardens. I am also advised that because of the high water table its continuous use for active sports would cause serious damage to the ground surface.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

195. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42625/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** In 2007 my Department spent €160,916.32 on mileage allowances. The total number of kilometres for which mileage allowance was claimed was 224,159. The total number of trips taken in the year amounted to 1,176 and the number of



claimants for the year was 212. A detailed breakdown of the figures by engine size is contained in the following table:

Engine Size	Summary Details	Totals
0cc to 1200cc	Claim Value	€2,199.06
	Kilometres	4,238
	No. of Trips Taken	32
	Number of Claimants	12
1201cc to 1500cc	Claim Value	€45,692.12
	Kilometres	74,166
	No. of Trips Taken	381
	Number of Claimants	76
1501cc and above	Claim Value	€113,025.14
	Kilometres	145,755
	No. of Trips Taken	763
	Number of Claimants	124

### Garda Stations.

196. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the plans for the future use of an old Garda station (details supplied) in Dublin 11 which will shortly become vacant. [42680/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh):** It is anticipated that the new Garda station facility at Finglas will be ready for occupation in Spring 2009. Accordingly, plans for the use or disposal of the existing station building are still under consideration.

*Question No. 197 answered with Question No. 180.*

### Ministerial Staff.

198. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42904/08]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan):** The staffing of my private and constituency office is set out below:

#### Private Office

Title	Number	Annual Salary Range
Administrative Officer	1	€45,510 – €64,296
Executive Officer	2	€30,566 – €50,510
Staff Officer	1	€34,941 – €46,655
Clerical Officer*	5	€23,174 – €40,417

\*Including 1 work sharing.

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## Constituency Office

Title	Number	Annual Salary Range
Executive Officer (on Higher Executive Officer duties)	1	€46,558 – €59,097 plus allowance retained from former duties
Clerical Officer	2	€23,174 – €40,417
Personal Assistant	1	€46,558 – €55,030
Personal Secretary	1	€23,181 – €44,726

To date in 2008, salary and related allowance payments in my office amounted to €511,697. Overtime for the same period is €43,135. The amount paid in expenses for foreign and domestic travel (including attendance by the Minister and officials at monthly ECOFIN meetings), official entertainment and miscellaneous for the same period was €51,861. This expenditure covers costs incurred on behalf of staff in the offices and by the two Ministers who have had charge of the Office during that period. The financial reporting system currently in use in my Department does not differentiate between costs incurred in the Private and Constituency Offices.

**Food Safety.**

199. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health and Children the steps she is taking to ensure that all bottled water sold in the Irish market is tested to ensure compliance with either legal or EU guidelines; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42150/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace):** Packaged water, including bottled water, is tested in accordance with the following regulatory provisions; The European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 369 of 2006), the European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 225 of 2007) and the European Communities (General Food Law) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No. 747 of 2007).

The above regulations include microbiological and chemical parameters for bottled water. There is ongoing testing of all bottled water facilities and the frequency of testing increases in line with production volumes. Bottled water plants are inspected by Environmental Health Officers from the Health Service Executive operating under a Service Contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and are visited regularly. Samples are taken and tested generally as part of routine inspections. The primary responsibility for ensuring that only safe food is placed on the market rests with the food business operator, who is also responsible for ensuring that food (including bottled water), satisfies the requirements of food law.

**Grant Payments.**

200. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason for the delay in the final phase of payment from the dormant accounts funds in respect of a project (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42194/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** POBAL is the body tasked with administering the Dormant Accounts funds on behalf of the Department of Health and Children. POBAL pays grants to approved beneficiaries out of advance funds received from the HSE, on the approval of my Department and the Department of Finance. I understand that the named centre was approved for a grant of €86,878. To date, €78,190 has been paid leaving a balance of €8,688. Under the terms of the Dormant Accounts

Funds, the final 10% is withheld pending confirmation of completion of the project. POBAL have confirmed that once the Centre have reported that 100% has been spent and that the project is completed, it will be in a position to seek reimbursement of the balance due.

#### **Health Services.**

201. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a person (details supplied). [42234/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this case investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Grant Payments.**

202. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 136 of 1 October 2008, if funding will continue for an organisation (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42244/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** POBAL is the body tasked with administering the Dormant Accounts Funds on behalf of the Department of Health and Children. POBAL pays grants to approved beneficiaries out of advance funds received from the HSE, on the approval of my Department and the Department of Finance. I understand that the named Centre was approved for a total grant of €50,000. To date €29,300 has been paid to the Centre. The Centre recently applied for a further instalment of €7,777 from the Dormant Accounts Fund. I understand that POBAL paid €3,800 (49%) of that amount on the 5 November, 2008. It is anticipated that the balance of that instalment will be processed in due course.

#### **Health Services.**

203. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42272/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. The Executive, therefore, is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Medicinal Products.**

204. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health and Children when legislation will be brought to Dáil Éireann to deal with shops selling herbal pills and party pills (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42389/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I am aware that a range of substances often referred to by the generic term 'legal highs', which mimic or cause effects similar to illicit substances, are available in so-called 'head shops' and are currently not scheduled under Misuse of Drugs legislation. These substances include 'herbal pills' and 'party pills'. The

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and regulations made thereunder regulate and control the import, export, production, supply and possession of a range of named narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances listed in the Schedules to the Act. Substances are scheduled under the Act in accordance with Ireland's obligations under international conventions and/or where there is evidence that the substances are causing significant harm to public health in Ireland, which could merit the criminalisation of their sale and use.

The list of scheduled substances is kept under review on an ongoing basis. In particular my Department reviews any evidence that substances are being abused and are causing significant harm to public health. For example, in 2006 psychotropic ('magic') mushrooms, which were on sale in 'head shops', were brought under control and their possession and sale is now an offence. Furthermore, following the European Council of Ministers' decision in March 2008 to bring Benzylpiperazine (BZP) under control, which was deemed to pose an excessive risk as a 'party pill', my Department will be introducing regulations to make the possession and sale of BZP illegal. I expect that the legislation necessary to introduce control measures will be in place before the deadline of March 2009.

### **Food Safety.**

205. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she is satisfied with the policy for establishment and maintenance of standards in production of bottled water here; if she will review bottled water labelling to identify three types of source on every bottle for consumers; if not, the reason for same; if a water bottling company must have a pre-approved testing system to comply with Food Safety Authority of Ireland quality control standards; if the bottling company is obliged to conduct daily tests for compliance with these standards; and the frequency of quality control checks by the FSAI on water bottling companies. [42660/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace):** Packaged water, including bottled water, is subject to several sets of regulations in Ireland and I am satisfied that there is an appropriate legal framework in place for the establishment and maintenance of standards in production of bottled water. The regulations covering the production of bottled water include the European Communities (Hygiene of Foodstuffs) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 369 of 2006), the European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No 225 of 2007) and the European Communities (General Food Law) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No 747 of 2007).

The bottling plants come within the definition of food business operators under EU legislation and, as such, must meet the requirements set down in EC Regulation (EC) 852/2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs which was transposed into national law in 2006. Consequently the operators of water production/bottling plants must ensure that they meet high food safety standards set out in the legislation. In addition there must be in place a food safety management system based on the principles of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and staff must have appropriate training. All bottled water plants must register with the Health Service Executive which is the competent authority in this regard.

In addition to general hygiene requirements applicable to the processing plants, there are separate requirements in relation to water. These are set down in the European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No 225 of 2007). These requirements include microbiological, chemical and labelling parameters, including sale descriptions. There is ongoing testing of all bottled water facilities and the frequency of testing increases in line with production volumes. There is no

requirement for a pre-approved testing system but the business operator must put in place a safety management system which ensures the water is safe for consumption and meets all legal requirements.

There are three types of bottled water namely natural mineral water, spring water and other waters. The use of the designations “natural mineral water” and “spring water” is dealt with in S.I. No 225 of 2007. These designations can only be used when the waters meet defined conditions and consumers should be able to distinguish between the different types by reading the label. All bottled water, regardless of which category they fall into must be safe for human consumption.

Bottled water plants are inspected by Environmental Health Officers from the Health Service Executive operating under a Service Contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and are visited regularly. Samples are taken and tested generally as part of routine inspections.

*Question No. 206 answered with Question No. 83.*

*Question No. 207 answered with Question No. 80.*

### **Homeless Persons.**

208. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the breakdown of the Health Service Executive’s spending on youth homelessness for 2007 and 2008; and the expected spending for 2009. [42122/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews):** The Deputy’s question relates to the management and delivery of health and social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

209. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there was a difference in the estimated expenditure on homelessness as outlined in the annual Health Service Executive service plan and the actual amount spent in 2007 and 2008; if so, the amount of the difference; and the reason for the difference. [42123/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Deputy’s question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

*Question No. 210 answered with Question No. 131.*

### **Health Service Allowances.**

211. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position of an application for domiciliary care allowance by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare in respect of their son; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42134/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Deputy’s question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004.

[Deputy John Moloney.]

Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this case investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Accommodation.**

212. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of long stay beds for older people in Cherry Orchard Hospital; the number of these beds currently available; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42135/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hocht):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. The Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Health Services.**

213. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the speech and language therapy resources that will be made available from January 2009 to meet the demand for services at a special needs school (details supplied) in County Cork. [42142/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

214. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will receive speech therapy services. [42143/08]

249. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will receive speech therapy services. [42420/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 214 and 249 together.

The Deputy's questions relate to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have these matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Accident and Emergency Services.**

215. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will provide additional beds in the accident and emergency department of Beaumont Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42153/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall



Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Hospital Staff.**

216. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of consultant ophthalmic surgeons attached to Beaumont Hospital; her plans to increase this number; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42154/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Hospital Services.**

217. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children the wards currently in operation at Our Lady's Hospital in Cashel; the plans there are to provide additional services in the hospital; the number of full-time and part-time staff employed there; if all required staff for these services have been recruited; if any posts are outstanding; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42179/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Nursing Homes.**

218. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children if any complaints in the past 18 months in relation to nursing homes which have been upheld related to nursing homes in south Tipperary. [42206/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. The Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

219. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number and names of organisations or agencies under the auspices of her Department which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42223/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The programme of rationalisation in the health sector involves a total of fifteen agencies as follows:

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

- 3 agencies are to be amalgamated to form a new Public Health and Medicines Safety Authority
  - Food Safety Authority of Ireland
  - Office of Tobacco Control
  - Irish Medicines Board
- 6 agencies are to be integrated into the Health Service Executive
  - National Cancer Screening Service — National Cancer Registry
  - Drug Treatment Centre Board
  - Crises Pregnancy Agency
  - Post Graduate Medical and Dental Board
  - National Council for Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery
- 3 agencies to be integrated into the Health and Social Care Professionals Council
  - National Social Work Qualifications Board
  - Opticians Board
  - Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council.

My Department's measures for the rationalisation of agencies within the health sector have been prepared primarily in the context of the OECD's recommendations in relation to the need for a more integrated public service. While there is clearly a need to secure efficiencies from the rationalisation programme, the primary aim of these measures is to streamline service delivery, professional registration and policy making in a number of areas in the health sector, through the integration and/or amalgamation of function. Efficiencies will derive over time from economies of scale and the elimination of duplication in areas such as recruitment, procurement, payroll and ICT systems.

### **Hospital Services.**

220. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the circumstances of a person (details supplied) in County Louth; if her further attention has been further drawn to the pressures being placed on staff and resources in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42243/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I am aware that some concerns have been raised in relation to the demand for services at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. The Health Service Executive is working to increase the capacity of the hospital through a programme of investment, including the development of a new Accident and Emergency Department. I am not familiar with the circumstances surrounding the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to investigate the issues raised and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### Health Service Staff.

221. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the assessments that have been made of the expected costs and savings that will result from the new consultants' contracts; the expected change in the average cost to the public health services per consultant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42252/08]

222. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the value for money systems in place to ensure that hospital consultants' work in relation to public patients is in accordance with their contract; if there is a recording of the number of procedures they perform, the number of such patients they see of other comparative measure; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42253/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 221 and 222 together.

Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive (HSE) under the Health Act 2004. My Department is in contact with the HSE on the matters raised by the Deputy and I will revert to the Deputy once the requisite information is to hand.

### Pharmacy Services.

223. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children the response of her Department to each individual recommendation in respect of the recommendations contained within the Consumer Strategy Group report directed to her Department; if the recommendations have as of today been implemented in full, in part, or not at all; if, of those recommendations which have not been implemented to date, she will implement them; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42254/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Consumer Strategy Group was established in March 2004 to advise and make recommendations for the development of national consumer policy. The Group's report and recommendations were published in May 2005. Following their publication, a High Level Inter-departmental Committee was established to examine the recommendations and advise on their implementation. The Committee published its final report in February 2006. The Consumer Strategy Group made five recommendations (recommendations 8 to 12 of the report) relating to pharmaceuticals for which my Department is responsible. Since the report was published significant progress has been made by both my Department and the HSE.

Recommendation 8: Change the current methodology for establishing manufacturers' prices of pharmaceuticals. Include a consumer impact assessment to ensure that all consumers are getting best value for money. Under new agreements reached between the HSE and pharmaceutical manufacturers in September 2006, the methodology for establishing manufacturers' prices of drugs and medicines has been changed to ensure greater value for money for both the State and consumers. The basket of countries used for the pricing of new drugs and medicines has been increased to include lower price European countries. Price cuts for off-patent drugs and medicines have been introduced and cost-effectiveness assessment is now possible for high cost items. These changes have resulted in downward pressure on Irish manufacturers' prices bringing them closer to the EU average.

Recommendation 9: Review the GMS/DPS schemes to redress the current imbalance in cross-subsidy of pharmacy incomes by DPS consumer payment. The remuneration of community pharmacists under the various drugs schemes will be reviewed as part of the ongoing

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review of the pharmaceutical supply chain which commenced with the manufacturers' agreements in 2006.

Recommendation 10: Strengthen and broaden the current optional incentive scheme for GPs to encourage generic prescribing. The Indicative Drugs Target Scheme, which was designed to encourage more rational and cost-effective prescribing under the General Medical Services Scheme, was suspended in 2006 as it was found, on expert advice, to be no longer viable in its present form, or meeting its stated objectives.

Recommendation 11: Display prices for branded and generic drugs in pharmacies at the point of purchase. The Consumer Strategy Group also recommended that prices be displayed for all drugs and medicines in pharmacies at point of purchase. There are logistical difficulties in doing this which are further complicated by current differences in retail prices under the various drug schemes. Following the review of pharmacist remuneration it may be possible to consider options in this area.

Recommendation 12: Allow pharmacists to provide generic substitution for branded products. The fifth recommendation of the Group concerned generic substitution by pharmacists. Although generic substitution may contribute towards cost control in the short term, the main driver of increased expenditure on drugs and medicines for both the State and consumers is the increasing volume of prescribed pharmaceuticals. While generic substitution exists in Ireland, the particular nature of the Irish pharmaceutical market does not lend itself to extended generic substitution. The option of off-patent price cuts, agreed under the 2006 pharmaceutical manufacturers' agreements, was pursued as it was considered, on expert advice, to yield greater savings in this area.

In addition, the ongoing review of the drugs supply chain will include consideration of rational and cost-effective prescribing. I have also recently established a group, under the chair of Dr Michael Barry of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics, which will consider, among other things, the capacity for increased generic prescribing by GPs.

### **Nursing Homes Repayment Scheme.**

224. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason the administrators of the health repayment scheme do not state the reason a particular claim is being rejected, but rather give examples in which people might not qualify, without explaining the position in the particular case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42277/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for administering the health repayment scheme in conjunction with the appointed scheme administrator K.P.M.G. and McCann Fitzgerald. The HSE has advised my Department that the scheme administrator provides in respect of each individual rejection an explanation as to the reason why the claim is being rejected. Where applicants require further explanation they can contact the helpline operated by the scheme administrator. (1890 886 886).

### **Hospital Services.**

225. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if, in view of the fact that almost 400 symphysiotomy procedures were carried out on women in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, some taking place after childbirth, she will arrange for an external review to establish the reason for this number of procedures; the outcome of these procedures

generally for the women involved; the need for clarity in these unusual circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42285/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** My predecessor, Minister Martin, met with the Survivors of Symphysiotomy (SOS) Group in late 2003 and agreed that a range of measures would be put in place to support the Group. I subsequently met with the Chairperson of the SOS Group in early 2007 who expressed satisfaction with regard to the progress made in this regard. My Department has asked the Health Service Executive to examine the specific issues raised regarding symphysiotomy practice at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda and to reply directly to the Deputy.

#### **Community Care.**

226. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the effect that the cut-backs on travel allowance by the Health Service Executive will have on community addiction outreach workers; her views on whether communities will suffer as a result of their distances from regional centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40948/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **National Drugs Strategy.**

227. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on the newspaper reports regarding new figures obtained from the report from the national drugs related deaths index that indicate that drug related deaths are running at three times the officially recorded level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40921/08]

230. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views in relation to contradictory newspaper reports which state that the actual deaths from drugs is three times greater than the national drug related index has determined; her further views on whether this reflects a wider demand for drugs than had previously been believed; the steps she is taking to reduce the demand for illicit drugs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33526/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 227 and 230 together.

In 2005, the Department of Health and Children and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform jointly asked the Health Research Board (HRB) to establish a National Drug-Related Deaths Index (NDRDI). The NDRDI data base combines information from four sources — coroners' records; the Hospital In-Patient Enquiry scheme (HIPE); the Central Treatment List (CTL) and the General Mortality Register (GMR). The first report of the NDRDI, covering the 8 year period 1998-2005 was published by the HRB at the beginning of this month. As was to be expected, the number of deaths reported under the new system is greater than those previously reported. Taking the year 2005 as an example, the number of deaths previously reported is 131, while the total number found by the comprehensive data collection method used in the NDRDI is 400.

The high quality of the data available in the NDRDI means that for the first time we can examine the total burden of drug-related mortality in Ireland and strengthen our approach to

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reducing it. My Department will be working with the HSE in this regard. The HSE has in place a range of measures in the area of prevention, treatment, harm reduction and staff training which aim, among other things, to reduce the demand for drugs. The HSE carries out this work in partnership, where appropriate, with the voluntary and community sector and in the wider context of the National Drugs Strategy which is co-ordinated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

In addition, following on from a recommendation in the Report on Drugs Rehabilitation, the HSE is in the process of appointing a national rehabilitation co-ordinator who will chair the National Drug Rehabilitation Implementation Committee which is being established. These developments will build on existing initiatives and facilitate the roll-out of further actions in the Rehabilitation Strategy to support drug users along their care pathway towards re-integration into their community.

228. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the results of the research in relation to the cocaine public awareness campaign; if there was a reduction in demand or in crime figures or in the number seeking health care as a result of the programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40918/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace):** The Deputy's question relates to the funding, management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act, 2004. This includes the development and ongoing implementation of public awareness campaigns. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

229. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of known heroin addicts here; the geographical spread of the addiction; the action taken to reduce the level of addiction; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40916/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** At end September 2008 there were 8,670 opiate users on the central treatment list (CTL) for methadone treatment: their geographic spread among the HSE regions was as follows:

- 4,289 reside in Dublin Mid-Leinster (49.5%);
- 3,017 reside in Dublin North East (34.8%);
- 233 reside in the West and (2.7%);
- 163 reside in the South. (1.9%).

In addition 470 (5.4%) of those on the CTL at the end of September 2008 were being treated in prison. A further 498 people (5.7%) on the CTL were being treated at the Drug Treatment Centre Board in Pearse Street, Dublin. A number of opiate users in both these situations would be from outside the Dublin area. However, since clients move on and off the CTL, the number who would be on the list in a year, for example, is greater than the number who would be recorded in any given month.

Actions to reduce the level of addiction take place within the overall context of the National Drugs Strategy (NDS) 2001-2008 which is co-ordinated by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The HSE has a range of measures in place in the area of prevention, treatment and harm reduction which aim to reduce the level of addiction to heroin. Where



appropriate, it pursues actions with partners in the statutory, voluntary and community sectors. In addition, in line with recommendations in the Report of the Working Group on Drugs Rehabilitation published by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, the HSE is in the process of appointing a national rehabilitation co-ordinator who will chair the National Drug Rehabilitation Implementation Committee which is being established. These developments will help to build on existing initiatives and facilitate the roll-out of further actions in the Rehabilitation Strategy to support drug users along their care pathway towards re-integration into their community.

*Question No. 230 answered with Question No. 227.*

231. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children her views on the increase in the numbers involved in the methadone scheme as operated by the Health Service Executive; the action she proposes or has taken to deal with the matter; the areas involved; if there is a waiting list in relation to participants obtaining a general practitioner to process their application for inclusion; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33516/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

232. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she is satisfied with the number of pharmacists participating in the methadone scheme as operated by the Health Service Executive, in view of the areas involved; the number of methadone users; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33515/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Child Care Services.**

233. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the application for assistance by a person (details supplied) in County Offaly towards the cost of pre-school fees in respect of their son; the reason for the refusal of assistance to this person; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42291/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews):** As the Deputy will be aware, I have responsibility for the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) which has a total allocation of €575 million for the development of childcare services. As part of the NCIP, the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) was introduced in January of this year and supports community childcare services to enable them to provide reduced childcare fees to disadvantaged and low income parents. The Scheme has an allocation of €154.2 million over 2008 -2010 and is additional to the main supports available to all parents to assist them with the care of their childcare, that is Child Benefit and the Early Childcare Supplement.

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Under the CCSS, community childcare services receive subvention to enable them to provide reduced childcare fees to parents who are in receipt of social security and social assistance payments or parents who are engaged in education, training or work experience programmes where an underlying entitlement to such a payment is established. Parents in receipt of low incomes and who hold a medical card or GP visit card or are otherwise disadvantaged can also qualify for subvention under the Scheme. Parents using a community childcare service are asked to complete a declaration form for inclusion in an annual return to my Office. Following verification of the information provided, my Office will advise each of the services participating in the Scheme of the level of subvention, if any, which individual parents qualify for.

While I am not in a position to comment on the particular circumstances of the case in question, I understand that three community childcare services in the Tullamore area are currently in receipt of funding under the CCSS. These are Ballycommon Community Playschool, the Tullamore Traveller After-School Care Programme and Pullough Community Pre-School. If the parent concerned is availing of a pre-school service in one of these facilities and considers that she is not benefiting from an appropriate reduction in her childcare fees, I would suggest that she contact the Childcare Directorate of my Office for further information.

#### **Health Services.**

234. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will intercede and allow a respite care grant application lodged by a person (details supplied) in County Sligo to be sanctioned; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42295/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Deputy's question relates to the management and delivery of health and personal services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this case investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **General Medical Services Scheme.**

235. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a matter in relation to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [42304/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Under the General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme general practitioners hold one of two contract types, i.e. the Fee per Item contract (first introduced in 1972) or the Capitation contract (effective from 1989). These contracts reflect the agreed outcome of negotiations between my Department and the GP representative body, the Irish Medical Organisation. Both contract types contain provisions relating to retirement age. The Capitation contract provides that GPs who entered into contracts on the date of its commencement could hold the contract up to age 70 and that all subsequent GP contractors could hold the contract up to age 65. The Fee per Item contract terminates upon the GP reaching 70 years of age.

In the context of a review of the contractual arrangements for the provision of services under the GMS Scheme and other publicly funded schemes, I have asked my Department, in conjunction with the Health Service Executive (HSE), to examine provisions relating to the age at which GPs must cease to hold contracts. As the HSE has the operational and funding responsibility for the General Medical Services Scheme, it is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has therefore requested the

Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to address this matter and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Health Services.**

236. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a matter in relation to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11. [42305/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hocht):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. The Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Nursing Home Subventions.**

237. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will review the decision made with regard to subvention for nursing home care in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; the reason for a reduced payment especially in view of the impact that this will have on those supporting the nursing care for this person; and if she will halt changes in subvention pending the introduction of the fair deal scheme. [42353/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hocht):** I presume the Deputy is asking whether individual subvention payments will be maintained at their current level until such time as the new Nursing Homes Support Scheme, A Fair Deal, is introduced. The Nursing Home Subvention Scheme is governed by the Health (Nursing Homes) (Amendment) Act 2007. Under the Act, the maximum amount for basic subvention is €300 per week. The Act also provides for enhanced subvention to be paid. However, there is no maximum amount set for enhanced subvention. The amount paid is at the discretion of the HSE and will vary depending on the following criteria:

- the assessed means of the applicant,
- the cost of care in the individual case compared to the level of fees in the locality,
- the amount of basic subvention payable,
- the amount of resources available for the scheme,
- the need for the HSE to ensure that the available resources are distributed in a way that supports applicants as evenly as possible across the country.

Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services.**

238. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 268 of 29 October 2008 and the alleged conflicting evidence

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regarding the suitability of discharge of the patient involved, if she will organise a round table conference involving the appropriate medical staff at Crumlin Hospital and Cork University Hospital, the appropriate community and public health personnel and the parents for the patient involved in order that all the necessary information can be communicated clearly to the family; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42360/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** My Department has made enquiries of the Health Service Executive (HSE) in this matter and has been informed that consultations are in progress between the HSE South and Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin with a view to agreeing a discharge plan to bring the sick baby in question back home to Cork in the coming weeks. I also understand from the HSE that a homecare package has been agreed which will put in place the necessary arrangements, including equipment and professional staff support, for the baby to be cared for in the family home. The HSE has also assured my Department that the parents concerned are fully involved in the arrangements being made to bring their daughter home and the formulation of the plan for her discharge and home care.

239. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children her commitment to the provision of a dedicated stroke unit in Cork. [42369/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace):** The Deputy's question relates to the funding, management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Nursing Home Subventions.**

240. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will review the decision made with regard to subvention for nursing home care in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; the reason for a reduced payment in view of the impact that this will have on those supporting the specialised nursing care for this person; and if she will immediately halt any changes in subvention pending the introduction of the fair deal scheme. [42375/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor):** I presume the Deputy is asking whether individual subvention payments will be maintained at their current level until such time as the new Nursing Homes Support Scheme, A Fair Deal, is introduced. The Nursing Home Subvention Scheme is governed by the Health (Nursing Homes) (Amendment) Act 2007. Under the Act, the maximum amount for basic subvention is €300 per week. The Act also provides for enhanced subvention to be paid. However, there is no maximum amount set for enhanced subvention. The amount paid is at the discretion of the HSE and will vary depending on the following criteria:

- the assessed means of the applicant,
- the cost of care in the individual case compared to the level of fees in the locality,
- the amount of basic subvention payable,

- the amount of resources available for the scheme,
- the need for the HSE to ensure that the available resources are distributed in a way that supports applicants as evenly as possible across the country.

Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Services.**

241. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will provide a full-time neurology service to County Donegal; if there is a critical number of neurological patients in the county; if there is a disproportionate number of neurological patients on the Inishowen peninsula; if a full-time neurology service in Letterkenny would be more useful to Inishowen and Donegal patients than the service in Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42386/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Services for People with Disabilities.**

242. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason €38 million has been diverted from the disability budget since January 2007; the location this money was spent in other areas of the health service; the cutbacks that were made in the disability budget because of this €38 million diminution; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42387/08]

243. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if disabled people without personal assistance have been placed on a second waiting list due to the diversion of this €38 million. [42388/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 242 and 243 together.

My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Health Service Executive to arrange to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy in relation to Disability expenditure in 2007. In the 2008 Budget, €50m was provided to the Health Service Executive (HSE) to fund a range of additional services under the Multi Annual Investment Programme for Disability. Although the commencement of the planned developments in disability services this year had been delayed due to a financial review, I am pleased to inform you that the Executive has informed the Department of Health and Children that it is now in the process of rolling out the planned developments, including 200,000 additional personal assistant/home



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support hours. A total of 3.2 million hours of personal assistant/home support are provided each year by the HSE to people with a disability.

The HSE had indicated that due to the delayed start to some of these developments it expects to spend €33m of the €50m by the end of 2008. The resulting €17m time related savings were included in this Department's budgetary consolidation measures announced to the House in July 2008. In Budget 2009, an additional €10 million was allocated to the HSE for services in the area of disability and mental health. The funding for 2009 will provide for 125 additional therapy posts in the disability and mental health services area, targeted at children of school going age. The additional funding for 2009 will also provide for, once-off funding of €1.75m for suicide prevention initiatives and for mental health projects supporting service users and carers.

### **Hospital Services.**

244. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will confirm that it is still the intention of her Department and the Health Service Executive to transfer the functions of St. Luke's Hospital, Rathgar, Dublin 6 to St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8; if in so doing she recognises the widespread opposition to this move by many current and former patients, as well as local residents; if she will confirm that it is the proposal of her Department and the HSE to sell off the valuable site at St. Luke's to raise capital for her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42393/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The decision to transfer services from St. Luke's was taken by the Government in the context of its consideration of the National Plan for Radiation Oncology Services. The decision is based on expert advice and is designed to ensure that radiation oncology is integrated with all other aspects of cancer care, including surgery and medical oncology. This is in line with best international practice. I am convinced that this model will provide better patient centred treatment with improved quality of service and outcome for patients. The Board of St. Luke's Hospital and its Executive Management Team are fully committed to supporting the Government's decision in relation to the development of radiation oncology.

It is important to note that the transfer of services from St. Luke's Hospital to new facilities at St. James's Hospital is not due to take place for a number of years. In the meantime, two additional linear accelerators and two replacement linear accelerators were commissioned at St. Luke's earlier this year. These will provide much needed interim capacity pending the roll out of the National Plan for Radiation Oncology. No decisions have yet been taken in relation to the future use of the site and facilities at St. Luke's. However, I am anxious to ensure that these resources are utilised in the best interest of the health services.

### **Accident and Emergency Services.**

245. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will provide, in panel format, the number of people who have been treated by the accident and emergency departments in Cork University Hospital and The Mercy Hospital, Cork, respectively, in each of the past three years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42396/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall Vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular issue raised



by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### **Hospitals Building Programme.**

246. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Health and Children, further to Parliamentary Question No. 192 of 18 November 2009, the timeline in respect of the tendering process for the establishment of the proposed co-located hospital on the site of Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown; when the tender under consideration was received by her Department; the company or organisations which submitted this tender; when she expects to award preferred bidding status; when she expects construction of the co-located hospital to begin; when she expects construction to be completed; when she expects the co-located hospital to open; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42405/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the implementation of the acute hospital co-location initiative rests with the Health Service Executive. My Department has therefore requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the detailed matters raised by the Deputy investigated and a reply issued directly to her.

### **Departmental Reports.**

247. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children when it is proposed to publish the Hynes report of the review of the circumstances surrounding the elapse of time in bringing to completion the Western Health Board inquiry into allegations of abuse in the Brothers of Charity Services, Galway which was received by her Department on 30 October 2008. [42408/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** As the Deputy is aware from correspondence received from me, this matter is currently with my Department for consideration.

### **Child Abuse.**

248. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that people permanently resident here who originate from countries that practice female genital mutilation take their children to their home countries to undergo the procedure and then return here; and her views on whether it is necessary to address loopholes in the provisions of the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 which leave children unprotected from the practice of female genital mutilation while abroad. [40064/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Legal advice which I obtained in 2004 strongly indicated that Female Genital Mutilation would constitute an offence under the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997. In September 2006, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in its concluding observations on Ireland's second periodic report urged Ireland to continue its efforts to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation through, *inter alia*, prohibiting it by law. I am currently examining the possibility of introducing specific legislation to ban Female Genital Mutilation in the context of UNCRC's recommendations.

*Question No. 249 answered with Question No. 214.*

### **Child Care Services.**

250. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason for her refusal despite repeated requests to meet with groups (details supplied) regarding the community child care subvention scheme. [42422/08]

251. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason she or her Minister of State will not, despite repeated requests to do so, meet with groups (details supplied) regarding the community child care subvention scheme. [42423/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 250 and 251 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, I have responsibility for the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010 (NCIP), which will invest €575 million over 5 years, with €358 million of this in capital grant aid for childcare services. I am aware of the recently published report commissioned by the Dublin Inner city Partnership and the Dublin Inner City Childcare Providers' Network regarding the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) which was introduced by my Office in January 2008. As acknowledged in the report, the initial findings of the research were made available to my Office and, to assist the groups in finalising the report, I understand that my officials provided various clarifications as well as updated data in regard to the scheme.

I have been active in meeting many childcare service providers, both from the community and commercial sectors. I am satisfied that the position in relation to the implementation of the CCSS has been fully communicated to the Group in question and that there is nothing further which can be added at this point in time. I am aware that concerns regarding the Scheme continue to be expressed by some community childcare services while at the same time many commercial providers who are outside the scope of the Scheme, and many parents who do not have access to a community based service, would like to see the CCSS extended across the sector. However, as a targeted scheme for disadvantaged and low income parents, the Scheme will continue to be confined to supporting community-based services.

The CCSS is a more transparent scheme than the support scheme previously in place for community-based childcare services and the support funding is linked more directly to qualifying parents. As a result, it is necessary for services participating in the Scheme to implement fees policies which reflect the various fee reductions available to qualifying parents, that is parents who are disadvantaged or on low incomes. In effect, grant funding is provided to a service to make up the difference, in the case of qualifying parents, between the cost of a childcare place and the fee which the service must charge to meet that cost.

In many cases, community services had not been charging the economic cost of their service. As a result, many parents who would not have been considered disadvantaged or low income for the purposes of the support funding would also have benefitted significantly. In some cases, failure to charge the economic cost led to services operating at a deficit. The CCSS will assist services to operate on a clearer financial footing, balancing their expenditure with income. Given the substantial level of State funding which many are in receipt of, this would be an expected requirement.

### **Care of the Elderly.**

252. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the role her Department has in the introduction of a community led pilot scheme to counter the social isolation

of the elderly in rural Ireland as per the Agreed Programme for Government; if such a scheme has been introduced; the various other supports offered by her Department to assist elderly people to remain in their homes and participate in the community, in particular in rural areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40963/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hocht):** The scheme referred to by the Deputy would not fall under the direct remit of my Department. However, the National Development Plan which gives effect to many of the commitments contained in ‘Towards 2016’ recognised older people as one of the main groups at risk from social exclusion. The supports for minimising social exclusion among older people relates to a wide range of measures in the National Development Plan, including for example the Social Inclusion, Social Infrastructure and Human Capital Priorities.

The over-arching policy of my Department and the Health Service Executive is to support older people to live at home and in their communities through a range of quality community services. The key initiatives insofar as my Department is concerned relates to the Living at Home Sub Programme which provides for some €4.7 billion investment over the period of the Plan. In this regard, just over €200m new funding has been provided over the three years 2006-2008 inclusive, to develop community based initiatives nationally to enable older people to live at home and in their communities. This includes, for example,

- €120m funding for Home Care Packages. The HSE will provide approximately 4,600 packages in 2008, benefiting over 11,000 people. Approximately 8,700 people are in receipt of packages at any one time. The HSE expects to provide over 4,700 packages in 2009.
- €56m for expanded Home Help Services over the last three years. An estimated 54,000 clients will receive Home Help services in 2008. A revised Model of Service Delivery is also being implemented at present by the HSE throughout the country.
- Some €16m additional funding has been made available for enhanced Day/Respite Care services. The total projected by the Executive provision in 2008 is around 21,000 places.
- A sum of €5m between 2006-2008 for Meals on Wheels services has been allocated to complement previous levels of provision.

As the Deputy is aware operational responsibility for the management and delivery of these services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. The Executive is therefore the statutory body charged with pursuing these policies and services at regional and local level.

The new Office for Older People intends to progress the Strategy on Positive Ageing, which will include consideration of appropriate proposals relating to combating social or rural isolation. The new strategy will be developed on a cross departmental basis. This approach is key to delivering the Government’s vision of improved integration of services, and thereby further supporting older people into the future.

### **Consultancy Contracts.**

253. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount of expenditure on consultancy by her Department in each of the years 2000 to 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by her Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies

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awarded contracts and the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by her Department in these years and for the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42579/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The information requested regarding consultancy expenditure from 2000 to 2007 is set out in the attached document, a copy of which has issued directly to the Deputy. On foot of a Government decision last July, Departments were required to deliver significant administrative efficiency savings in 2008 and 2009 on both the Administrative Budget area and across Programme spending more generally and to reduce expenditure on consultancy (including IT contractors and external service providers), advertising and public relations by at least 50% in 2009. Accordingly, the allocation of funding for consultancy in my Department has been halved in 2009. In addition, it should be noted that all consultancy projects receive my approval before being considered for funding.

2000

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Alpha Consulting	Review of the Organisational Structures of the ERHA	7,682.00
2	Anne Colgan and Associates	Consultation Process for the National Children's Strategy	54,734.00
3	Astutec	Consultancy on best management practices for IT maintenance and support contracts	16,593.00
4	Carr Communications	Alcohol Awareness Campaign (2000-2003)	470,100.00
5	DCU and University of Leeds	Report Nurses' and Midwives Understanding and Experiences of Empowerment in Ireland. Report Empowerment Narratives. Final Report of the Empowerment of Nurses and Midwives Steering Group: An Agenda for Change	23,320.00
6	Deloitte and Touche	Value for Money Audit of the Health Services	616,035.00
7	Department of Nursing Studies University College Cork — National University of Ireland Cork	National Study of Turnover in Nursing and Midwifery	70,000.00
8	Dillon Consultants	Sexual Health Awareness Campaign	165,000.00
9	Dr Mary Codd	Acute Hospital Bed Capacity Review	268,470.00
10	Dr Peter Bacon & Associates	Preparation of a report on the current and future supply and demand conditions in the labour market for physiotherapists, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists	38,092.00
11	ESRI	Critique of earlier Health Strategy "Shaping a Healthier Future"	21,469.00
12	Grayling Gilmore	PR services + project management on National Awareness Campaigns (2000-2002)	94,500.00
13	Information Consultants Pty	FOI Training	2,327.00
14	Institute of Public Administration	Consultancy assistance for work plan of newly established change management team	19,390.00
15	IPA/RCSI	Consumer Survey of Radiotherapy services in Ireland	21,707.00
16	Joint North South Project	All Ireland Public Health and Nursing Steering Group — A Nursing Vision of Public Health. From Vision to Action. Strengthening the Nursing Contribution to Public Health. Nursing for Public Health: Realising the Vision	27,027.00
17	Marsh Ireland Ltd	Review of Professor Bonner's Report on Births in Portiuncula Hospital	1,921.00

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
18	Mercer Consultants	Development of a high level strategic HR policy for the Department.	11,350.00
19	Maureen Lynott	Review of the Organisation and Management of “An Board Uchtála”	20,895.00
20	National Nutrition Surveillance Centre	Providing DoHC with an independent source of data, information and advice relating to nutrition and health.	342,000.00
21	Prospectus	Introduction of Business Planning in DOHC	15,212.00
22	Public Communication Centre	Heart Health Awareness Raising Activities (2000)	70,000.00
23	QMP Publicis	Advertising services: National Awareness Campaign on Smoking (2000-2002)	735,438.00
24	RGC Technologies	Research and production of specification for delivery of NDP management computer software application.	24,242.00
25	Siobhan Parkinson	Writing of children’s version of the National Children’s Strategy	6,349.00
26	System Dynamics	Consultancy for the Information Management Unit to provide a strategy for data management	35,489.00
27	Walsh Public Relations	Launch and publicity for the National Children’s Strategy	16,110.00
28	Cap Gemini Ernst & Young	Feasibility Study relating to implementation of Case-Mix based Risk Equalisation.	173,456.00
29	Institute of Public Health	Report of the Working Group on National Anti-Poverty Strategy and Health (including research, extensive public consultation and publication)	190,000.00
	Total		3,558,908.00

## 2001

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Arcline Ltd.	RMU: Records Management consultancy	13,440.00
2	Cap Gemini Ernst & Young	Provision of consultancy support in relation to the appraisal of international health information/ICT framework strategies in the context of the development of the National Health Information Strategy	50,128.00
3	Carr Communications Ltd.	Promotion and launch of National Health Strategy	100,724.00
4	Centre for Social and Educational Research	Evaluation of the Teen Parents Support Initiative. Final Evaluation Report of the Teen Parents Support Initiative. Policy Paper 1: ‘The Invisible Student’ Young Parents in Education’. Policy Paper 2: ‘I Hadn’t A Penny’. A Review of State Income Supports Available to Young Parents. Cost of Consultancy on database for extracting files to aid research	43,126.00
5	Children’s Research Centre	The Educational and Social Support Experiences of Young People in Long-Term Foster Care	96,000.00
6	Circa Healthcare Consulting	Provision of medical indemnity advice, provision of Clinical Indemnity Scheme Helpline on behalf of State Claims Agency, STARS implementation, negotiations with MDU	952,439.00
7	Colgan & Associates	Designing, planning, implementing and reporting on the external consultation programme in the preparation of the 2001 Health Strategy	124,980.00
8	Community & Voluntary Pillar	Consultation on Health Strategy	8,740.00

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Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
9	Corporate Graphics	Design work for suite of Health Strategy documents and related materials	102,440.00
10	Davy Corporate Finance Ltd / William Fry Solicitors	Report on the Strategic Options for the Voluntary Health Insurance Board	553,493.00
11	Department of Public Health Medicine UCD	Consultancy support in relation to international approaches to the collection and analyses of health information in the context of the development of the National Health Information Strategy	25,192.00
12	European Health Management Association	Input to report on the Regulation of the Practitioners of Complementary and Alternative Medicine	6,095.00
13	Information Consultants Pty	FOI Training	2,286.00
14	Institute of Public Administration	Organisation of consultation for DoHC staff on National Health Strategy	8,126.00
15	Institute of Public Administration	Preparation of a report on the Regulation of the Practitioners of Complementary and Alternative Medicine	6,857.00
16	Irish Marketing Surveys Ltd	Market research for the Department on the public's attitude to health matters	99,040.00
17	IT Force	Information Technology, e-Government Strategy for the Internal Systems and GRO Review	6,909.00
18	IT Force	Information Technology	93,965.00
19	James Doran & Associates Ltd	Consultation with chiroprody bodies re membership of committee established to determine criteria to apply to chiroprodists wishing to practise in the public health service	6,095.00
20	James Doran and Associates	Working Group on Patient Escorts	15,125.00
21	Jerry O'Dwyer	Preparation of a new Medical Practitioners Act	9,122.00
22	Jonathan Drennan, Med, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	Report — National Evaluation of the Role of the Clinical Placement Co-ordinator.	25,359.00
23	Marsh Consulting	Enterprise Liability Project Professional Fees	679,977.00
24	Marsh Ireland Ltd	Review of Potential Liabilities of Portiuncula Hospital	28,188.00
25	Michael Bruton Professional Solutions	Review of Dáil na nÓg 2001	8,533.00
26	Miriam Owens	Forum on Fluoridation	66,928.00
27	Mr Gerry Donnellan	Preparation of the heads of the Health and Social Care Professionals Bill	4,448.00
28	Mr Paul Gardiner, Senior Counsel	Report on the steps open to the State to instigate an effective inquiry into the role of the international pharmaceutical companies into the infection with HIV and Hepatitis C of persons with haemophilia.	103,000.00
29	QMP D'Arcy	Forum on Fluoridation	93,829.00
30	Red Dog/Brunswick Press	Design and Printing of Progress report on implementation of the Strategy Statement 1998-2001	22,674.00
31	Seamus O'Hickey	Forum on Fluoridation	514.00
32	Social Information Systems Ltd.	Final Report on Options for System Development and Implementation	74,154.00
33	The Mazars Group	Implementation of new payroll system	102,046.00
34	Walsh Public Relations	PR and event management Dáil na nÓg 2001	19,401.00
	Total		3,553,373.00



2002

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Anne Colgan	National Children's Advisory Council — Facilitation for Young People and Report on Young People's Participation on the Council	14,509.00
2	Bark	Forum on Fluoridation	4,247.00
3	Brid Mc Grath	Review of the Library and Information service in Department of Health and Children	9,375.00
4	Carr Communications	Advice on the Report of the Independent Review Panel to the Minister for Health and Children concerning the birth of Baby Bronagh Livingstone on 11 December 2002.	3,448.00
5	Carr Communications	Communications Consultancy in respect of BCG vaccine	5,445.00
6	Carr Communications	PR and event management for Dáil na nÓg 2002	23,255.00
7	Carr Communications	Public launch and communication of Forum on Fluoridation Report	16,973.00
8	Carr Communications Ltd.	Communications support in relation to (1) The organisation of the first annual National Consultative Forum in 2002 to report on progress in the implementation of the National Health Strategy, (2) The launch of the Health Service Reform Programme	24,405.00
9	Centre for HP Studies, NUI Galway	Develop and rollout NHLS (SLAN) Analysis and publication of data — Phase 2: 2004	860,000.00
10	Children's Research Centre	Childline Review	45,000.00
11	David Hanly	Chairman — National Task Force on Medical Staffing	211,935.00
12	Dell Computer Corporation	Windows 2000 Upgrade Consultancy	31,006.00
13	Deloitte	The Evaluation of 'Cancer Services in Ireland': A National Strategy 1996	106,398.00
14	Deloitte	Review of Governance and Accountability in the General Medical Service	130,584.00
15	Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University College Dublin	Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption	28,314.00
16	Dr. Daniel O'Hare	Chairing of National Health Strategy Consultative Forum	2,269.00
17	ESRI and RCSI	Scoping Study for a Survey of Sexual Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviours	20,000.00
18	Farrell — Grant- Sparks	Facilitate Management Advisory Committee in relation to the restructuring of the DOH&C	2,299.00
19	Hosca Consultants	Staff Attitudinal/Climate Survey	22,990.00
20	Indecon International Economic Consultants	Ex-ante Review of Proposed Regulatory Models for the Pharmacy Sector	83,902.00
21	Indecon International Economic Consultants	Ex-post Assessment of the 1996 Pharmacy Regulations	65,400.00
22	Information Consultants Pty	FOI Training	2,500.00
23	KPMG	Review of funding for sheltered workshops- this review arose from the commitment in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness to undertake a review of funding of sheltered workshops.	106,840.00
24	Lynne Peyton	National Children's Advisory Council-Report on the Implementation of Children First and Vetting	9,809.00
25	Madeline Clarke	Consultation on the Development of a Family Support Strategy. Preparatory work prior to the Review of Family Support Services	1,500.00
26	Marcus Geoghegan	Review of Active Directory installation and assistance with implementation of a high end data availability project	2,178.00
27	Marcus Geoghegan	Review of Active Directory installation and assistance with implementation of a high end data availability project	3,146.00

## [Deputy Mary Harney.]

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
28	Maureen Lynott	Report to the Minister for Health and Children: Independent Examination related to the Medical Council and the South Eastern Health Board (Lynott Report — in relation to Dr John Harding-Price)	7,770.00
29	Maureen Lynott	Report of the Independent Review Panel to the Minister for Health and Children concerning the birth of Baby Bronagh Livingstone on 11 December 2002.	7,841.00
30	Mr George Birmingham	Preliminary Inquiry into Handling of Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse relating to the Diocese of Ferns	195,133.00
31	Ms Helen Boyle	Preliminary Inquiry into Handling of Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse relating to the Diocese of Ferns	124,704.00
32	Mr Kevin Bonner	Report of Mr. Kevin Bonner on Monaghan General Hospital	43,584.00
33	Ms Pauline McKeever Conference Organisers Ltd	Assistance with organisation of conference on “What Works Best with Troubled Children”	6,398.00
34	NYCI Marian Brattman	National Children’s Advisory Council — Report on the Voice of the Child	3,200.00
35	Ogilvy/Wilson Hartnell PR	National Drugs Awareness Campaign (2002-2005)	314,200.00
36	Professor Hugh McKenna, Sinead Keeney, and Felicity Hasson, University of Ulster	Evaluation of the Irish National Pilot Programme for the Education of Health Care Assistants.	76,000.00
37	Prospectus Strategy Consultants	Audit of Structures and Functions in the Health System to make recommendations which would ensure clear accountability and communication between each part of the health system, no overlap or duplication between organisations, and a proper alignment of the structure as a whole with the vision and objectives outlined in the National Health Strategy.	533,131.00
38	Research Team, UCD	Paediatric Palliative Care Needs Assessment — ‘A Needs Assessment for Children’	71,943.46
39	Slick Fish Design	Forum on Fluoridation	20,382.45
40	Social Information Systems Ltd.	Report on Social Work Workload Management	30,000.00
41	Western Health Board/NUI Galway Child and Family Research and Policy Unit	A Research Project on the identification, analysis and dissemination of examples of good practice in Child and Family Care Services in the Republic of Ireland resulting in the following publication “Working for Children and Families Exploring Good Practice”	35,186.00
	Total		3,307,199.91

## 2003

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Carr Communications Ltd	Media advice and support for the launch of: (1) Report on the Evaluation of ‘Cancer Services in Ireland’: A National Cancer Strategy 1996. (2) The Report of the Expert Group on the Development of Radiation Oncology Services in Ireland	25,622.00
2	National Youth Council of Ireland	Organisation, Management and Follow-up of Dáil na nÓg 2003	114,884.00
3	Addiction Research Centre, TCD	Literature Review commissioned by the Working Group on treatment of under 18 year olds presenting to treatment services with serious drug problems.	10,249.00
4	Allwrite	Data Sources on Children	4,840.00
5	Anna Gunning	Facilitating Student Council Working Group	700.00

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
6	Anna Gunning	Management of project on involvement of children in the appointment of the Ombudsman for Children	9,000.00
7	BFHI National Co-ordinator	Contributions to drafting and proofing the Interim Report of the National Committee on Breastfeeding	3,000.00
8	Capita Consulting Ltd.	Review of the Guardian ad Litem Service	96,331.00
9	Carr Communications Ltd.	Consultancy services to provide information to the Public on the SARS alert	23,667.00
10	Corporate Graphics/ Brunswick Press/Lensmen/Mr Sean De Freine	Design, translation and printing of Statement of Strategy 2003 — 2005	17,254.00
11	Deloitte and Touche	Report — Rostered Year Replacement Ratio Project (Nursing Degree Students)	133,161.00
12	Deloitte and Touche	The engagement of professional business consultancy to provide assistance in respect of two project headings: Review of internal controls in the Department of Health and Children with a view to implementing the recommendations of the Mullarkey Report; and consultancy assistance with respect to the structure of the Management Information Framework (MIF) in the Department.	70,731.00
13	Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University College Dublin	Standardised Framework for Domestic Adoption	47,976.00
14	Dr Hannah McGee, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland	Survey and report on “Public Perceptions of Biomedical Research”	120,000.00
15	Dr J R Pinkerton, School of Social Work, Queens University, Belfast	The following piece of work was commissioned in order to provide a knowledge based working definition of family support to help in the work of the Review: Family Support in Ireland Definition and Strategic Intent — A Paper for the Department of Health and Children	7,074.00
16	Dr Ursula Kilkenny, Faculty of Law, U.C.C	Guide to the Children Act 2001	10,029.00
17	Gibney Communications	Public Relations- Hanly Report	39,840.00
18	Grayling Gilmore	PR services and project management on National Awareness Campaigns (2003-2005)	893,000.00
19	Information Consultants Pty	FOI Training	3,750.00
20	Institute of Public Administration	To report on regulation issues	10,000.00
21	Irish Heart Foundation	To provide assistance and advice to the Department of Health and Children on nutrition (2003-2006)	159,000.00
22	ISPCC/CRA	Organisation of involvement of children in the appointment of the Ombudsman for Children	33,690.00
23	Jim Halley Consultants	Adoption Legislation Consultation	26,661.00
24	Mr Geoffrey Shannon	Adoption Legislation Consultation	5,000.00
25	Kieran McKeown Ltd.	Men and Domestic Violence: What research tells us	66,000.00
26	Kieran McKeown et al	This work entailed a detailed review of Family Support Services and was carried out to help map out a national policy and plan for the future development of family support services by the HSE in line with Action 27 of the Health Strategy and is essential to the development of a Family Support Policy. The following research documents resulted from this Review: Promoting the Well-Being of Families and Children: A Study of Family Support Services in the Health Sector in Ireland; A Census of Family Support in Ireland: Results of a Census of Family Support Services which were funded by Health Boards in 2002.	207,869.00
27	Lynne Peyton	National Children’s Advisory Council — Report on Alcohol Use/Misuse by Young People	12,404.00
28	Maria Corbett	Observer/evaluator-Student Council Working Group	600.00
29	Ms Brid McGrath	Review of Library and Information service of DoHC	9,375.00

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Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
30	National University of Ireland	Children's Understanding of Well — Being	16,625.00
31	Ovation	Organisation of <i>Pompidou Group Ministerial Conference</i>	5,240.00
32	PMI Software Limited	Project management of software development and cost of INSPIRE Brochure	233,911.00
33	QMP Publicis	Advertising services; National Awareness Campaigns (2003-2005)	1,286,761.00
34	RGC Technologies	Project management of software development and cost of INSPIRE Brochure	96,921.00
35	Siobhan Parkinson	To provide the text for the children's version of the <i>National Standards for Foster Care</i>	3,300.00
36	Slickfish	Design of the report 'Radiation Oncology Services in Ireland'	5,717.00
37	Slickfish	Design of the report 'The Evaluation of Cancer Services in Ireland: A National Strategy 1996'	4,005.00
38	Tony Murphy	Observation/Evaluation of Student Council Working Group	20,873.00
39	Mercer Human Resource Consulting Ltd.	Provision of continuous expert advice and information in relation to the Irish Health Insurance Market, in particular to the maintenance of a community rated market.	348,082.00
	Total		4,183,142.00

## 2004

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Jeremy Neathey	National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Commissioning Process — International Expertise	26,384.00
2	Anna Gunning	Establishment of Youth Forum and other youth participation projects for the National Children's Office	49,809.00
3	Business 2 Enterprise	Clean up of HR data before transfer to new system and selection of an interim solution.	12,063.00
4	Capita	Evaluation of Coronary Heart Attack Ireland Register	64,100.00
5	Capita	Evaluation of Heartwatch	81,700.00
6	Carmel Corrigan	The Development and Implementation of Child Impact Statements	27,430.00
7	Carr Communications/Irish Advocacy Network	Expert Group on Mental Health Policy (cost of the public consultation process and the publication of two reports on that process)	152,542.00
8	Centre for Social and Educational Research	Play and Technology	49,367.00
9	Children's Research Centre	The process of Youth Homelessness: A Qualitative Longitudinal Cohort Study	44,505.00
10	Children's Research Centre TCD	Research on Second Level Student Councils	41,600.00
11	Children's Research Centre, TCD	To review current practice and methods used to consult with children with disabilities	7,000.00
12	Children's Rights Alliance	Work on "Young Voices — Guidelines on how to involve children and young people in your work"	17,498.00
13	Cork Institute of Technology	Young People's Views about Opportunities, Barriers and Supports to Recreation and Leisure in Ireland. Component of the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland	45,325.00

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
14	David Cawte	Rostering for medical staff as part of preparations for the implementation of the European Working Time Directive	7,987.00
15	David Hanly	Chairman — Acute Hospital Review Group	40,580.00
16	Department of Social Studies (Trinity College)	Research project on integration of health and social services	6,050.00
17	Dr Fiona Keogh	Project worker for the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy	62,341.00
18	Dr. Satya Brink	National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Commissioning Process — International Expertise	24,775.00
19	Dublin City University	Giving Children a Voice	27,294.00
20	Eamon O'Shea, UCG	Consultancy work for the Working Group on the Review of the Nursing Home Subvention Scheme	1,300.00
21	First Impression	Design and printing of Departmental Annual Report 2003	20,700.00
22	Hay Group (Ireland Limited)	Consultancy Services re organisation and design of restructured department	49,247.00
23	Hay Group Ltd	Personnel Management — Workshop on Performance-Related Awards for CEOs of Health Boards — 22 January 2004	2,662.00
24	Mercer HR	Health Insurance Actuarial and Related Advice	88,118.49
25	Lynne Peyton	National Children's Advisory Council — End of Term Report	3,713.00
26	McGrath Associates	Consultancy for Health Service Reform Programme National Steering Committee (including sub-group on devolution of functions)	30,885.00
27	Mr George Nixon, Nixon Consulting	To prepare and facilitate a workshop on clinical placements in OT, Physiotherapy and SLT	2,437.00
28	Mr John Travers	Report on DoHC and Long Stay Charges	93,150.00
29	Mr Michael Bruton, Professional Solutions Ltd	To produce a study on Clinical Placements in OT, Physiotherapy and SLT	4,719.00
30	Murray Consultants	Public Relations — Hanly Report	75,456.00
31	National Youth Council of Ireland	Organisation, Management and Follow up of Dáil na nÓg 2005	142,131.00
32	PMI Software Limited	Hosting of INSPIRE	9,438.00
33	Professor Ann Sanson	National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Commissioning Process — International Expertise	17,596.00
34	Programme of Action for Children	Kidscreen	49,215.00
35	Purchasing Solutions	National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Commissioning Process — Process Auditor	28,137.00
36	PWC	Specification of tender for due diligence examination of MDU	25,844.00
37	Quantum EMB	Provision of actuarial advice	226,537.00
38	RGC Technologies	Administration Contract to assess co-ordinate, assign and resolve help desk queries in relation to INSPIRE	3,630.00
39	Secta Consulting Ltd.	Development of Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Strategy for Primary Care. This work involved determining at a strategic level, the nature of the ICT systems which would be required in order to support and facilitate the delivery of integrated multi-disciplinary primary care.	44,287.00
40	Slattery Communications	Consultancy services in respect of the UN Day for Older People on 1st October 2004.	16,455.00
41	Social Information Systems Ltd.	Project management of social work workload pilots	90,127.00
42	Sopra, Newell & Budge formerly Celare	Security advice and assistance	40,177.00
43	Tillinghast Towers Perrin	Specification of tender for due diligence examination of MDU	15,488.00
44	Tony Murphy	Review of the Structures and support needs of Comhairle na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg	26,611.00

## [Deputy Mary Harney.]

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
45	University College Cork	The Voice of the Child Within the Health Setting	49,118.00
46	University College Dublin	A Feasibility Study of the Inclusion of Blood and Tissue Data as a Component of the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland	75,504.00
47	Waterford Institute of Technology	Investigating the Impact on Children of Witnessing Domestic Violence: Nature and Adequacy of Child-Centred Services	46,518.00
48	The Children's Research Centre, University of Dublin, Trinity College	Inter-country Adoption Research Project	231,290.50
	Total		2,298,840.99

## 2005

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Carr Communications	Media Advisor — [Launch of the Report of the Commission on Assisted Human Reproduction]	5,515.00
2	Catalysto	Design and printing of Strategy Statement	18,310.00
3	Business 2 Enterprise	Clean up of HR data before transfer to new system and selection of an interim solution.	44,881.00
4	Curriculum Development Unit of City of Dublin VEC	Development of a teaching/learning resource on giving children and young people a voice	154,000.00
5	Dr Eilish Mc Auliffe	Facilitation of regional input workshops and the production of a feedback Report on the implementation of a Statutory Complaints Process under Part 9 of the Health Act, 2004.	16,750.00
6	Dr. John Bowman	Work in relation to the organisation (including the chairing) of the National Health Consultative Forum 2005	6,050.00
7	Eneclann Ltd	RMU: Evaluation of CRAFTS	2,856.00
8	First Impression	Design and printing of Departmental Annual Report 2004	22,480.00
9	First Impression	Design and printing of Quality Customer Service Action Plan 2005-2007	21,800.00
10	Hay Group Ltd	Personnel Management — Job sizing of post of CEO of HIQA	9,680.00
11	Indecon Economic Consultants	Economics Analysis of Childcare Policy Options	101,821.00
12	Information Consultants Pty	FOI Training	2,700.00
13	IPPA and Súgradh	Contract for the establishment and management of the National Play Resource Centre	62,500.00
14	Liz Harper	Evaluation of the work of the Children/Young People's forum of the OMC	17,740.00
15	Lynne Peyton	National Children's Advisory Council — Mid Term Review of the National Children's Strategy	57,500.00
16	Mercer HR	Health Insurance Actuarial and Related Advice	83,025.15
17	McGrath Associates	Chair of transition steering group	16,335.00
18	Mr David Hanly	Consultancy for Health Service Reform Programme — sub group on devolution of functions	7,260.00
19	Mr David Hanly	Participation of Transition Steering Group	7,260.00
20	Ms. Suzanne Campbell	To undertake a research project to assist the work of the National Working Group on the Regulation of Complementary Therapists	19,100.00



Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
21	National Youth Council of Ireland	Organisation, Management and Follow-up of Dáil na nÓg 2006-2008	219,484.00
22	Ovation	Organisation of <i>Traveller Health Conference</i>	4,810.00
23	PBAS	Review of catering facilities at Department's headquarters	5,140.00
24	Pricewaterhouse	Implementation of a risk management programme	45,746.00
25	Prospectus	Consultancy to provide advice on the criteria and conditions relevant to the development of private hospitals on public hospital sites	29,403.00
26	Renaissance Contingency Services	Business Continuity — Technology Recovery Planning	31,702.00
27	S McGrory & H Newman, c/o Health Promotion, Training & Support Services	Review of existing Health Promotion Training and Identification of Future Needs	36,379.00
28	Peter Cassells Consultants Ltd	Chairing Sustaining Progress Working Group on Alcohol Misuse	9,075.00
29	Rita Burtenshaw & Associates	Report from the Evaluation of the National Health Promotion Information Project	13,600.00
30	Sandra Roe	Analysis of Responses to Public Consultation on the Development of a Recreation Policy for Young People in Ireland and to produce a report on the outcome of the Public Consultation	26,600.00
	Total		1,099,502.15

## 2006

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Byrne Safety Services	To provide advice and assistance in the drafting of a Health and Safety Statement for the GRO	800.00
2	Business 2 Enterprise	Clean up of HR data for before transfer to new system and selection of an interim solution.	62,920.00
3	Catalysto	Design and printing of HR Handbook	18,704.00
4	Catalysto	Design and Translation of Annual Report 2005	16,507.00
5	Children's Research Centre, TCD	Research commissioned on: A Follow up Study on the Educational and Social Support Experiences of Young People in Long Term Foster Care	14,250.00
6	Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland	Keynote speaker for the National Health Consultative Forum 2006	31,142.00
7	Dr Helen Buckley	Advise on Child Welfare and Protection issues	5,400.00
8	Dr. John Bowman	Work in relation to the organisation (including the chairing) of the National Health Consultative Forum 2006	6,050.00
9	Dublin Institute of Technology	Research commissioned on: Services and Supports for Children on Remand in Ireland	29,787.00
10	Farrell Grant Sparks/Children's Research Centre, Trinity College	National Children's Advisory Council-Research Report on Youth Volunteering in Ireland	47,389.00
11	Fitzpatrick's Associates Economic Consultants	Value for Money Review of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006	45,665.40
12	Information Consultants Pty	FOI Training	2,700.00
13	Mercer HR	Health Insurance Actuarial and Related Advice	176,939.21
14	Maire Ni Shuilleabháin	Drafting of Fluoridation of Water Supplies Regulations	425.00
15	Máire Ni Shuilleabhain	Drafting of <i>European Communities (Control of Drug Precursors) Regulations 2005</i>	3,910.00

## [Deputy Mary Harney.]

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
16	National Youth Council of Ireland	Consultation with young people on the issues to be considered by the Minister for Children when examining the age of consent for sexual activity	61,498.00
17	Prof John Pinkerton	To develop a National Children's Policy for the OMC .	3,750.00
18	Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, University of York	Evaluation by an international panel of experts of applications for funding under the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme for Children	3,637.00
19	Professor Marjorie Smith, University of London	Evaluation by an international panel of experts of applications for funding under the Prevention and Early Intervention Programme for Children	4,223.00
20	RCSI Consortium	National Health and Lifestyle Survey — Slán 06	847,568.00
21	School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College Dublin	Research Commissioned on: A Study of Parent-Child Agreements and Arrangements based on Court Records	9,268.00
22	Slickfish	Design of 'A Strategy for Cancer Control in Ireland 2006'	3,165.00
23	The Centre for Bioethical Research and Analysis(COBRA), National University of Ireland, Galway	Research commissioned on:Ethics Committees and Ethics Approval for Children's Research in Ireland	14,389.00
24	The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin	Research Commissioned on: Child Protection Services in Ireland: An Evaluation	19,348.00
25	The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin	Research commissioned on: Perspectives on Parenting Styles and Discipline	6,800.00
26	The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College Dublin	Research commissioned on:Public Library Services for Children and Young People in Ireland	22,746.00
27	Unique Group	Event management services for holding of National Health Consultative Forum	51,072.00
28	University College Cork	Attitudes towards Removable Partial Dentures — a comparative study of patients and dentists in the North and South of Ireland	48,400.00
29	William Fry Solicitors	To provide legal services to the Oversight Committee. (This Committee was appointed by the Tánaiste to provide an independent input into the repayments scheme for long stay charges)	50,802.00
	Total		1,609,254.61

## 2007

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
1	Childrens Research Centre, Trinity College	A Study of Inter-country Adoption Outcomes in Ireland.	188,194.00
2	Collier Broderick Management Consultation Ltd	Engaged to carry out analysis of staff survey 2007 and report on the findings.	10,000.00
3	Life Strategies Ltd	Provision of Financial and Legal Advice	203,250.00
4	Mercer HR	Health Insurance Actuarial and Related Advice	109,936.57
5	School of Public Health and Population Science, UCD	To conduct an All-Ireland Traveller Health Study.	349,000.00
6	Carr Communications	To develop and implement a communications strategy for the announcement of a new initiative on Long Term Care for Older People.	48,400 (incl. VAT)
7	Colm Rapple, Economist and financial journalist.	To facilitate a one-day round table meeting on the financial abuse of older people.	3,000.00
8	Peter Cassells Consultants Ltd	Chairing Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body	18,150.00
9	Peter Cassells Consultants Ltd.	Chairing Sustaining Progress Implementation Group on Alcohol Misuse	18,150.00

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
10	Dr Mark Morgan	To complete the Irish portion of the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD)	48,400.00
11	SLAN 07 Consortium	To undertake National Health and Lifestyle Survey (SLAN 07)	755,233.00
12	NUI, Galway	To undertake Health Behaviours of School-Aged Children (HBSC) Study	91,299.50
13	Independent Review Group	Independent Clinical Review of Symptomatic Breast Care Services at Barrington's Hospital, Limerick	137,474.48 between Sept 2007 and March 2008
14	Dublin Institute of Technology	Research commissioned on : The Physical Chastisement of Children by Parents	76,033.98
15	The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College	Research commissioned on: A follow up study on the educational and Social Support experiences of Young People in Long Term Foster Care	19,000.00
16	The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College	Research commissioned on: Public Library Services for Children and Young People in Ireland	34,118.40
17	The Centre for Bioethical Research and Analysis (COBRA), National University of Ireland, Galway	Research commissioned on: Ethics Committees and Ethics Approval for Children's Research in Ireland	21,583.80
18	School of Social Work and Social Policy, Trinity College	Research commissioned on: A Study of Parent-Child Agreements and Arrangements based on Court Records	21,626.00
19	The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College	Research commissioned on: Child Protection Services in Ireland: An Evaluation	45,145.00
20	Dublin Institute of Technology	Research commissioned on: Services and Supports for Children on Remand in Ireland	29,986.67
21	The School of Psychology and The Children's Research Centre, Trinity College and The Dublin Institute of Technology	Research commissioned on : Children's Perspectives on Parenting Styles and Discipline	10,200.00
22	Economic and Social Research Institute and Children's Research Centre Trinity College	Research Commissioned on : National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland (NLSCI)	4,825,290.21
23	Dr. Satya Brink, Director Human Resources Development Canada	International expertise provided to the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Steering Group	12,496.10
24	Professor Ann Sanson Network Coordinator Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Melbourne	International expertise provided to the National Longitudinal Study of Children in Ireland Steering Group	6,220.26
25	Child and Family Research Centre, NUIG	Report on Youth Café Provision	31,511.42
26	Prospectus Strategy Consultants	Provision of Change Management Support for the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group and Children's Services Committees.	57,500.00
27	Cnag ar an Doras Consultancy and Life Coaching	Service to evaluate and facilitate the Children and Young People's Forum	12,152.00
28	Cnag ar an Doras Consultancy and Life Coaching	Project management of consultations on alcohol misuse including preparation of the report.	30,093.00
29	Cnag ar an Doras Consultancy and Life Coaching	Evaluate the Comhairle na nOG Development Fund programmes and submit periodic reports to OMC Communications and Participation Team Management.	9,680.00
30	Liz Harper	Evaluation of Children and Young People's Forum 2005-2007.	12,000.00
31	Liz Harper	Evaluation of Dáil na nÓg Council.	5,000.00
32	National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)	Service to manage operate and develop Dáil na nÓg and Dáil na nÓg Council including report of event.	311,173.00
33	IPPA	To operate and manage the National Play Resource Centre	72,734.58
34	Professor John Pinkerton, Queens University Belfast Dr Pat Dolan, Dr John Canavan, NUI Galway	The consultants were requested to produce a concise and clear children's policy for the Office of the Minister for Children — The Agenda for Children's Services	11,946.00

[Deputy Mary Harney.]

Count	Consultant	Contract Details	Expenditure (incl VAT)
			€
35	Dr Helen Buckley, Dept. of Social Studies, TCD	Dr Buckley was engaged by the OMC in 2006 to provide ongoing advice relating to child protection issues	1,500.00
36	Fitzpatrick's Associates, Economic Consultants	Value for Money Review of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme	30,443.00
37	Raymond Burke Consulting	Quality Assessment of the Value for Money Review	2,995.00
38	Teri Garvey	Facilitator engaged to manage work days for complementary therapist organisations and to produce a short report for the Department	14,000.00
39	Bearing Point	Ongoing assistance to Department with operational services of the CMOD PeopleSoft HRMS system	26,252.00
40	Halley and Associates	Provision of Management, Training and Mentoring Services	53,671.63
	Total		7,764,839.53

### Nursing Homes Repayment Scheme.

254. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a matter (details supplied). [42602/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Health Service Executive has responsibility for administering the Repayment Scheme and the information sought by the Deputy relates to matters within the area of responsibility of the Executive. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued to the Deputy.

### Departmental Expenditure.

255. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Health and Children the estimated spend on mileage allowances for her Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42627/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The amount paid by my Department in 2007 in respect of official motor travel in accordance with the rates approved by the Department of Finance was €189,231. The breakdown of this figure is as follows:

Car type	Amount claimed (€) up to 4,000 miles	Number of claimants	Amount claimed (€) greater than 4,000 miles	Number of claimants
Up to 1,200 cc	2,183	10	0	0
Between 1,201 cc and 1,500 cc	44,169	54	1,586	2
Above 1,501 cc*	130,901	118	10,392	7
Total	177,253	182	11,978	9

\*These figures are in respect of Official Motor Travel claimed at a rate of €1.2601 for mileage up to 4,000 miles and €0.5897 for mileage exceeding 4,000 miles.

There were no claims in respect of cycling allowances in 2007.

### Medical Cards.

256. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a medical card will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42632/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** As the Health Service Executive has the operational and funding responsibility for the medical card benefit, it is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has therefore requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to address this matter and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

257. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will support a matter in relation to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [42642/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** As the Health Service Executive has the operational and funding responsibility for the medical card benefit, it is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has therefore requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to address this matter and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### Pharmacy Services.

258. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding the contract negotiations between the Health Service Executive and the Irish Pharmacy Union. [42644/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Health Service Executive, with the support of my Department, agreed with the Irish Pharmacy Union on 28th April 2008 to address a number of matters including engagement on a new substantive contract and payment of outstanding general round increases. Progress has been made in relation to the general round increases. Engagement on a new contract was deferred pending the judgment of the Commercial Court in a case relating to wholesale reimbursement pricing. Now that the Court has delivered its judgment, I intend to initiate a process of engagement with the IPU at an early date.

### Health Services.

259. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway is not entitled to free transport to University College Hospital, Galway in view of the fact that they have had cancer for a considerable length of time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42655/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The specific question raised by the Deputy relates to the management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the HSE under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this regard.

260. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if there has been a change in the timing of the proposed diabetic retinopathy screening programme; the reason for same; when it will be introduced; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42667/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Mary Wallace):** The Deputy's question relates to the funding, management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Health Services.**

261. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will clarify her response to Parliamentary Question No. 283 of 21 October 2008; if the doctor concerned was or was not available to the person involved during the period from 2 October 1998 to 19 October 2000; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42668/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** While I understand that the doctor in question may not always have been available to meet with the person concerned during the period from 2 October 1998 to 19 October 2000, I also understand that the doctor spoke at length with the person concerned on 1st November 2000 and also set out the position in writing on the same date.

262. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a steering group (details supplied) has completed its work; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42674/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Eligibility Review Team was established in my Department in 2005 to begin working on a new legislative framework to provide for clear statutory provisions on eligibility for health and personal social services. As part of this work the Department is reviewing the eligibility criteria for the assessment of medical cards in the context of financial, medical and social need in line with the commitment in Towards 2016 to clarify entitlement to a medical card. A Steering Group has been established to carry out this work and is expected to complete its work within the next few months.

263. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will expedite a decision on eligibility for orthodontic treatment for persons (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42678/08]

264. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will expedite a decision on eligibility for orthodontic treatment for persons (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42679/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 263 and 264 together.

The Deputy's question relates to the funding, management and delivery of health and personal social services, which are the responsibility of the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **General Medical Services Scheme.**

265. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health and Children the reason medical card holders are obliged to pay fees for chiropody services; the situation with regard to agree-



ment of a common contract between the Health Service Executive and chiropodists; and the fee structure agreed for public patients and medical card holders. [42681/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** There is no statutory obligation on the Health Service Executive (HSE) to provide chiropody services to GMS patients; however in practice arrangements have been made in several regions to provide these services. Before the establishment of the HSE the nature of any arrangements for community chiropody services and the level of service provided were a matter for individual health boards and so a degree of variation in practice developed over time. I understand that priority is usually given to certain groups of people, including people who are medical card holders aged 65 years and over. In several regions the service is provided by private chiropodists by arrangement with the HSE.

I consider that it is inappropriate for private chiropodists who are providing services on behalf of the HSE to charge patients a top-up fee, and I have conveyed this view formally to the HSE. My Department requested the HSE to review the fee arrangements in place for the provision of chiropody services, with a view to ensuring that such additional fees will no longer be levied on persons in receipt of this service.

I have been advised by the HSE that, subject to consultation with IMPACT on non-fee aspects, it will be contacting chiropodists offering them interim contracts to provide services and advising them of the revised fees payable for such services. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the Deputy advised when this has been accomplished. The HSE has also stated that its long term intention is to replace the interim contract with a substantive contract for the provision of chiropody services and that this will be progressed in line with national policy as it applies to private contractors.

#### **Health Services.**

266. **Deputy John Cregan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the Health Service Executive will provide a detailed response to questions (details supplied) in relation to cystic fibrosis sufferers in the mid-west region. [42690/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** My Department has made enquiries with the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Health Service Executive in relation to the matter referred to by the Deputy. The Executive has advised that a reply will issue to the Deputy shortly.

#### **Hospital Accommodation.**

267. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when the new community nursing home unit on the grounds of Kerry General Hospital will be open for patients; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42692/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. The Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

268. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of public beds available to patients in the Health Service Executive south area for the years 2002 to 2008 inclusive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42703/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The data requested by the Deputy are not readily to hand. It will be necessary for my Department to work in conjunction with the Health Service Executive to have the information compiled. The data will be forwarded to the Deputy as quickly as possible.

#### **Care of the Elderly.**

269. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of long-term residents aged 65 years in public and private nursing homes in the Health Service Executive south areas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42704/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Máire Hctor):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. The Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

#### **Services for People with Disabilities.**

270. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she or her departmental officials have had discussions or negotiations with representatives for an association (details supplied) regarding the necessity for a substantial increase in the compensation package for the 32 recognised victims and survivors of the Thalidomide tragedy; her views on the fact that, 33 years later, a whole new range of health and lifestyle problems have arisen because of the deterioration in the physical and emotional well-being of the group; if having regard to the age and size of the group and the members' deteriorating situation she will confirm that she will increase the present level of compensation to a substantial amount; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42726/08]

286. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she or her officials have had discussions or communications with representatives of an association (details supplied) regarding the necessity for a substantial increase in the compensation package for the 32 recognised victims and survivors of the Thalidomide tragedy; her views on the fact that in the intervening 33 years substantial new health and lifestyle difficulties have arisen for these victims because of the deterioration in the physical and emotional well-being of the group; if having regard to the age and size of the group and the members' deteriorating situation will she will increase substantially the level of compensation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42913/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 270 and 286 together.

The Irish Thalidomide Association has made a submission outlining their views regarding the matters raised in the Deputies' questions. I would like to inform the Deputies that the Minister and Departmental officials have met with the Association. I can assure the Deputies and the Association that the submission is currently under active consideration.

### Hospital Waiting Lists.

271. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a person (details supplied) in Dublin 1 is waiting for an eye operation for some time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42728/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services is a matter for the Health Service Executive and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular case raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### Hospital Accommodation.

272. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of the full-time beds which are available for persons under 65 years of age who need full-time care and attention in County Mayo; the location of these beds; the plans she has to have further beds available for persons under 65 years of age in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42745/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Operational responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services was assigned to the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and funding for all health services has been provided as part of its overall vote. Therefore, the Executive is the appropriate body to consider the particular matter raised by the Deputy. My Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

*Questions Nos. 273 and 274 answered with Question No. 79.*

### Health Service Executive.

275. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the steps she has taken to make the Health Service Executive accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42785/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Health Act 2004 contains very specific provisions relating to the Executive's accountability to the Oireachtas at National level. The central elements of the current statutory accountability framework within which the HSE operates are: the Annual National Service Plan, the Annual Financial Statements, the three year Corporate Plan and the Code of Governance. The Service and Corporate Plans and the Code of Governance are subject to my approval. In addition, the HSE is required to obtain my prior written permission for major capital spending.

The HSE Annual Report for 2007 was submitted to me in May 2008 and was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas in June. I approved the HSE Corporate Plan 2008 — 2011 in September following which it was laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. The plan provides that a biannual Corporate Performance Measurement Report (CPMR) will report an overview of trends and progress against the high level corporate objectives contained therein.

The operation of the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the HSE (PAD) allows for the centralised receipt, assignment and tracking of Parliamentary Questions within the HSE's extensive network of operations. More generally, the PAD monitors overall performance in relation

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to the timely issue of replies and provides a central contact for all requests from Oireachtas members for information relating to matters within the statutory remit of the Executive. It reports on a regular basis to the Chief Executive Officer of the HSE, Professor Brendan Drumm, and his management team.

In the period January to October 31st 2008, a total of 3,040 questions (59% of the total tabled) were referred to the HSE for direct reply. During this period 2,929 replies were issued by the Executive and of these, 2,237 (74%) of replies were issued by the HSE within the new 15 day timeframe. The HSE routinely furnishes Oireachtas members with press releases and other documents, as prescribed in SI No. 798 of 2005, "Health Act 2004 (Dealings with members of either House of the Oireachtas) Regulations 2005." The HSE has reviewed its arrangements for briefing Oireachtas members. Meetings at regional level are being replaced by briefings for Oireachtas members at local level.

### **Health Service Reform.**

276. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she or her Department has issued instructions, guidelines or advice in the matter of restructuring and reconfiguration of the health services throughout the country with particular reference to the suggestion that it is intended to recreate a number of health boards throughout the country; if such structures are expected to be directly accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas, her Department or the Health Service Executive; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42786/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The HSE was set up to manage and deliver health and personal social services. One of the core objectives of the health reform programme was to be provide clear lines of accountability and to simplify structures. I have made it clear on many occasions that I want to see health and personal care provided to patients on an integrated basis. I have also made it clear to the HSE that there needs to be accountability for performance throughout the system from the ground up. Reform on this scale is a dynamic process. There must be accountability throughout the system to deliver on national policies and standards.

The HSE has informed the Government that it is proposing to put in place a regional model, within the national structure, to drive operational performance and accountability on the ground. It has not yet finalised its proposals for such a model. The HSE proposes that, within a national structure, authority for operational performance will be delegated to regional level. It will mean that people at regional level will be accountable for the resources provided and the services delivered at that level.

I hope it is clear from what I have said that there will not be any regional authorities or any other autonomous structure within or instead of the HSE. The internal structural changes proposed for the HSE will be considered by the Government when they are finalised and submitted to me by the Board of the Executive. The Government will want to be satisfied that the proposed changes will improve operational performance and accountability, and that they will sit comfortably with the configuration of other public services at local level.

### **Proposed Legislation.**

277. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if it is intended to introduce a new Health Act to facilitate impending changes in structure of the Health Service Executive at local level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42787/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** There is no requirement for the introduction of a new Health Act to facilitate the impending structural changes in the Health Service Executive. I am satisfied that these changes can be made on an administrative basis.

*Question No. 278 answered with Question No. 96.*

### **Health Services.**

279. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the action she proposes to take to ensure strategic research into the possible cause or causes of autism here with particular reference to comparison with other European countries; if her attention has been drawn to the strongly held views of parents of children with autism about urgent research in this area; if she or her Department has had discussions with the countries throughout Europe with the highest and lowest incidents of autism and Asperger's syndrome; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42789/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney):** The Department of Health and Children does not collect information on children identified with Autism on a national or international basis. Information pertaining to diagnosis is specifically excluded from the National Intellectual Disability Database as the database is not designed as a medical epidemiological tool. Accordingly the database does not record the incidence of Autism or any other disability.

In 2004, the Department of Health and Children, through the Health Research Board, approved expenditure of €5 million on autism research to help improve international understanding of the genetic causes of autism. This €5 million is the Irish contribution to a new major international research initiative called the Autism Genome Project which will receive a total investment of €12 million from a variety of international organisations over the next three years. The other co-funders in the international consortium include Autism Speaks (US), the British Medical Research Council (CIHR), Southwest Autism Research and Resource Centre (SARRC), and the Hilibrand Foundation. This unique combination of international, public and private partners funding a consortium of clinicians and scientists is a new and welcome departure in the field of autism research. The Health Research Board has informed my Department that this funding was awarded as follows:

- €2.8 million: Professor Michael Gill, Department of Psychiatry, Trinity College, Dublin;
- €2.2 million: Professor Andrew Green, Director National Centre for Medical Genetics, Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin (affiliated to UCD).

This figure represents the largest tranche of funding to be awarded by any of the four funders within the international consortium. The Irish researchers are at the forefront in unravelling the genetic determinants of autism and related disorders. They are using novel state of the art genetic sequencing technology to analyse DNA samples taken from autistic patients to identify candidate genetic markers for autism. They will collaborate with their international colleagues to then link these genetic markers with clinical outcomes. This unique international research effort will greatly improve not only our understanding of the causes of autism, but its diagnosis and treatment. To-date my Department has not been in any discussions on this specific issue with European colleagues.

*Question No. 280 answered with Question No. 94.*



### **Hospital Services.**

281. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the view of many professionals that all hospitals regardless of location, status or size are required to be centres of excellence and that the setting up of centres of excellence within the health service, instead of improving the quality of service, is likely to result in selective investment with little benefit to the overall quality of service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42791/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The international evidence base indicates that clinical skill levels and patient safety can be safeguarded by centralising acute and complex care and thereby ensuring a sufficient throughput of cases. It is vital to ensure that services are provided safely and to a high quality. While the more complex services are increasingly being concentrated in a smaller number of larger centres, this is being balanced by transferring less complex work to local hospitals. Both larger and smaller hospitals must be developed on this basis.

Much of the recent discussion around “centres of excellence“ has focused on our cancer services. The objective of the National Cancer Control Programme is to provide the highest quality diagnosis and treatment in eight designated centres, each serving a population of 500,000 people. In the Programme the term ‘designated centre’ as opposed to “centre of excellence” is used.

The Director of the National Cancer Control Programme is making significant progress in relation to the realignment of services into the designated centres. In relation to breast cancer specifically, he plans to have transferred the remaining symptomatic services to the eight designated centres next year. Preparation and planning are also underway in relation to other site specific cancers such as prostate and lung cancers. The designation of cancer centres aims to ensure that patients receive the highest quality care while at the same time allowing local access to services, where appropriate. Where diagnosis and treatment planning is directed and managed by multi-disciplinary teams based at the cancer centres, then much of the treatment (other than surgery) can be delivered in local hospitals.

### **Infectious Diseases.**

282. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the instructions she has given to eliminate MRSA or other hospital-based infections with a view to ensuring patients entering hospitals are not exposed to further infection; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42792/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Tackling all Health Care Associated Infections (HCAIs), including MRSA and *C. difficile*, continues to be a priority for the government and the Health Service Executive (HSE). HCAIs are not a new phenomenon and have always been a potential complication of medical treatment, especially in hospitals. This is the case worldwide.

As the Deputy will be aware, the HSE launched a National Infection Control Action Plan in March 2007. The HSE aims over the period of the Plan to reduce HCAIs by 20%, MRSA infection by 30% and antibiotic consumption by 20%. A new National Surveillance System has been established to collect data and provide information on HCAIs in our health system. This data covers four key areas:



1. Staphylococcus bacteraemia (bloodstream infection);
2. Antibiotic consumption;
3. Alcohol gel use; and
3. 4. From 2008 onwards, MRSA Surveillance in Intensive Care Units.

Data in respect of the first three areas has been compiled and published for 2006 and 2007. This report provides essential data that will serve as a benchmark for assessing progress in the future. I firmly believe that you cannot manage what you do not measure. With this system we have now begun a very useful measurement process. The results so far show some improvement with a relatively small reduction in MRSA in 2007 over 2006.

Since May 4th this year, *C. difficile* has become a notifiable disease and all cases now have to be reported to the relevant Department of Public Health. The Health Protection Surveillance Centre of the HSE published Guidelines for the Surveillance, Management and Control of *C. difficile*-associated diseases in May 2008. This publication gives national guidance and deals with the isolation of *C. difficile* ribotype 027 for the first time in Irish hospitals. The guidelines will be a valuable resource in assisting in the prevention, management and control of this infectious disease.

Other measures taken to reduce the incidence of HCAs include the appointment of additional infection control staff, education campaigns for health care staff and the general public around the prudent use of antibiotics. Last year I instructed the HSE that private beds should be used where possible for isolation purposes where required for patients who contracted HCAs. In addition, new environmental building guidelines to inform infection control policy in all new builds and refurbishments are to be published shortly by the HSE.

An important part of infection control is hygiene. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), which I established last year, undertook a comprehensive review of hygiene in our acute hospitals in 2007 and published its report last November. The report represents a thorough assessment of how hygiene services are provided and managed in 51 HSE-funded acute care hospitals. HIQA is following up on this review to ensure that deficits identified during that process are rectified and the Authority has already commenced a further national review this autumn. HIQA is also due to publish Infection Prevention and Control Standards later this year. When finalised, these, along with the National Hygiene Standards, will provide a comprehensive framework to control infection in all health care settings.

While accepting that not all HCAs are preventable, I am satisfied that significant steps are being taken to reduce the rates of HCAs generally and to treat them promptly when they occur.

### **Hospitals Building Programme.**

283. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children when it is expected the full and final phase of the Naas Hospital development plan will be completed including the commissioning of all theatres, the clean air theatre and other facilities anticipated, required or provided; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42793/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** In drawing up its capital programme, the Health Service Executive is required to prioritise the capital infrastructure projects to be progressed within its overall capital funding allocation under the National Development

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Plan, taking account of targets for the division of capital investment between the Acute and Primary, Community & Continuing Care sectors. The process leading to the approval of the HSE's Capital Plan 2009 is currently underway. Details on individual projects will be made available when the capital plan is approved. My Department has asked the Executive's Parliamentary Affairs Division to reply directly to the Deputy on the operational issues raised by him.

### Health Services.

284. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the extent to which it is intended to upgrade, improve or replace or extend the facilities at the various health centres throughout County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42794/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** Under the Health Act 2004, the management and delivery of health and personal social services is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive. This includes operational responsibility for the upgrading, improving, replacing or extending of health centres. Accordingly, my Department has requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Executive to arrange to have this matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

### Ministerial Staff.

285. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of persons employed in her private office and her constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42906/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the tables below.

Table 1: Staffing Position at November 2008

	Private Secretary	Executive Officer	Staff Officer	Clerical Officer	Special Advisor	Personal Assistant	Total
Private Office	1	2	1	4	2	1	11
Constituency Office				2		1	3

Table 2: Administrative Budget details — Paid to date

2008 (to date)	Total Pay	Travel & Subsistence Payments	Ministerial Expenses
	€m	€m	€m
Minister for Health & Children Private Office	0.925	0.046	0.011
Minister for Health & Children Constituency Office	0.135	0.000	0.000
Total	1.060	0.046	0.011

*Question No. 286 answered with Question No. 270.*

### **Departmental Expenditure.**

287. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children the costs involved in off-site rental storage of her departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43231/08]

**Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney):** The Department of Health and Children has currently 12,586 boxes of files held in an off-site storage facility. The estimated annual costs for 2008, which include general storage, the provision of a high-security vault and collection and return services, are approximately €62,000 inclusive of VAT. The storage elements of these costs are borne by the Office of Public Works.

### **State Airports.**

288. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Minister for Transport if he will confirm reports that he intends to abandon plans to implement the provision of the State Airports Act 2004 separating Cork and Shannon Airports from the Dublin Airport Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42127/08]

290. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Transport, further to Parliamentary Question No. 266 of 7 October 2008, if the business plans for the three airports have been received by his Department; his views on media reports that the decision taken in the State Airports Act 2004 to break up the three airports is to be reviewed in view of the recent economic downturn; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42151/08]

295. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Minister for Transport if there has been a change in his policy on setting up independently run and owned airports at Cork, Shannon and Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42379/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 288, 290 and 295 together.

The State Airports Act, 2004 provides the framework for the establishment of Shannon and Cork as independent airports. Under the Act, both the Minister for Finance and I will have to be satisfied as to the state of operational and financial readiness of the three airports before any vesting of assets can take place. I have already received the Cork and Shannon business plans and I expect shortly to receive a finalised commentary on those plans by the DAA when they submit their own plan under the Act. Following consideration of the business plans and the views of the three boards, and after consultation with the Minister for Finance, I will bring the matter to Government, taking account of the current state of the aviation market and the economy generally.

### **Rural Transport Services.**

289. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Transport the position in relation to rural transport for Loughglynn, County Roscommon; if he will give assurances that this service will be continued into the foreseeable future. [42130/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** Pobal administers the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) on behalf of my Department and is working with 37 individual rural transport groups around the country, including groups in County Roscommon, to expand it on a phased basis in response to local public transport service needs and having regard to the availability

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of resources. A list of RTP groups is available on the Pobal website at [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie). Euro 10 million is being provided for the RTP in 2008, up from Euro 9 million in 2007. Euro 11 million has been allocated for the Programme in 2009.

*Question No. 290 answered with Question No. 288.*

### **Departmental Bodies.**

291. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Transport the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42227/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** My Department is at present preparing proposals for the implementation of the decision announced in Budget 2009 in relation to the rationalisation of State agencies. For my Department, this involves the establishment of the Dublin Transport Authority and the amalgamation of air, marine, and rail accident investigation functions. At this stage, no agencies or functions have been amalgamated or eliminated.

It is proposed that the Dublin Transport Authority will incorporate the Dublin Transportation Office, the Commission for Taxi Regulation and the Public Transport Licensing function of my Department. I am satisfied that substantial benefits will accrue as a result of the improved procurement, regulation, management and co-ordination of transport services. Those benefits will accrue to the travelling public, employers, taxpayers and society at large and will make an important contribution to sustaining competitiveness and addressing the increasing challenges of climate change. I believe also that the amalgamation of the accident investigation functions will enable efficiencies to be achieved. These will come from the integration of support functions.

### **Public Transport.**

292. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Transport the response of his Department to each individual recommendation in respect of the recommendations contained within the Consumer Strategy Group report directed to his Department; if the recommendations have as of today been implemented in full, in part, or not at all; if, of those recommendations which have not been implemented to date, he will implement them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42256/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The Department of Transport is actively pursuing a public transport regulatory reform process, which, in broad terms, accords with the recommendations concerning passenger transport made by the Consumer Strategy Group — see Part 2, Chapter 4 of the Group's report. The first stage of that process involves the establishment of a Dublin Transport Authority (DTA). In this regard the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008 became law earlier this year. Accordingly, for the first time we have the law in place to ensure that a single body will be in charge of surface transport in the Greater Dublin Area. The DTA will be established during 2009.

The DTA will assume responsibility from the Department of Transport and the Railway Procurement Agency for the procurement of bus, rail, metro and light rail public passenger transport services in accordance with a legislative framework that is consistent with Regulation (EC) No. 1370/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007.

A major objective of the 2008 Act is the delivery of an integrated public transport network. This will be achieved in a number of ways. For example the DTA will take over direct responsibility for the implementation of integrated ticketing. The DTA will be obliged to implement a single public transport brand by operators across the various public transport modes. It will also have responsibility for developing an integrated information system, providing a single integrated source of travel planning information for public transport users. There is also provision for the implementation by the DTA of a fares scheme in the Greater Dublin Area. The Act also makes provision for representation by transport users on the Dublin Transport Authority Advisory Council.

The next stage of the reform process will involve the assignment of responsibility for bus licensing and public transport service contracts nationwide to the DTA. Government approval for the drafting of the necessary legislation will be sought shortly. It is also proposed that the Commission for Taxi Regulation as well as the functions envisaged in the Programme for Government for a National Transport Regulator will be absorbed into the DTA under this legislation.

### **Road Traffic Offences.**

293. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Transport the location of the demarcation lines for prosecutions being brought by his Department through the State Solicitor scheme, at a time when the Road Safety Authority clearly is responsible for such prosecutions and is being represented by an independent firm of solicitors (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42322/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport (Deputy Noel Ahern):** Under the Road Safety Authority Act 2006 (Conferral of Functions) Order 2006 (S.I. No 477 of 2006), the Road Safety Authority is responsible for the prosecution of offences arising from those functions transferred to the Authority, including for example of offences in respect of tachographs and vehicle standards. I can assure the Deputy that no prosecutions for such offences are brought by my Department and therefore no duplication arises.

### **Road Network.**

294. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the road contract for the N2-N3 link road section from Cherryhound to Tyrrelstown; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42346/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in their areas is a matter for local authorities to be funded from their own resources supplemented by State grants provided by my Department. State grant aid has not been provided by my Department for this project. Progress with the proposal is a matter for the local authority.

*Question No. 295 answered with Question No. 288.*

### **Rail Network.**

296. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Transport the plans his Department has to upgrade the Maynooth rail line; the timescale for such plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42402/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The detailed planning and design of the upgrade works on the Maynooth line is a matter for Iarnród Éireann. I understand that Iarnród Éireann intend to undertake the resignalling and the removal of level crossings on the line in the period 2009-2012 and that the electrification of the line will progress in tandem with the resignalling. These projects will provide for a significant increase in trains per hour from 7 currently to 17 trains per hour. When completed the Maynooth line will become an integral part of the DART network.

297. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Transport the amount of State funding allocated to the Kildare route project; the progress of the project to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42403/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** Exchequer funding of €269m has been approved for the Kildare Route Project and €157,978,144 has been paid to date. The construction phase of the Kildare Route Project commenced in June 2007 and is due to be completed by early 2010.

### Consultancy Contracts.

298. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Transport the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42580/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the table below. In general, consultancy services are procured in areas where there is need to avail of particular expertise.

Consultancy Firm	2006	Cost (incl VAT)	Purpose of Consultancy
		€	
Audrey Kirwan	2006	16,985.37	Business Process Manuals, knowledge transfer and work practices, in preparation for decentralisation of Road Transport Operator Licensing Unit
Aspen Connect & Tekenable	2006	8,863.25	Report on the viability of an information technology solution to an Information Centre required under an EU Motor Insurance Directive
C.C Fisher associates	2006	85,000 inc VAT	Evaluation of projects for Irelands unit load capacity to 2014 and beyond
IBM	2006	72650	Information Technology Strategy for the Department
Mazars	2006	9,680.00	Audit of National Roads Measure
Helm Corporation Ltd	2006	7,260.00	Audit of Personnel/Finance Division-Overtime
Helm Corporation Ltd	2006	19,360.00	Audit of Irish Coast Guard-Search & rescue Helicopter Contracts
Change Management Training	2006	6,292.00	Development of Drive-Tester Selection Toolkit
Change Management Training	2006	93,230.50	Review & Re-design of Driver-Tester Training Programme
Precept Consulting	2006	5,445.00	Preparation of Discussion Paper on PMDS — Guidelines on Standardised Performance Rating System



Consultancy Firm	2006	Cost (incl VAT)	Purpose of Consultancy
		€	
MVA Limited	2006	56,318.00	Review of Integrated Ticketing Project and independent technical advice to the Chairman of the Integrated Ticketing Project Board.
LECG Ltd	2006	35,965.73	Work relating to the Competition Authority investigation into access to Dublin Airport infrastructure
Pricewaterhouse Coopers	2006	103,539.09	Consultancy on state airports business plans
INDECON (Ireland)	2006	101,970.04	Capital Expenditure Grant Scheme Review for regional airports
Boyd Creed Sweet	2006	157,300.00	Verification Process for Terminal 2
AIB Corporate Finance; UBS Ltd; Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer; William Fry Solicitors; Bowen International	2006	6,211,807.00	Financial and Legal advice to the Minister and the Minister for Finance in relation to the Aer Lingus IPO
Mr. James Connolly, SC, Inspector to the Public Inquiry	2006	45,375.00	Report of the Public Inquiry into the Kildare Route Railway Order application
Moore Stephens		4,235.00	Financial Audit of cohesion funded rail network track & signalling project
Equinox Business Solutions	2006	8,839.05	Design, development and maintenance of a dedicated Transport 21 website
Drury Communications Ltd	2006	31,551.53	The development and management of, and provision of advice on, an Information & Communications Strategy for Transport 21 up to end 2007
Hay Group Ireland(Consultants)	2006	26,620.00	To make recommendations on the appropriate remuneration for senior positions in the proposed Dublin Transport Authority.
Matheson Ormsby Prentice (Consultants)	2006/7	39,885.00	To provide legal advice in respect of aspects of the Dublin Transport Authority Bill.
Mr James Connolly S.C	2006	39,325.00	Costs of Inspector appointed to conduct Public Inquiry into Railway Application Order for Luas Extension from Sandyford to Cherrywood
Mr James Connolly S.C	2006	36,300.00	Costs of Inspector appointed to conduct Public Inquiry into Railway Application Order for Luas Extension from Connolly Station to the Point.
Major Christopher Holden(Retd)	2006	5,368.35	Fees and expenses of statutory assessor to assist Inspector at Public Inquiry into RPA's application for a Railway Order for the Luas extension fro Sandyford to Cherrywood
Major Christopher Holden(Retd)	2006	6,061.43	Fees and expenses of statutory assessor to assist Inspector at Public Inquiry into RPA's application for a Railway Order for the Luas extension from Connolly Station to the Point
Goodbody Economic Consultants (Bernard Feeney)	2006	16,316.85	Appraisal of Cherrywood Luas Extension and assessment of Methodology of evaluating impact of proposed Luas cross — city link bus services
Siobhan Phelan (Barrister)	2006	3,630.00	Transposition of Tunnels Directive 2004/54/EC
Mazars Consulting	2006	28,737.00	Support for upgrade of Corepay system
A Kirwan	2006	6,050.00	Finance Development Workshop
Venn Group	2006	2,444.00	Payroll services
Marsh Insurance	2006	25,000.00	Advice/assistance on aviation insurance
Imelda Higgins, BL	2006	3,267.00	Legal drafting of Statutory Instruments to give effect to EU Regulations

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Consultancy Firm	2007	Cost (incl VAT)	Purpose of Consultancy
		€	
Pricewaterhouse Coopers	2007	54,822.08	Analysis and review of the State Airports Business Plans
INDECON (Ireland)	2007	67,979.98	Capital Expenditure Grant Scheme Review for regional airports
AIB Corporate Finance; UBS Ltd; Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer; William Fry Solicitors	2007	2,559,000.00	Residual costs associated with Aer Lingus IPO + advice to the Minister and the Minister for Finance in relation to the Competition case arising from the Ryanair takeover bid for Aer Lingus
GoodbodyEconomic Consultants	2007	19,481.00	Business Cases for Reopening of WRC Phase 1 (Ennis to Athenry) Dublin Bus requirements i.e. purchase of 33 railcars
Booz Allen Hamilton	2007	98,500.00	to evaluate CIE Subvention payments
Raymond Burke Consulting	2007	3,265.00	Quality Assessment of CIE Subvention Expenditure Review
Mr. Pat Butler S.C.	2007	33,275.00	Report of the Public Inquiry into the Cork-Midleton Railway Order application
Caplin Meehan		14,217.50	Financial Audit of cohesion funded rail network track & signalling project
Design Bridge	2007	70,463.35	The technical design and development of a Transport 21 corporate identity (branding and logo graphic design) and guidelines for their application
Raymond Turner Associates	2007	172,237.10	The development of key messages for Transport 21
Equinox Business Solutions	2007	780.45	Hosting fee for Transport 21 website
Drury Communications Ltd	2007	183,599.95	The development and management of, and provision of advice on, an Information & Communications Strategy for Transport 21 up to end 2007
Steer Davies Gleave	2007	124,737.19	To review compliance by the State Agencies responsible for the delivery of transport infrastructure with the appraisal and procurement guidelines during the project appraisal stage.
Booz & Co.	2007	228,614.38	1) To assess quality and robustness of project development and implementation of selected Transport 21 projects with regard to compliance with the appraisal and procurement guidelines. 2) Giving advice on the financial, economic and technical aspects of the Transport 21 Capital Investment Programme.
realTime	2007	32,697.08	Development and maintenance of the Transport 21 Database
Design Bridge	2007	70,463.35	The technical design and development of a Transport 21 corporate identity (branding and logo graphic design) and guidelines for their application
Goodbody Economic Consultants	2007	13,370.50	Review of Business cases of Luas Lines A1 and C1
Dom Hegarty	2007	18,876.00	Review of funding arrangements for Longmile Road Junction
Matheson Ormsby Prentice	2007	9,075.00	Seminar on State Aid in Land Transport
PA Consultants	2007	56,991.00	Work on Report on the cost of motor insurance premiums for young drivers which was undertaken on foot of a commitment given by the Government in the Social Partnership Agreement 'Towards 2016'
Warren Estates auctioneers	2007	1,210.00 inc VAT	Valuation-South quay, Wicklow

Consultancy Firm	2007	Cost (incl VAT)	Purpose of Consultancy
		€	
Baker Tilly O'Hare	2007	6,050.00 inc VAT	Updates and monitoring of Dundalk 21 oct 05
Richard Hooper	2007	18,000.00 The amount was not Vatable	Bremore report
Ernst & Young	2007	13,000.00	Audit of Ennis Bypass
Helm Corporation Ltd	2007	14,058.00	Audit of Fixed Assets Register
Deloitte & Touche	2007	72,600.00	Review of Procurement in Department of Transport
Institute of Public Administration	2007	93,654.00	Development of Employee Attitude Survey and Human Resource Strategy
HRM Recruitment	2007	67,496.00	Sustainability Advisor to provide economic and environmental analysis to support the Department policy on sustainability issues.
MVA Limited	2007	60,611.00	Independent technical advice to the Chairman of the Integrated Ticketing Project Board.
Calyx Software	2007	27,507.00	Upgrade of the Agresso Financial Management System and additional enhancements
PMI Software	2007	36,300.00	Development and implementation of reporting tools for Risk Management System
Carr Communications	2007	5,248.00	Business Planning process for Finance Division
Mr. R.Kane B.L. Aviation Consultant	2007	12,000.00	Legal drafting of Statutory Instruments to give effect to EU Directive/Regulations

### Rail Services.

299. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Transport if, in view of the fact that the North Esk freight facility is no longer connected to the upgraded Cork-Cobh line, there is an issue over the reliability of the responses made by Irish Rail to the Department of Transport (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42616/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** In May 2006 the then Minister for Transport in reply to a PQ indicated that he had been informed by Iarnród Éireann that the work planned on the Cork-Cobh line would have no impact on the North Esk freight facility and that the freight yard would remain connected to the rail system. I now understand from Iarnród Éireann that there have been no rail freight activities at the North Esk rail freight depot since September 2006. In the meantime, Iarnród Éireann has undertaken some track renewal and realignment works in the area. It is normal practice when such work is undertaken not to renew or replace connecting turnouts to sections of line not currently in use and this was the case with regard to the North Esk connection. However, if a viable business case were to emerge the turnout could easily be reinstated and I am informed by Iarnród Éireann that no work has been undertaken, or will be undertaken, which would prevent this in the future.

### Departmental Expenditure.

300. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Transport the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42631/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The information requested by the Deputy cannot currently be provided from the reporting templates of the Department's Travel and

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Subsistence system. I will, however, respond fully to the Deputy in a few weeks when the system will be amended to produce the required reports.

### **Taxi Regulations.**

301. **Deputy Pádraic McCormack** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the regulation of taxi operators having to have wheelchair accessible taxis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42640/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The Commission for Taxi Regulation is the independent public body responsible for the regulatory framework of the taxi industry. There is no requirement for taxi operators to have a wheelchair accessible vehicle to acquire a taxi licence. However, my Department has been in discussion with the Commission for Taxi Regulation about a proposal for a subsidy scheme to assist with the purchase of accessible vehicles over a five-year period that will meet the new accessible vehicle specification that has been developed by the Commission. A number of options for the delivery of additional accessible vehicles are being explored by my Department in the wider context of improving accessibility to public transport for people with disabilities.

In this context, the Department's Public Transport Accessibility Committee recently discussed the provision of wheelchair accessible taxis when considering a review of Transport Access for All — the Department's sectoral plan under the Disability Act 2005. The Committee questioned whether, in the present economic environment and on practical grounds, it was necessary to provide for the entire fleet of taxis in urban areas to be wheelchair accessible. In that light my Department will engage further with the Commission for Taxi Regulation to identify whether a more cost effective approach to the provision of adequate numbers of wheelchair accessible taxis can be developed.

### **Public Transport.**

302. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42698/08]

304. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Transport if he will put in place an alternative method of refund for transport operators to the excise duty refund for public transport services, which was terminated on 31 October 2008; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that similar such schemes are operating in other EU countries to support commercial public transport services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42718/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 302 and 304 together.

As already stated in my answer to Question numbers 28 and 33 on 1 October last and in further question answered on 4 November, the Finance Act 2008 provides for the removal of excise duty reliefs in the bus sector with effect from 1 November 2008. Since this is in line with our EU obligations, there is no power to restore the scheme.

### **Road Network.**

303. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Transport if his Department has received an application for funding from Kildare County Council for the construction of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42715/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The provision and improvement of regional and local roads in its area is a matter for Kildare County Council to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State grants. My Department received an application from Kildare County Council dated 7th November 2008 for 100% funding of the Athy Southern Distributor Road at an estimated cost of €42 million. This application will be considered by my Department, having regard to compliance with eligibility criteria, the need to prioritise projects, competing demands from other local authorities and the funds available for the Regional and Local Roads Programme.

*Question No. 304 answered with Question No. 302.*

#### **Ministerial Staff.**

305. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42910/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The following table provides the information required by the Deputy.

Office	Grade	Number	Salary Scale
			€
Constituency	Special Advisor	1	92,730 – 107,485
Constituency	Executive Officer	1	32,179 – 51,054
Constituency	Clerical Officer	1	24,397 – 39,558
Constituency	Personal Assistant	1	46,558 – 55,030
Constituency	Personal Secretary	1	444.26 – 825.90 p.w.
Private Office	Press Advisor	1	86,168 – 100,191
Private Office	Higher Executive Officer	1	49,007 – 62,210
Private Office	Executive Officer	1	32,179 – 51,054
Private Office	Clerical Officers	6	24,397- 39,558

The amount paid to date in respect of salaries and expenses for both offices is €885,953.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

306. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43232/08]

**Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey):** The main file storage facility for the Department of Transport is a storage facility in Finglas, Dublin rented directly by the Office of Public Works at an annual cost of €45,520. There is no specific banker box storage charge payable as the facility is operated directly by the Department. An additional off site file storage facility is provided in Limerick for the storage of documents for the driver and vehicle computer services division. The cost in this facility per “Bankers box” (cubic size 1.25) is €6.90 (incl vat) per box per year.

#### **Road Traffic Offences.**

307. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his

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Department has considered the introduction of cameras to monitor the observance of red lights as has occurred in other states; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42191/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that their current priority is the use of camera technology for speed enforcement. I am also informed that they are currently considering the introduction, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, of cameras at various locations in the Dublin area, where failure to observe traffic lights by road users is a significant issue.

308. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of breathalysers in use by the Garda Síochána nationwide; the breakdown of the number of breathalysers per Garda station; the number of gardaí trained in the use of breathalysers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42155/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The information requested by the Deputy is currently being researched. I will contact the Deputy when the information is to hand.

**Garda Deployment.**

309. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work on the traffic corps nationally; the number of staff moved from their duties to traffic corps duties every year; the proportion of total overtime that is worked by the traffic corps; and the number of staff moving permanently or temporarily to work for the traffic corps in rural stations. [42156/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the personnel strength of An Garda Síochána on 31 October 2008, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 14,244. The personnel strength of the Garda Traffic Corps on 31 December 2005 to 2007 and on 31 October 2008 was as set out in the following table:

Traffic Corps

	Number
31 December 2005	570
31 December 2006	775
31 December 2007	954
31 October 2008	980

As part of the accelerated recruitment in An Garda Síochána, provisions were made for the establishment of the Garda Traffic Corps and the allocation of personnel to it on an incremental basis. The figures shown above indicate the numbers who have moved into the Traffic Corps in recent years.

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the Force. In doing this he takes into account all relevant factors, including factors such as population, crime rates and trends as well as operational priorities. Approximately 4.5% of the total overtime incurred each year by An Garda Síochána relates to traffic duty. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the needs of the



Garda Traffic Corps will be fully considered by the Commissioner with the overall context of the needs of Garda Units throughout the country.

310. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work full-time in the traffic corps in south Tipperary in 2008; and the number of gardaí who worked in south Tipperary traffic corps in 2006 and 2007. [42157/08]

311. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work full-time in Tipperary in 2008; and the number who worked full-time in Tipperary in 2006 and 2007. [42158/08]

312. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work full-time in Carrick-on-Suir in 2008; and the number who worked full-time in Carrick-on-Suir in 2006 and 2007. [42159/08]

313. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work full-time in Cahir in 2008; and how many worked full-time in Cahir in 2006 and 2007. [42160/08]

314. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work full-time in Clonmel in 2008; and the number who worked full-time in Clonmel in 2006 and 2007. [42161/08]

315. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí who work full-time in Cashel in 2008; and the number who worked full-time in Cashel in 2006 and 2007. [42162/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 310 to 315, inclusive, together.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the personnel strength of Carrick-on-Suir, Cahir, Clonmel, Cashel and Tipperary Garda Stations and also the personnel strength of the Traffic Corps in Tipperary Garda Division for 31 December 2006 to 2007 and 31 October 2008, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was as set out in the following table.

	31/12/06	31/12/07	31/10/08
Cashel Garda Station	13	12	13
Tipperary Town Station	32	32	34
Cahir Garda Station	36	40	45
Carrick-On-Suir Garda Station	16	15	13
Clonmel Garda Station	48	51	53
Tipperary Traffic Corps	22	27	35

It is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to allocate personnel throughout the Force taking everything into account. The situation will be kept under review and when additional personnel next become available the allocation of resources will be fully considered by the Commissioner within the overall context of the policing throughout the country.

#### **Garda Operations.**

316. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of requests received from the Garda authorities in each of the past five years for

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permission to place taps on the telephones of individuals believed to be involved in criminal activity; and the number of orders granted. [42163/08]

320. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of applications by the gardaí to tap telephone conversations in each of the past five years; the number granted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42203/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 316 and 320 together.

The interception of telecommunications is governed by the provisions of the Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act 1993. For sound security reasons, it is not the practice and it would be contrary to the public interest to disclose details of any requests or any authorisations to intercept, including their number.

### **Citizenship Applications.**

317. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if views have been sought from overseas employers on the delay in processing claims for long-term residency or naturalisation; if benchmarks from competitor countries have been identified to see how Ireland rates; and if there is a case for putting extra resources into fast-tracking this process as part of a policy for a successful economic internationalisation strategy. [42183/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** Applications received by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service are diverse in nature and processing times vary considerably according to the nature and circumstances of the scheme in question. The service has recently allocated substantial additional resources to the processing of applications for both naturalisation and long-term residency and, having regard to the many demands on the service, will keep the resource allocation under review. The service has taken this step with a view to providing an improved customer service to applicants for both schemes and, incrementally, an improvement in processing times.

The Deputy will appreciate that the scale of long-term residency and naturalisation applications and the resources dedicated to dealing with such applications differs considerably from state to state and benchmarks of the type referred to by the Deputy are therefore not easily identifiable. I remain satisfied, given the overall workload facing the organisation, that the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service is making every effort to ensure that all such applications are processed as expeditiously as possible.

### **Proposed Legislation.**

318. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in law following recent court decisions in relation to begging in public places such as traffic junctions; and if he plans to amend the law in any way. [42184/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the Government recently approved my proposals for new legislation to deal with the outcome of the High Court judgment which found that section 3 of the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847 was unconstitutional. That was the section under which prosecutions for begging were brought. The new legislation is being drafted. I expect it will be published in 2009. The General Scheme of the Bill is available on my Department's website.

The new legislation will provide that begging will be an offence where it is accompanied by unacceptable behaviour such as harassment, obstruction or intimidation. The Bill will also provide a new power that will enable the Garda to direct persons who are begging to desist. A failure to comply with a direction may result in an arrest and charge. I believe this new power will prove to be an effective addition to the enforcement options available to the Garda.

### **Citizenship Applications.**

319. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the status of an application for naturalisation by a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42198/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the question was received in the citizenship section of my Department in November 2008. On examination of the application submitted, it was determined that the statutory declaration was not completed correctly and the application in its entirety was returned to the person concerned for further attention on 13 November, 2008. In order to be fair to all applicants, only valid applications can be considered. It is open to the person in question to resubmit the application to the citizenship section of my Department at any time.

*Question No. 320 answered with Question No. 316.*

### **Garda Equipment.**

321. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if the report in a Sunday newspaper that the Garda traffic corps cannot reliably use its equipment for detecting speeding vehicles in wet and murky weather is correct; if any cases have been challenged on grounds of unreliability of equipment; if new equipment is being sought; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42205/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that all fixed and mobile speed cameras operated by the Garda Síochána can be used in wet and inclement weather. When visibility is poor, as in severe rainfall, heavy fog or snow, the operating range may be reduced. I am also informed that when a handheld speed detection device is being used offending motorists must be stopped by the detecting Garda as this device does not capture or retain an image of offending vehicles.

In severe weather conditions operation of such a speed detection device may not be safe for Garda personnel and motorists because of the extended vehicle stopping distances necessary due to road conditions associated with severe rainfall, heavy fog or snow. I am further informed that the Garda Síochána is satisfied with the capabilities of speed enforcement technologies in use and there are no plans to review the operation of this equipment at this time. The Garda Síochána is not aware of any challenges before the courts on grounds of unreliability of equipment.

### **Departmental Bodies.**

322. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42224/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Deputy will be aware that, as part of budget 2009, the following measures were agreed for my Department under the heading of rationalisation of State Agencies. The Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission will fully integrate their facilities, back office and administrative services and access for citizens. The National Crime Council will be abolished. The Censorship of Publications Board and its appeals board will be amalgamated with the Irish Film Classification Office. The office of the Minister for integration will cease funding the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and its functions will be absorbed into his office in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to be administered directly by it.

My Department is proceeding with the implementation of these decisions in consultation with the Department of Finance. However, it is too early at this stage to provide the specific information requested by the Deputy in respect of all the savings that will accrue when that process is completed. However, I can confirm immediate savings of just over €1 million in respect of the decisions in relation to the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism and the National Crime Council. I can also say for the Deputy's information that savings of €11 million will be made next year across agencies associated with my Department by the introduction of economies, elimination of consultancies and spending on public relations.

#### **Victims of Crime.**

323. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if the garda superintendent will liaise with a group (details supplied) regarding referrals and the direct garda referral via the liaison garda will continue for the group. [42235/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** As I already advised in response to Parliamentary Question No. 866 put down by Deputy Shatter in June 2008 it is Garda Síochána policy to provide the best service possible to victims of crime. The Garda Síochána make victims of crime aware of the National Crime Victims Helpline and the support services available nationally and specific to their location. In Kerry this would include The South Kerry Support for Victims of Crime Group. This is one of the groups in the Kerry area funded by the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime.

Disclosure of personal data held by the Garda Síochána to non-Garda personnel is governed by the Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003. The general rule is that there is a prohibition on the disclosure of personal data to third parties unless the disclosure is compatible with the purpose or purposes for which the data was obtained. I am aware that as an organisation the Garda Síochána takes its responsibility for the control of the data it processes about individuals very seriously. This is to ensure no unauthorised disclosures are made. The prohibition on disclosure is lifted in certain restricted cases, including where such disclosure is made at the request of, or with the consent of, the data subject. Where a victim explicitly requests a Garda to contact a support organisation for them it would be possible, from a data protection point of view, for the Garda to do so. However, it is a matter for the individual to choose which support service, if any, to avail of.

The National Crime Victims Helpline, which is also funded by the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime, acts as a first port of call for victims. The Helpline is there to listen, inform and where necessary, to refer a victim to support services in their local area. For example, during 2007 the Helpline received 1,963 requests from members of the public for information and/or assistance. In 2007 the Helpline was able to deal with approximately 80% of their contacts without the need for further referral to local support services. I understand that the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime has commissioned further research

into the support needs of victims of crime and the factors involved in the demand for such support services. I welcome this initiative by the Commission, and look forward to its findings.

### **Proposed Legislation.**

324. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will confirm that property management companies are to be legislated for with a single Bill rather than three separate Bills, as had been previously indicated with respect to the comments made by An Taoiseach in Dáil Éireann on 12 November 2008 regarding management companies; when he expects the heads of this Bill to be drafted; if he will commit to having the Bill published and enacted before the end of July 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42247/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Deputy will be aware that this is a complex issue which involves a number of Government Departments. The Government is determined that its Strategy for Multi-Unit Developments will be effective and comprehensive. To that end, work on the preparation of legislative proposals to respond to the Law Reform Commission's recommendations concerning multi-unit developments and the regulation and governance of property management companies is under way across a number of Departments. Options are being considered in consultation with relevant Departments and the Attorney General as to whether it would be more expeditious to introduce a single Bill or to adopt a sectoral approach to amending existing legislation. The Government's decision on the matter will be made on the basis of how quickly the required legislation can be enacted.

### **Departmental Reports.**

325. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the response of his Department to each individual recommendation in respect of the recommendations contained within the Consumer Strategy Group report directed to his Department; if the recommendations have as of today been implemented in full, in part, or not at all; if, of those recommendations which have not been implemented to date, he will implement them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42255/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Deputy will be aware that the recommendations in the Consumer Strategy Group Report which are directed specifically to my Department concern the sale of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and consumer legislation and enforcement, particularly in relation to the small claims procedure in the District Court. As regards the sale of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, I am pleased to report that the Government Legislative Programme provides for the publication of the Sale of Alcohol Bill during the current session. The Bill will modernise and streamline all the laws relating to the sale and consumption of alcohol by repealing the Licensing Acts 1833 to 2008, as well as the Registration of Clubs Acts 1904 to 2008, and replacing them with updated and streamlined provisions.

In relation to consumer legislation and enforcement, in October 2005, following consultations between my Department and the Courts Service, the maximum award limit under the small claims procedure in the District Court was increased to €2,000. In setting that maximum award limit, regard had to be given to the general jurisdictional limits of the District Court but I can inform the Deputy that a further review of the limits applying will be conducted in 2009. In addition to increasing the maximum award limit, the Small Claims Court has introduced an on-line claim application procedure. This system was initially piloted in the Dublin Metropolitan



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District Court and Cavan District Court and has now been rolled-out to all District Courts. It provides an enhanced claims procedure and allows for 24 hour access by consumers.

I am sure the Deputy will agree that the Small Claims Procedure in the District Court provides a cost effective and extremely efficient claims procedure for consumers. In terms of output, in 2007, a total of 3,734 applications were received by the District Courts. This level of applications represents a 25% increase over application levels in 2006 and I believe that it is indicative of the confidence which consumers continue have in the Small Claims Procedure.

### **Garda Stations.**

326. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when work will commence on the refurbishment of Blarney Garda station, which was seriously damaged by an arson attack on 10 October 2008; when a decision will be made on the request for an interim arrangement whereby prefabs would be provided in Blarney for use as a temporary Garda station while the necessary repairs are being carried out in view of the fact that the gardaí are operating from Gurrabraher Garda station which is a considerable distance from Blarney, especially as the present situation gives out the message that the gardaí can be driven out of a village by illegal activities. [42258/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am advised by the Garda authorities that following the incident which occurred at the station on 10 October last, the Gardaí allocated to Blarney are temporarily operating from the Garda District Headquarter at Gurrabraher which is a distance of approximately 8 kms. I am also advised by the Garda authorities that they are liaising with the Office of Public Works regarding refurbishment works to Blarney Garda Station. In addition, the Garda authorities, in conjunction with the OPW, are currently examining a range of options with a view to providing temporary accommodation for Gardaí in Blarney in the most cost efficient and timely manner.

### **Asylum Support Services.**

327. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of people in direct provision at present; the cost to the State in the past 12 months of such provision; the number of accommodation centres nationally; if he has plans to increase the subvention to asylum seekers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42259/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) of my Department is responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers in accordance with the Government policy of direct provision and dispersal. In this regard, RIA is currently providing accommodation to almost 6,900 asylum seekers in 60 centres located across 22 counties. The cost to the State for the provision of such accommodation in the last financial year, i.e. 2007, was £83.262 m. This expenditure included such services as preschool services, utilities (gas) etc, transporting asylum seekers throughout the country under the system of dispersal, and miscellaneous amounts such as the payment for nappies and funeral expenses.

The Direct Provision system seeks to ensure that the accommodation and ancillary services provided by the State meet the requirements of asylum seekers while their applications for asylum are being processed. This system provides asylum seekers with full board accommodation free of utility or other costs. It is essentially a cashless system. The question also refers to the subvention to asylum seekers. I assume the Deputy is referring to the Direct Provision allowance of £19.10 per adult and £9.60 per child which was introduced some years ago. This is paid by Community Welfare Officers (CWOs), operating under the aegis of the



Department of Social and Family Affairs. CWOs also have discretion to make once-off exceptional needs payments in relation to, for example, back to school clothing.

The Direct Provision allowance seeks to reflect the value of the above-mentioned services to the asylum seeker and there are no plans to increase the allowance. It should also be noted that asylum seekers in Direct Provision also qualify for medical cards and can access the public health service in the same way as an Irish citizen and that children are entitled to free education at Primary and Post-Primary level.

### **Residency Permits.**

328. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected position relating to an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42261/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 20 January 2004. As part of the process of having his asylum claims investigated, the person concerned was invited to attend for interview at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner on 15 September 2004. The person concerned did not attend for interview on this date, nor did he furnish an explanation for his failure to attend. Consequently, he was informed, by letter dated 21 September 2004, that the Refugee Applications Commissioner had recommended to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform that he should not be declared to be a refugee, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 (2) of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended). The person concerned was also informed that there was no appeal against such a recommendation.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 7 October 2004, sent by registered post to his last known address, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. This letter was returned to my Department marked 'gone away'.

The case of the person concerned now falls to be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. When this consideration has been completed, the case file of the person concerned is passed to me for decision.

329. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 22 must renew his GNIB card every month; if this matter will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42262/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Deputy is aware from PQ No. 160 of 25 September 2008 and my subsequent letter dated 29/9/08 that the person concerned is the subject of an investigation into immigration issues. Accordingly, he is required to renew his GNIB Card on a monthly basis for operational reasons. It is not intended to review this arrangement until the GNIB enquiries are completed and considered. However, if this arrangement is causing difficulties, the person concerned should write to the Ministerial Decisions Unit of my Department at 13/14, Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 giving details of the difficulties encountered which will be given every consideration.

330. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will use his discretion to offer an extension of residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42263/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I refer the Deputy to the Reply given to his Parliamentary Question No. 240 on Thursday 24 April 2008. The status of the person concerned remains as set out in that Reply. The person concerned has continued to meet her presentation requirements with the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). She is due to present again on Thursday 27 November 2008. The enforcement of the Deportation Order is an operational matter for the GNIB.

331. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42264/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I refer the Deputy to the Replies given to his previous Parliamentary Questions No. 536 of Wednesday 31 October 2007 and No. 126 on Thursday 20 November 2008. Since those dates correspondence from the person concerned requesting the exercise of my discretion to grant leave to remain in the State has been considered. In view of the existing Deportation Order in respect of the person concerned, this correspondence could only be considered as a revocation request under Section 3 (11) of the Immigration Act, 1999, as amended. Following consideration of the information submitted, the Deportation Order was affirmed and the person concerned was notified of this decision. He was also advised to continue to comply with his presentation requirements at the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB). The enforcement of the Deportation Order is, and remains, an operational matter for the GNIB.

332. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected position relating to an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42265/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 15 July 2003. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 18 August 2005, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. Representations were submitted on behalf of the person concerned at that time.

The person concerned subsequently submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 and this application is under consideration at present. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the Subsidiary Protection application is refused, the case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will then be considered under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. When this latter consideration has been completed, the file is passed to me for decision.

333. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected position in relation to an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42266/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 4 July 2003. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 16 November 2007, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006).

The person concerned submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with these Regulations and this application is under consideration at present. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the Subsidiary Protection application is refused, the case file of the person concerned, including all representations submitted, will then be considered under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. When this latter consideration has been completed, the case file of the person concerned is passed to me for decision.

334. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the current or expected position in relation to an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42267/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 31 December, 2004, this application was refused by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner, and that decision was affirmed by the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. The person in question subsequently applied for permission to remain in the State under the revised arrangements for non-EEA parents of children born in Ireland prior to 1 January, 2005, known as the IBC/05 Scheme. This application was refused as the person did not meet the criteria of the scheme, and was informed of this decision by letter, dated 29 July, 2005.

While a deportation order was made in respect of the person concerned on 15 September, 2005, and remains in force, the person's case will be reviewed in light of the Supreme Court judgment on matters related to the IBC/05 Scheme, and the person concerned will be contacted directly and informed of any further decisions, in due course.

#### **Garda Investigations.**

335. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42272/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that a review of the investigation file into the incident referred to by the Deputy is ongoing.

#### **Garda Deployment.**

336. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of gardaí allotted to each of the Garda stations in the Dublin metropolitan area in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42274/08]

341. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will provide in tabular form the number of gardaí in each station around the country, for every year between 2002 and 2008. [42308/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 336 and 341 together.

I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the personnel strength of each Garda Station throughout the country on 31 December 2002 to 2007 and on 31 October 2008, the latest date for which figures are readily available was as set out in the following table. It should be noted that these figures only include members allocated to Garda Stations throughout the country and do not, for example, include members attached to national units.

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>District "A"</i>							
Kevin Street	117	117	119	122	127	139	143
Kilmainham	76	73	81	81	87	87	83
<i>District "B"</i>							
Pearse St	214	238	252	253	260	268	263
Harcourt Tce.	79	75	77	74	85	87	82
<i>District "E"</i>							
Donnybrook	114	123	125	121	125	136	126
Irishtown	49	55	57	56	54	56	58
TOTAL	649	681	711	707	738	773	755
<i>D.M.R. North Central</i>							
<i>District "C"</i>							
Store St.	225	261	269	271	281	296	292
<i>District "D"</i>							
Bridewell	157	163	166	162	165	180	181
<i>Fixed Penalty Office</i>							
						2	2
<i>District "U"</i>							
Fitzgibbon St.	116	119	119	119	118	117	116
Mountjoy	82	85	91	90	92	99	101
TOTAL	580	628	645	642	656	694	692
<i>D.M.R. South</i>							
<i>District "G"</i>							
Sundrive R.D	57	61	65	65	73	78	77
Crumlin	88	82	87	87	98	108	107
<i>District "M"</i>							
Rathfarnham	74	71	76	70	72	80	80
Tallaght	159	166	173	167	178	181	187
<i>District "P"</i>							
Rathmines	67	71	72	70	76	75	77
Terenure	84	87	91	97	98	101	100
TOTAL	529	538	564	556	595	623	628

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>D.M.R. North</i>							
<i>District "H"</i>							
Santry	91	105	107	119	130	121	82
Ballymun	64	63	65	62	56	75	110
Whitehall	40	40	35	34	40	48	47
Dublin Airport	19	63	65	21	21	21	25
<i>District "R"</i>							
Coolock	84	87	84	88	98	117	116
Malahide	43	40	40	40	45	46	45
Swords	57	56	68	65	68	79	78
<i>District "J"</i>							
Raheny	64	60	66	59	69	68	72
Clontarf	64	62	69	63	71	71	72
Howth	41	42	44	49	42	42	39
<i>District "Y"</i>							
Balbriggan	35	32	34	32	32	50	62
Skerries	10	10	11	10	11	11	10
Lusk	4	4	4	4	4	3	2
Rush	4	5	5	6	7	6	4
Garristown	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
TOTAL	567	618	643	600	640	761	767
<i>D.M.R. West</i>							
<i>District "K"</i>							
Blanchardstown	132	142	152	167	174	180	182
Cabra	76	65	63	69	68	71	75
Finglas	78	68	74	76	87	97	105
Lucan	73	65	74	68	70	84	83
Leixlip	24	26	28	25	25	24	28
Ronanstown	72	81	82	88	92	87	84
<i>District "L"</i>							
Ballyfermot	73	78	81	80	88	87	93
Clondalkin	82	78	76	81	92	104	96
Rathcoole	21	23	28	25	23	24	28
TOTAL	631	626	658	679	719	758	774
<i>D.M.R. East</i>							
<i>District "F"</i>							
Dun Laoghaire	106	90	104	99	96	109	109
Dalkey	29	28	26	26	26	32	33
Kill-O-Grange	36	37	35	33	35	33	32
Cabinteeley	39	40	41	39	38	36	33
Bray	79	75	85	88	103	103	117
Enniskerry	5	5	5	5	5	7	7
Shankhill	53	53	55	61	63	62	62
Greystones	28	28	29	28	35	42	42
<i>District "W"</i>							
Blackrock	66	66	68	75	79	83	83
Dundrum	69	65	68	75	76	79	73
Stepaside	36	32	31	29	35	32	34
TOTAL	546	519	547	558	591	618	625

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	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>Eastern Region</i>							
<i>Louth/Meath</i>							
<i>District: Drogheda</i>							
Drogheda	89	90	89	93	93	97	102
Castlebellingham	4	4	4	4	4	3	3
Clougherhead	3	2	2	1	2	2	3
Dunleer	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Laytown	7	7	8	8	10	12	19
Dundalk	96	97	101	101	109	115	117
Carlingford	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
Hackballscross	14	14	13	12	11	11	10
Dromad	13	12	11	9	7	7	7
Omeath	14	14	15	10	7	5	5
Louth	1	2	1	2	2	2	2
Blackrock	4	4	4	5	5	4	5
<i>District: Kells</i>							
Kells	31	34	31	32	37	45	47
Crossakeel	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Athboy	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Oldcastle	4	4	4	3	4	4	4
Nobber	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<i>District: Trim</i>							
Trim	24	25	25	23	25	30	34
Kilmessan	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Summerhill	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Longwood	0	0	0	1	2	1	2
Enfield	16	17	16	13	14	12	11
Ballivor	2	2	3	2	2	3	3
<i>District: Ashbourne</i>							
Ashbourne	37	37	40	37	49	44	49
Dunboyne	15	13	12	14	14	16	14
Dunshaughlin	11	11	10	9	9	21	22
Kilcock	6	5	5	5	5	5	8
<i>District: Navan</i>							
Navan	47	49	46	45	48	57	72
Ardee	9	10	10	10	9	9	21
Collon	2	2	2	2	2	2	5
Duleek	3	4	4	3	3	3	3
Slane	4	4	4	4	3	4	4
TOTAL	476	481	478	466	493	533	593
<i>Carlow/Kildare</i>							
<i>District: Naas</i>							
Naas	78	80	78	80	89	98	101
Celbridge	19	19	17	19	20	21	22
Clane	6	6	6	5	8	7	8
Kill	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Maynooth	14	15	15	15	17	16	18
<i>District: Kildare</i>							
Kildare	29	27	27	26	31	30	32



	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Robertstown	3	2	3	3	3	5	4
Kilcullen	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
Monasterevan	2	3	3	3	3	5	6
Newbridge	28	29	29	32	33	33	36
Rathangan	3	3	3	3	2	4	4
Carbury/Derrinturn	2	2	2	2	2	4	4
<i>District: Carlow</i>							
Carlow	51	50	53	54	60	71	71
Leighlinbridge	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Myshall	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Muinebheag	7	7	7	6	7	10	10
Athy	16	16	16	18	19	18	21
Castledermot	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>District: Baltinglass</i>							
Baltinglass	22	21	21	23	24	30	36
Blessington	14	13	14	14	18	16	18
Dunlavin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hollywood	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Donard	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Shillelagh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tinahely	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Hacketstown	2	1	1	1	2	2	1
Rathvilly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballymore Eustace	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Tullow	8	9	9	9	9	11	12
Ballytore	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>425</b>
<i>Laois/Offaly</i>							
<i>District: Portlaoise</i>							
Portlaoise	99	97	99	98	103	106	114
Mountmellick	5	5	5	6	6	6	6
Mountrath	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Portarlinton	9	9	10	11	9	11	14
Stradbally	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Clonaslee	3	3	3	3	3	1	2
<i>District: Abbeyleix</i>							
Abbeyleix	26	24	27	25	23	29	29
Ballacolla	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Durrow	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Rathdowney	5	4	3	3	4	4	4
Ballylinan	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Arles	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
Ballinakill	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Borris-On-Ossory	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>District: Birr</i>							
Birr	25	26	28	27	25	24	27
Banagher	6	5	5	5	5	6	6
Cloghan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ferbane	5	5	5	5	5	5	4

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	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Kilcormac	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Kinnitty	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Shinrone	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Shannonbridge	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lorrha	1	1	1	1	1	2	2
<i>District: Tullamore</i>							
Tullamore	43	45	47	48	58	68	79
Clara	6	5	5	5	5	6	6
Clonbologue	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Daingean	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Edenderry	13	13	13	13	13	12	13
Rhode	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
Geashill	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>338</b>
<i>Longford/Westmeath</i>							
<i>District: Mullingar</i>							
Mullingar	72	71	72	71	87	100	105
Killucan	3	3	3	2	2	3	4
Kinnegad	6	6	6	6	7	7	7
Rochfortbridge	3	3	3	4	4	4	5
Castletowngeoghegan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Delvin	3	3	3	3	2	4	3
<i>District: Athlone</i>							
Athlone	46	46	47	48	53	61	65
Ballinahown	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballymore	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Glasson	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilbeggan	3	3	3	3	2	3	4
Moate	4	5	4	4	5	12	13
Ballymahon	3	3	3	3	4	5	4
<i>District: Longford</i>							
Longford	40	45	44	44	52	60	62
Ardagh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Drumlish	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kenagh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Newtowncashel	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lanesboro	7	6	7	6	7	7	7
Tarmonbarry	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
<i>District: Granard</i>							
Granard	25	24	24	30	30	30	31
Ballinalee	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Edgeworthstown	5	5	5	5	5	4	6
Smear	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballynacargy	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Castlepollard	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
Multyfarnham	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Rathowen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>336</b>

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>South Eastern Region</i>							
<i>Wicklow/Wexford</i>							
<i>District: Wexford</i>							
Wexford	68	71	69	72	83	88	95
Taghmon	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Baldwinstown	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Castlebridge	1	1	1	1	1	1	4
Kilmore Quay	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Glynn	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rosslare Strand	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Rosslare Pier	9	9	8	8	7	5	7
<i>District: Gorey</i>							
Gorey	41	41	39	39	45	48	53
Bunclody	5	5	5	5	6	6	6
Courtown Harbour	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Arklow	28	27	28	30	31	31	34
Carnew	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
<i>District: Enniscorthy</i>							
Enniscorthy	31	31	32	32	34	37	38
Blackwater	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
Ferns	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Kiltealy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oylegate	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oulart	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Clonroche	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>District: New Ross</i>							
New Ross	32	31	32	33	37	40	42
Ballycullane	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Carrick-On-Bannow	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Duncannon	2	2	2	3	3	3	5
Carrickbyrne	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Campile	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>District: Wicklow</i>							
Wicklow	41	39	36	36	44	49	49
Ashford	3	3	3	3	3	7	11
Rathdrum	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
Newtownmountkennedy	4	4	3	2	2	1	1
Avoca	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Roundwood	3	4	4	5	4	5	5
Aughrim	0	3	3	2	2	2	2
TOTAL	310	312	304	312	344	365	393
<i>Waterford/Kilkenny</i>							
<i>District: Waterford</i>							
Waterford	131	136	135	134	149	161	160
Dunmore East	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ferrybank	6	6	6	6	4	4	5
Passage East	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mooncoin	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Glenmore	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Kilmacow	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

## [Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>District: Dungarvan</i>							
Dungarvan	35	35	35	33	39	45	45
Cappoquin	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Tallow	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
Ballymacarberry	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Aglish	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ring	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Lismore	4	3	4	4	4	5	5
<i>District: Tramore</i>							
Tramore	27	27	30	31	34	35	38
Kill	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilmacthomas	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Kilmeaden	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Portlaw	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Rathgormack	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Leamybrien	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Kilkenny</i>							
Kilkenny	64	66	65	61	72	97	95
Freshford	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Callan	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
Castlecomer	7	7	7	6	7	4	7
Ballyragget	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Thomastown</i>							
Thomastown	19	20	20	20	21	26	32
Goresbridge	0	0	0	0	1	1	1
Bennetsbridge	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Graiguenamanagh	6	5	6	6	7	6	5
Stonyford	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballyhale	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inistioge	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilmoganny	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mullinavat	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Borris	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
TOTAL	343	346	350	343	380	428	437
<i>Tipperary</i>							
<i>District: Thurles</i>							
Thurles	62	59	63	67	65	70	75
Ballingarry South	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Holycross	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Killenaule	2	3	2	2	2	2	3
Ballinure	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Johnstown	2	2	2	1	2	1	0
Urlingford	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Littleton	1	1	1	1	4	1	1
G.C.V.U.		0	0	0	4	5	6
<i>District: Clonmel</i>							
Clonmel	39	40	39	41	48	51	53
Kilsheelan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mullinahone	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Grangemoekler	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Fethard	3	2	2	2	1	2	2
Carrick-On-Suir	16	16	17	16	16	15	13
Piltown	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>District: Cahir</i>							
Cahir	25	25	27	27	36	40	45
Ardfinnan	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
Ballyporeen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
New Inn	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cashel	12	13	14	14	13	12	13
Clogheen	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Nenagh</i>							
Nenagh	32	32	32	30	33	37	37
Ballingarry North	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Borrisokane	5	5	5	4	4	3	5
Cloughjordan	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dolla	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Portroe	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Toomevara	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Terryglass/Ballinderry	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Templemore</i>							
Templemore	26	26	25	24	27	34	42
Templetuohy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Roscrea	18	19	18	19	19	20	20
Moyne	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Templederry	2	1	1	1	1	0	0
Borrisoleigh	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Shevry	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Moneygall	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Tipperary Town</i>							
Tipperary Town	30	32	25	30	32	32	34
Dundrum	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Emly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Golden	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Cappawhite	2	2	1	1	2	2	1
Bansha	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Oola	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Doon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Galbally	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>342</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>383</b>
<i>Southern Region</i>							
Cork City							
<i>District: Anglesea Street</i>							
Anglesea Street	208	219	221	224	239	255	266
Barrack Street	24	22	22	20	20	25	23
Bridewell	32	23	24	23	22	22	18
Blackrock	26	29	28	32	28	33	32
<i>District: Gurrabraher</i>							
Gurrabraher	49	51	53	51	55	51	53
Blarney	15	15	15	15	15	15	15

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	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Ballincollig	25	23	23	21	21	22	20
Rathduff	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<i>District: Mayfield</i>							
Mayfield	38	40	45	45	41	46	49
Watercourse Road	33	60	58	52	61	55	56
McCurtain Street	30	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mallow Road	9	9	6	5	4	4	4
<i>District: Togher</i>							
Togher	56	55	58	59	55	53	57
Douglas	23	21	24	22	24	23	25
Bishopstown	23	25	26	23	23	24	24
Carrigaline	16	16	16	17	20	19	20
Passage West	5	4	5	5	3	4	4
Crosshaven	2	3	2	3	5	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>616</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>671</b>
<i>Cork North</i>							
<i>District: Fermoy</i>							
Fermoy	43	47	47	46	5	59	61
Mitchelstown	18	18	15	17	2	20	20
Ballynoe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilworth	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kildorrery	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Castletownroche	2	2	2	2	19	2	2
Rathcormack	2	2	1	2	2	1	1
Ballyduff	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
<i>District: Cobh</i>							
Cobh	29	28	27	27	28	33	37
Carrig na Bhfear	3	3	3	3	3	1	1
Carrigtwohill	2	3	3	3	20	3	3
Watergrasshill	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Glanmire	16	16	18	19	1	17	21
Glenville	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Middleton</i>							
Middleton	39	40	39	40	45	49	55
Ardmore	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Youghal	20	2	2	18	18	22	22
Cloyne	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
Whitegate	2	19	19	1	1	1	1
Killeagh	4	1	1	2	2	2	2
Ballycotton	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
<i>District: Mallow</i>							
Mallow	34	31	31	32	34	44	49
Buttevant	2	3	3	3	2	2	1
Doneraile	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Milford	1	1	4	6	3	1	1
Charleville	14	14	14	14	14	15	14
Glantane	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Liscarroll	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>303</b>



	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>Cork West</i>							
<i>District: Bandon</i>							
Bandon	69	63	65	64	76	87	88
Ballineen	2	2	2	2	1	0	1
Ballinhassig	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
Ballinspittle	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Ballyfeard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Innishannon	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Kilbrittan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kinsale	10	13	14	14	14	15	15
Timoleague	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Bantry</i>							
Bantry	24	23	24	26	30	34	36
Adrigole	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Ballydehob	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Castletownbere	5	5	4	5	2	4	4
Durrus	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Glengarrif	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Goleen	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kealkil	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Drimoleague	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Schull	4	4	4	3	3	4	2
<i>District: Clonakilty</i>							
Clonakilty	21	22	23	23	24	27	28
Ballygurteen	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Baltimore	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Castletownsend	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Drinagh	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Dunmanway	6	5	7	7	7	9	9
Roscarbery	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Skibbereen	9	10	10	10	10	9	11
<i>District: Kanturk</i>							
Kanturk	24	22	24	24	25	28	34
Ballydesmond	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Boherbue	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Knocknagree	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Meelin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Millstreet	7	7	8	8	8	9	9
Newmarket	3	3	3	4	4	4	4
Rathmore	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Macroom</i>							
Macroom	22	23	26	25	27	30	39
Ballingeary	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballyvourney	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Coachford	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Crookstown	4	5	5	5	5	6	6
Inchigeela	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Stuake	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tarelton	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	246	241	251	251	264	294	315

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	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>Kerry</i>							
<i>District: Tralee</i>							
Tralee	86	83	83	89	98	109	117
Ardfert	2	2	2	2	3	3	2
Fenit	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Abbeydorney	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Dingle	9	9	9	9	8	9	9
Clochan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Castlegregory	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Annascaul	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballyferriter	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Camp	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Caherciveen</i>							
Caherciveen	22	22	22	21	23	23	23
Ballinskelligs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Valentia Island	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Portmagee	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Glenbeigh	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Killorglin	8	11	10	10	10	10	13
Waterville	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Sneem	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Castlemaine	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Killarney</i>							
Killarney	48	48	47	49	58	66	69
Kilgarvan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kenmare	7	8	7	7	8	8	9
Castleisland	9	10	10	9	11	11	13
Farranfore	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Barraduff	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Beaufort	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lauragh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Listowel</i>							
Listowel	31	30	30	29	32	37	41
Ballyheigue	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ballylongford	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballybunion	7	7	6	7	8	8	9
Ballyduff	2	3	3	2	2	1	1
Brosna	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Knocknagoshall	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lixnaw	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Moyvane	1	1	1	2	2	2	2
Tarbert	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>340</b>
<i>Limerick</i>							
<i>District: Henry Street</i>							
Henry St	184	189	198	191	212	226	240
Mary St	4	4	4	4	4	14	18
Castleconnell	4	4	4	4	5	5	5
Ardnacrusha	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Mayorstone Pk.	41	46	49	49	60	81	87

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>District: Roxboro Road</i>							
Roxboro Rd	91	94	91	99	105	127	128
Patrickswell	4	4	3	3	3	3	2
Ballyneety	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Caherconlish	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
<i>District: Askeaton</i>							
Askeaton	22	20	22	22	24	22	26
Adare	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
Pallaskenry	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Croom	4	3	4	4	4	4	4
Glin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Foynes	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Shanagolden	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Rathkeale	6	6	6	6	6	6	5
<i>District: Bruff</i>							
Bruff	18	18	18	21	25	25	29
Kilfinane	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Ballylanders	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Hospital	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Bruree	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Kilmallock	4	5	5	5	5	3	3
Pallas	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
Cappamore	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Murroe	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
<i>District: Newcastlewest</i>							
Drumcollogher	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
Newcastlewest	24	26	27	27	29	29	33
Abbeyfeale	12	12	12	12	13	11	10
Ballingarry	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tournafulla	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Athea	1	1	1	11	1	1	1
Kilmeedy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Castletown	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTAL	460	472	482	495	532	593	626
<i>Western Region</i>							
<i>Clare</i>							
<i>District: Ennis</i>							
Ennis	79	73	84	84	95	118	130
Crusheen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lissycasey	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Newmarket On Fergus	4	3	3	3	3	4	4
Quin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Shannon	42	64	64	63	94	64	67
Sixmilebridge	3	3	3	2	4	3	4
Immigration Office						7	6
<i>District: Kilrush</i>							
Kilrush	25	24	26	27	27	28	29
Carrigaholt	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Doonbeg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilmihil	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Labasheeda	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kildysart	3	3	3	3	3	2	3

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	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Kilkee	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
<i>District: Killaloe</i>							
Killaloe	22	22	22	21	25	30	32
Broadford	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Newport	3	3	4	5	5	6	6
Scariff	6	5	6	6	6	6	6
Mountshannon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tulla	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Rearcross	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
<i>District: Ennistymon</i>							
Ennistymon	23	21	22	24	22	21	24
Ballyvaughan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Corofin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inagh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Lahinch	1	2	2	2	3	2	3
Lisdoonvarna	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Miltown Malbay	3	2	2	2	3	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>314</b>	<b>336</b>
<i>Galway West</i>							
<i>District: Galway</i>							
Galway	165	163	175	177	199	210	219
Oranmore	4	5	5	7	6	16	24
Carndolla	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Lough George	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Headford	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Athenry	4	4	4	5	5	5	4
Monivea	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Kiltullagh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Clifden</i>							
Clifden	17	18	21	22	25	24	27
Recess	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Letterfrack	2	1	1	2	1	0	1
Lennaun	1	0	1	1	2	1	0
Carna	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Maam	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Roundstone	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Loughrea</i>							
Loughrea	27	29	31	32	33	36	39
Tynagh	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Killimor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Woodford	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
New Inn	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Eyrecourt	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Portumna	9	9	8	8	9	8	8
Kilrickle	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
<i>District: Salthill</i>							
Uachtarard	7	7	7	7	6	6	6
Moycullen	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Carraroe	6	5	5	6	6	6	6
Ros Muc	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inverin	1	0	1	1	1	1	1

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Spiddle	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
Leitir Mor	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Salthill	40	39	41	43	44	43	48
Cill Ronain	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<i>District: Gort</i>							
Gort	22	21	23	25	25	28	26
Ardrahan	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
Craughwell	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Kinvara	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
Peterswell	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Kilchreest	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
Kilcolgan	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Shanaglish	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>448</b>
<i>Roscommon/Galway East</i>							
<i>District: Roscommon</i>							
Roscommon	51	49	50	54	56	66	69
Athleague	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Knockcroghery	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Strokestown	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
Ballyforan	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Creggs	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballygar	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
<i>District: Ballinasloe</i>							
Ballinasloe	39	37	36	37	39	39	43
Ahascragh	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilconnel	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kiltormer	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Menlough	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mountbellew	9	8	9	9	10	10	9
Taughmaconnel	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Clonark	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Moylough	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Boyle</i>							
Boyle	27	28	28	28	27	29	30
Ballyfarnan	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Cootehall	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Elphin	3	3	2	2	3	3	3
Frenchpark	2	1	2	2	3	3	3
Keadue	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tulsk	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Castlerea</i>							
Castlerea	29	30	28	30	31	33	37
Ballaghadereen	6	6	6	6	7	7	7
Ballinlough	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Loughlynn	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
Ballintubber	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballymoe	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Tuam</i>							
Tuam	41	42	43	42	47	51	54
Williamstown	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Milltown	2	2	1	1	1	1	1

## [Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Kilconly	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Glenamaddy	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
Dunmore	4	4	4	3	3	4	3
Corofin	2	2	2	2	2	2	1
Barnadearg	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>293</b>
<i>Mayo</i>							
<i>District: Castlebar</i>							
Castlebar	61	62	58	57	66	76	78
Ballyvary	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballyglass	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Balla	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Partry	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Glenisland	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tourmakeady	1	1	1	1	3	1	1
Garda Info Services						4	4
<i>District: Ballina</i>							
Ballina	36	37	37	38	41	47	50
Killala	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ballycastle	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bonnicconlon	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Crossmolina	4	4	2	3	3	4	4
Lahardane	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Enniscrone	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Easkey	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<i>District: Belmullet</i>							
Belmullet	19	19	19	19	21	22	22
Blacksod	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Bellacorrick	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Bangor Erris	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Ballycroy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Glenamoy	1	1	2	2	1	0	1
<i>District: Claremorris</i>							
Claremorris	23	23	21	21	23	27	27
Kilmaine	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Ballindine	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Knock	3	4	4	4	3	4	3
Ballinrobe	9	11	11	11	9	10	10
Cong	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Shrule	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Hollymount	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
<i>District: Swinford</i>							
Swinford	22	24	24	22	26	28	28
Kiltimagh	3	4	4	3	3	3	3
Charlestown	4	4	4	2	4	6	6
Kilkelly	2	2	2	2	2	2	10
Ballyhaunis	9	10	9	8	9	9	10
Foxford	2	2	2	2	2	2	3
<i>District: Westport</i>							
Westport	27	27	27	25	26	30	32
Newport	2	2	2	2	2	2	3



	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Achill Sound	4	5	4	4	4	3	3
Mulranny	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Louisburgh	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Keel	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>331</b>
<i>Northern Region</i>							
<i>Sligo/Leitrim</i>							
<i>District: Sligo</i>							
Sligo	115	118	116	123	135	144	165
Collooney	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Skreen	2	2	2	2	2	1	2
Coolaney	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Cliffoney	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Rosses Point	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Grange	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
<i>District: Ballymote</i>							
Ballymote	21	20	20	21	21	23	23
Tubbercurry	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Gurteen	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
Riverstown	2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Aclare	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Bunnaadden	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Carrick On Shannon</i>							
Carrick-On-Shannon	30	33	34	31	40	42	41
Cloone	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dromod	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Drumshambo	4	4	3	4	4	4	4
Keshcarrigan	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
Mohill	5	5	5	6	6	5	5
Roosky	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
<i>District: Manorhamilton</i>							
Manorhamilton	26	25	26	26	28	26	26
Kiltyclogher	1	2	1	2	2	2	2
Drumkerrin	3	3	2	3	2	3	3
Kinlough	9	9	8	8	7	7	6
Glenfarne	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dromahair	2	2	3	3	3	3	3
Dowra	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Blacklion	9	10	9	9	6	5	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>318</b>
<i>Donegal</i>							
<i>District: Letterkenny</i>							
Letterkenny	92	101	94	97	119	129	132
Carrigans	8	7	6	5	5	5	5
Castlefin	4	4	4	3	3	4	4
Brocach	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Newtowncunningham	3	3	3	3	2	2	4
Raphoe	7	6	4	6	4	4	4
Lifford	15	17	15	14	15	15	13
Ballybofey	24	23	24	21	21	22	25

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	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
Convoy	4	4	3	3	3	4	3
<i>District: Buncrana</i>							
Buncrana	34	35	38	41	51	48	50
Burnfoot	18	15	13	11	12	14	15
Carndonagh	5	4	5	6	5	6	5
Clonmanny	3	3	3	3	2	2	1
Malin	3	3	3	2	3	7	5
Culdaff	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Moville	9	9	8	9	9	9	10
Muff	4	4	4	6	4	3	4
<i>District: Milford</i>							
Milford	20	23	23	23	24	27	31
Carrigart	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Kerrykeel	3	3	2	2	2	3	3
Kilmacrennan	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
Churchill	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Dunfanaghy	2	3	4	3	4	4	4
Craosloch	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Falcarragh	6	6	6	7	6	6	6
Ramelton	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Rathmullen	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Glenties</i>							
Glenties	21	24	24	21	22	27	27
Annagry	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ardara	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bunbeag	5	6	6	6	7	8	7
Burtonport	2	2	2	3	1	2	2
Clougher	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Doochary	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Dungloe	6	5	6	7	9	8	11
Carrick	2	1	1	2	2	2	2
Gleann Cholmcille	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Ballyshannon</i>							
Ballyshannon	31	32	33	34	36	35	36
Ballintra	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
Bundoran	12	11	11	12	12	12	12
Donegal Town	34	34	33	34	32	34	34
Pettigo	4	2	2	1	1	1	1
Dunkineely	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Na Cealla Beaga	6	7	8	7	7	7	6
Mountcharles	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>476</b>	<b>487</b>
<i>Cavan/Monaghan</i>							
<i>District: Monaghan</i>							
Monaghan	106	106	101	99	101	108	113
Clones	15	14	14	12	11	9	9
Newbliss	2	2	2	2	1	1	1
Clontibret	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Scotstown	7	4	5	5	5	5	3
Emyvale	10	5	4	4	4	4	4
Smithboro	0	1	1	1	1	1	1

	Strength 31/12/02	Strength 31/12/03	Strength 31/12/04	Strength 31/12/05	Strength 31/12/06	Strength 31/12/07	Strength 31/10/08
<i>District: Carrickmacross</i>							
Carrickmacross	36	42	43	40	43	44	50
Ballybay	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
Castleblaney	25	25	26	25	29	31	32
Shantonagh	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Corrinshigagh	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Rockcorry	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<i>District: Cavan</i>							
Cavan	57	59	59	60	67	69	72
Ballinagh	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Arva	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Stradone	2	2	2	1	1	2	2
Redhills	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Kilnaleck	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Finea	2	2	2	2	1	3	3
<i>District: Baileboro</i>							
Baileboro	27	27	30	29	35	40	43
Kingscourt	4	4	5	5	5	6	5
Mullagh	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Shercock	2	2	2	2	1	2	2
Tullyvin	0	1	1	1	1	1	0
Virginia	4	5	5	5	5	4	5
Cootehill	8	7	8	8	7	8	8
Ballyjamesduff	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
<i>District: Ballyconnell</i>							
Ballyconnell	34	27	23	27	25	23	26
Belturbet	3	3	4	3	3	2	4
Swanlinbar	7	3	3	3	3	3	3
Killeshandra	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Bawnboy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ballinamore	6	7	6	6	6	5	4
Carrigallen	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
TOTAL	384	377	374	367	383	401	420
YEARLY TOTAL	9,777	9,921	10,098	10,112	10,743	11,600	12,034

### Criminal Prosecutions.

337. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of bench warrants and committal warrants which had not been executed at the end of 2006, 2007 and to the end of October 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42275/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** In the time available it has not been possible for the Garda authorities to supply the details requested by the Deputy. I will be in contact with the Deputy as soon as the information is to hand.

### Closed Circuit Television Systems.

338. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of community closed circuit television schemes which have been approved in the 2005

[Deputy Richard Bruton.]

and 2006 call for applications; the success of the schemes in improving security in the areas affected; and if he plans to have a fresh call for applications in the near future. [42288/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Community-based CCTV Scheme offers pre-development (Stage 1) grants of up to €5,000 to enable qualifying applicants to investigate the need for CCTV in their area and to complete a detailed proposal, and development (Stage 2) grants of up to €100,000 from my Department for the establishment of a CCTV scheme. In addition, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs provides successful applicants from RAPID areas with matching funding to a maximum of €100,000.

As a result of the 2005 and 2006 call for applications, a total of 43 schemes were awarded capital grants under Stage 2 of the scheme. In addition, a total of 39 schemes received Stage 1 pre-development grants of which 15 were subsequently successful at stage 2 of the scheme. To date there are 14 Community CCTV Schemes up and running with a further 9 schemes at an advanced stage. The roll out of the remainder is progressing and in many cases is linked with the establishment of the Joint Policing Committees in the area who must approve the schemes in accordance with the provision of the Garda Síochána Act.

CCTV systems have become an important and effective tool to support policing and community safety in these areas and they also act as a useful deterrent to crime and public disorder. Before grants are awarded a comprehensive vetting of applications is carried out by Pobal on behalf of my Department. As part of the process, an assessment of needs, including an analysis of crime statistics and other background information, is carried out by the local Garda Divisional Officer. Calls for new applications are made from time to time and are dependent on a number of factors such as the availability of funding, the progression of schemes already grant aided and overall policy considerations.

#### **Private Security Industry.**

339. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of people who are employed in the private security industry; the number who are licensed; the cost of the licences; the amount collected since the licensing system was established; his views on a token charge for such licences as most security workers are poorly paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42293/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Private Security Authority, established under the Private Security Services Act 2004, is the regulatory body with responsibility for regulating and licensing the private security industry. The Authority is an independent body under the aegis of my Department. The amounts credited as Appropriation-in-Aid to the Justice vote in 2006 and 2007 were €2,048,230 and €2,311,375 respectively. The 2008 figure will be available when the 2008 accounts are finalised. The remaining issues raised by the Deputy refer to operational matters for which the Authority has sole responsibility. My Office has passed the Deputy's queries to the Authority and I am informed that it intends to reply to him directly.

#### **Nationality and Citizenship Regulations.**

340. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the reason the fee for a certificate of naturalisation has increased in the past two years; the reason such a necessary and standard document is so costly to citizens; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42301/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** A Certificate of Naturalisation is an exceptional and important document that facilitates a non-national becoming a citizen of Ireland. The Irish Nationality and Citizenship Regulations, 1993, as amended, provides that the prescribed fees are payable on the issue of a certificate of naturalisation. The making of an application for a certificate of naturalisation is an individual's choice. The granting of Irish Citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour and not an entitlement. Applications must be processed in a way which preserves the necessary checks and balances to ensure that it is not undervalued and is only given to persons who genuinely satisfy the necessary qualifying criteria. Certification fees for Citizenship were last changed in 1993; the increase implemented on 1 August, 2008 merely brings the amounts in line with inflation for this period.

*Question No. 341 answered with Question No. 336.*

### **Garda Deployment.**

342. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will provide in tabular form the number of community gardaí in each station around the country, for every year between 2002 and 2008. [42309/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Community Gardaí attached to each Garda Station in the Dublin Metropolitan Region as at 31 December 2003-2007 and as of 31 October 2008, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was as set out in the following table. Also included in the table is the number of Community Gardaí for the rest of the country for 31 December 2005-2007 and as of 31 October 2008. However, figures for Community Gardaí in the DMR for 2002 and figures for Community Gardaí for the rest of the country for the period 2002-2004 are not readily available and can only be obtained by the disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources relative to the information sought.

The Deputy will be aware that boundary changes have taken place in DMR East, Louth, Meath and Wicklow in recent times. The 2008 figures reflect the current position. It is, of course, the case that all Gardaí have a role to play in addressing community policing issues as and when the need arises. In that sense, community policing involves far more than a single unit within the Garda Síochána, and I agree with the view expressed by the Garda Inspectorate in their third report entitled "Policing in Ireland — Looking Forward" that community policing is a fundamental policing philosophy and that there is a strong foundation for it in Ireland.

Station	31/12/03	31/12/04	31/12/05	31/12/06	31/12/07	31/10/08
<i>DMR South Central</i>						
Kevin Street	7	8	7	7	18	32
Kilmainham	6	6	5	7	9	14
Pearse Street	11	15	11	13	33	19
Harcourt Tce	3	3	4	3	3	3
Donnybrook	4	5	4	4	5	4
Irishtown	2	2	3	2	2	3
<i>DMR North Central</i>						
Store Street	25	24	26	25	24	28
Bridewell	15	14	15	17	19	19
Fitzgibbon Street	17	17	30	17	16	13
Mountjoy	12	14	—	12	11	11

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Station	31/12/03	31/12/04	31/12/05	31/12/06	31/12/07	31/10/08
<i>DMR North</i>						
Santry	3	3	5	3	4	5
Dublin Airport	—	—	—	—	—	—
Whitehall	3	3	5	5	4	5
Ballymun	7	7	9	9	11	10
Raheny	5	6	4	6	6	6
Clontarf	6	6	5	6	7	5
Howth	4	4	5	4	6	4
Coolock	5	7	7	9	13	10
Swords	6	8	11	11	11	10
Malahide	4	3	5	4	5	4
Balbriggan			1	1	2	6
<i>DMR East</i>						
Dun Laoghaire	5	5	4	2	4	8
Dalkey	3	3	2	2	2	2
Cabinteeley	4	5	5	5	5	5
Kill O' Grange	3	3	3	3	3	3
Bray	6	7	9	14	12	*
Shankill	3	4	4	10	8	9
Enniskerry	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greystones	2	2	4	5	7	*
Blackrock	5	6	6	7	6	6
Dundrum	6	6	5	6	6	6
Stepaside	1	1	1	2	2	2
<i>DMR South</i>						
Crumlin	5	5	4	4	5	6
Sundrive Road	4	4	4	6	6	6
Tallaght	24	24	20	22	24	26
Rathfarnham	5	5	6	5	4	7
Rathmines	3	3	3	3	3	3
Terenure	5	7	7	6	6	6
<i>DMR West</i>						
Cabra	2	2	6	7	6	7
Finglas	9	13	12	10	14	12
Blanchardstown	19	17	17	19	22	24
Lucan	5	5	8	7	7	8
Leixlip	3	4	3	4	3	3
Ronanstown	13	16	13	12	12	10
Ballyfermot	9	9	14	9	9	10
Clondalkin	10	12	16	11	11	11
Rathcoole	—	1	1	1	2	2
<i>Waterford/Kilkenny</i>						
Waterford			9	14	14	15
Kilkenny			1	6	6	8



Station	31/12/03	31/12/04	31/12/05	31/12/06	31/12/07	31/10/08
<i>Wexford</i>						
Wexford			—	—	8	8
Enniscorthy			—	—	—	1
<i>Tipperary</i>						
Nenagh			2	2	2	2
Borrisokane			2	2	1	1
Dolla			1	1	1	1
Tommevara			1	1	1	1
Portroe			1	1	1	1
Terryglass			1	1	1	1
Ballingarry			1	1	1	1
Clonmel			—	—	—	6
Cloughjordan			1	1	1	1
<i>Cork City</i>						
Anglesea Street			4	4	4	4
Blackrock			1	2	2	1
Barrack Street			2	2	2	2
Bridewell			1	1	1	1
Mayfield			2	2	3	3
McCurtain Street			—	2	3	2
Watercourse Road			2	2	2	2
Mallow Road			1	1	1	1
Togher			2	2	2	2
Bishopstown			1	2	2	2
Douglas			1	2	2	1
Carrigaline			1	1	1	1
Ballincollig			1	1	2	2
Gurranbraher			3	3	3	3
<i>Cork North</i>						
Fermoy			1	1	1	1
Mallow			1	1	—	—
Middleton			—	—	—	1
<i>Cork West</i>						
Bandon			—	—	1	1
Clonakilty			—	—	1	1
Bantry			—	—	1	1
Kanturk			—	—	1	1
Macroom			—	—	1	1
<i>Kerry</i>						
Tralee			3	3	7	7
<i>Limerick</i>						
Henry Street			13	16	15	23
Mary Street			1	2	6	11
Ardnacrusha			—	1	1	1
Mayorstone			3	9	22	27
Roxboro Road			7	9	22	29

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Station	31/12/03	31/12/04	31/12/05	31/12/06	31/12/07	31/10/08
<i>Donegal</i>						
Letterkenny			4	5	4	4
Malin			—	—	16	12
<i>Cavan/Monaghan</i>						
Cavan			1	—	—	2
Monaghan			2	1	1	2
<i>Sligo/Leitrim</i>						
Sligo			6	4	5	6
<i>Clare</i>						
Ennis			—	4	4	6
<i>Mayo</i>						
Castlebar			—	—	—	4
Ballina			—	—	—	4
<i>Galway</i>						
Galway			9	9	15	13
Salthill			2	4	4	4
Roscommon/Galway East			—	—	—	2
<i>Longford/Westmeath</i>						
Athlone			2	2	6	7
Longford			—	—	4	4
Mullingar			5	5	5	5
<i>Louth</i>						
Drogheda			1	2	2	4
Dundalk			3	3	3	4
<i>Meath</i>						
Navan			2	4	4	4
Ashbourne			2	2	2	3
Kells			—	1	1	0
<i>Carlow/Kildare</i>						
Naas			4	3	3	4
<i>Laois/Offaly</i>						
Tullamore			—	—	2	4
Birr			—	—	—	2
Portarlinton					1	—
Portlaoise			—	—	4	2
<i>Wicklow</i>						
Bray			—	—	—	12
Greystones			—	—	—	7
Newtownmountkennedy			—	—	—	1
Wicklow			—	—	—	1

**Juvenile Offenders.**

343. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number and locations of Garda youth diversion programmes in communities around the country. [42310/08]

345. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number and locations of juvenile justice liaison officers in communities around the country. [42312/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Barry Andrews):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 343 and 345 together.

The Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme operates in accordance with Part 4 of the Children Act 2001, as amended, and under the general superintendence and control of the Garda Commissioner. The aim of the Diversion Programme is to deal with juveniles who offend, by way of administering a formal or informal caution, thus diverting the offender away from the courts and minimising the likelihood of further offending. The Diversion Programme embraces, whenever possible, the principles of restorative justice and, at all times, it pays the highest regard to the needs of the victims of juvenile offending. The Programme has proven to be highly successful in diverting young persons away from crime by offering guidance and support to juveniles and their families.

The Deputy will be aware that it is the responsibility of the Garda Commissioner to decide on the prioritisation and allocation of resources within the force. I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí operating as Juvenile Liaison Officers on 30 September 2008 was 105. The deployment of Juvenile Liaison Officers around the country on that date was as follows:

	Number
Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR) — South City	7
DMR-North City	4
DMR-North	11
DMR-East	6
DMR-South	10
DMR-West	9
Waterford/Kilkenny	6
Wexford	2
Tipperary	2
Cork City	7
Cork North	3
Cork West	2
Kerry	2
Limerick	4
Donegal	3
Cavan/Monaghan	2
Sligo/Leitrim	2
Clare	2
Mayo	2
Galway	2
Roscommon/East Galway	2
Longford/Westmeath	3
Louth	2
Meath	2
Carlow/Kildare	3
Laois/Offaly	2
Wicklow	3
Total	105

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The Garda Youth Diversion Projects, which are funded by the Irish Youth Justice Service, work in tandem with the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme. They are a crime prevention initiative designed to engage with young people aged 12-17 years of age who have been identified as being at risk of involvement in criminal or anti-social behaviour. Each project is managed by a multi-agency and community based committee, which is responsible for the strategic direction of the project. Garda Youth Diversion Projects were first introduced in 1991 and there are currently 100 Garda Youth Diversion Projects operating in various locations throughout the country. Details of the projects are available on the Irish Youth Justice website ([www.iyjs.ie](http://www.iyjs.ie)) under the Community Programmes heading.

### **Closed Circuit Television Systems.**

344. **Deputy Charlie O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the locations of closed circuit television schemes around the country. [42311/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Community-based CCTV Scheme is designed to provide financial assistance to qualifying organisations towards meeting the capital costs associated with the establishment of local community CCTV systems. Pobal has been engaged by my Department to carry out the day-to-day administration of the scheme.

A total of 43 schemes have been awarded grants by my Department and I have been informed by Pobal that there are 14 Community CCTV Schemes fully operational in the following locations: Athy, Corduff, Co. Dublin, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, Drogheda, Letterkenny, Limerick- Moyross, Limerick- Our Lady of Lourdes, Limerick- St. Munchin's, Sligo (Forthill and Cranmore); Tralee, Tuam and Waterford City (2 schemes).

The establishment of Community CCTV Schemes is at an advanced stage in a further 9 locations as follows: Blackpool, Cork City; Clondalkin, Killorglin, Liberties, Dublin City; Mallow; St. Theresa's Gardens, Dublin City and Tallaght (Killinarden, Fettercairn and Jobstown). In addition to the above schemes a further 20 schemes have been awarded Stage 2 funding for the establishment of Community CCTV Schemes at: Carrick-on-Suir, Clonmel, Cavan, Ballymun (5 schemes), Dublin North West Inner City, Drogheda, Dundalk; Ennis; Kilkenny; Longford, Manorhamilton, Mullaghmatt, Navan, New Ross, Thurles and Tralee.

In addition to the Community based scheme, a major expansion programme of town centre CCTV systems is ongoing in the Garda Síochána. There are currently 12 Garda CCTV systems in place in: Dublin (North Central); Dublin (South Central); Tralee, Cork City, Bray, Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire, Galway, Limerick, Tullamore, Ballyfermot, and Clondalkin, Co. Dublin. The system for Finglas will be introduced in conjunction with the completion of the new Garda station in early 2009.

The Garda CCTV Programme is currently being expanded to a further 14 locations at Drogheda, Tallaght, Mullingar, Waterford, Portlaoise, Kilkenny, Sligo, Castlebar, Ennis, Dungarvan, Kinsale, Athlone, Carlow and Clonmel.

*Question No. 345 answered with Question No. 343.*

### **Refugee Status.**

346. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his attention has been drawn to the circumstances of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42328/08]

347. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are around 30 detainees who have been labelled Guantanamo's refugees (details supplied); if he has had contact with the US authorities or with lawyers for the detainees regarding their relocation to safe countries; if he would be willing to offer them refuge here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42330/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 346 and 347 together.

There have been some discussions with the US authorities regarding detainees who have been cleared for release from the facility at Guantanamo. My Department has also had informal contacts with interested parties and lawyers representing one of these detainees, the individual to whom the Deputy refers. It has been made clear to all concerned that Ireland is not contemplating the relocation here of any person in this group.

#### **Asylum Applications.**

348. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has applied for leave to remain here. [42335/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** It is not the practice to comment in detail on individual asylum applications. As the Deputy will be aware, applications for refugee status in the State are determined by an independent process comprising the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal which make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. A final decision on each application is made following receipt of the recommendation of the Refugee Applications Commissioner or the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, as appropriate.

349. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has applied for leave to remain here. [42336/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** It is not the practice to comment in detail on individual asylum applications. As the Deputy will be aware, applications for refugee status in the State are determined by an independent process comprising the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal which make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. A final decision on each application is made following receipt of the recommendation of the Refugee Applications Commissioner or the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, as appropriate.

350. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has applied for leave to remain here on humanitarian grounds. [42337/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 25 July 2006. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

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Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 5 September 2008, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in the State in accordance with the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006). The person concerned has not submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection in the State.

Representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned and these representations will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, before the file is passed to me for decision.

351. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the precise information regarding a person (details supplied) in County Longford who is eight years here and who seeks to remain here on humanitarian grounds. [42338/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person to whom the Deputy refers applied for permission to remain in the State under the revised arrangements for non-EEA parents of children born in Ireland prior to 1 January, 2005, known as the IBC/05 Scheme. This application was refused as the person did not meet the criteria of the scheme. The person in question was informed of this decision by letter, dated 3 October, 2005.

The person concerned was subsequently invited, by letter dated 16 October, 2008, to submit updated representations under section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999, setting out the reasons as to why she should be permitted to remain in the State. Representations in this regard have been received in my Department, and are being considered by the relevant officials. The person in question can expect to be contacted directly and informed of the outcome of those considerations shortly.

#### **Garda Ombudsman Commission.**

352. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42348/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The work of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission is controlled and directed by its three Commissioners. Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 it is the task of the three Commissioners to ensure that its functions are performed in an efficient and effective manner and with “full fairness to all persons involved in complaints and investigations”. A person is not eligible to be nominated or appointed as a Commissioner if he or she is or has been a member of the Garda Síochána.

The Ombudsman Commission is independent in the performance of its functions and, as a reflection of that independence, is empowered to appoint its own officers, subject to the consent of the Minister for Finance and myself. Recruitment to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission is now conducted primarily through the Public Appointments Service (PAS). At its establishment however a number of administrative staff were recruited via the CAF/Decentralisation process and also by competitive interview from amongst staff of the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform. It is important to bear in mind however that



the officers in question are answerable to the Commission in the discharge of its statutory mandate and not to me as Minister or any other person.

### **Citizenship Applications.**

353. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when an application for naturalisation will be approved for a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [42368/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in March 2006. Officials in that Section inform me that the application is at an advanced stage of processing and the file will be forwarded to me for a decision in due course.

### **Residency Permits.**

354. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will receive residency; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42411/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The position in relation to granting long term residency is as follows: persons who have been legally resident in the State for over five years on the basis of work permit/work authorisation/work visa conditions may apply to the Immigration Division of my Department for a five year residency extension. In that context they may also apply to be exempt from employment permit requirements. The dependants of the aforementioned, who have been legally resident in the State for over five years may also apply for long term residency.

This particular long term permission does not grant an exemption from employment permit requirements to any such dependants. Time spent in the State on student conditions cannot be counted towards long term residency. While applications for long term residency are under consideration, the person concerned should ensure that their permission to remain in the State is kept up to date. An application for long term residency from the person referred to by the Deputy was received in October 2008. I understand that applications received in January 2007 are currently being dealt with. As soon as a decision is made on the case, the person concerned will be notified.

### **Departmental Staff.**

355. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of people awaiting transfers within his Department in Dublin to other locations around the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42416/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I understand, following clarification received from the Deputy's office, that this question relates to a civilian employee in the headquarters of An Garda Síochána in Dublin who is interested in obtaining a transfer to a country location. As the Garda Commissioner is responsible for staffing resources within An Garda Síochána, including civilian employees, it would be inappropriate for me to become involved in such cases. The Deputy may, therefore, wish to raise the matter directly with the dedicated Garda Civilian Human Resources Division within An Garda Síochána.

### **Immigration Procedures.**

356. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will assist with an immigration inquiry by a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [42421/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I wish to inform the Deputy that officials within my Department have arranged for the passport in question to be returned to the person concerned by registered post.

### **Garda Stations.**

357. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding the refurbishment of a Garda station (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42569/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation around the country is based on agreed priorities established by An Garda Síochána in consultation with the representative associations. The programme is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close cooperation with the Office of Public Works, which has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. I am informed by the Garda authorities that the timetable for the proposed refurbishment works to the station is being considered in the light of available resources and in the context of the Garda Accommodation Strategy currently being developed.

### **Consultancy Contracts.**

358. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42581/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I refer the Deputy to PQ 342 answered on 18th November 2008 in relation to the amounts paid by my Department and the consultancy companies engaged over the period. Regarding the steps taken to reduce expenditure on consultancy, these include among others a reduction in the Consultancy Budget in my Department from €409,000 to €109,000 (73%) in 2009 and the implementation of stricter controls over the approval process prior to the engagement of such services.

### **Ground Rents.**

359. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the arrangements with respect to the payment of ground rent, particularly with respect to properties in Fingal county; if it is possible that a property purchased in 1985 could give rise to a ground rent liability in 2007-2008; the way this might arise; if his attention has been drawn to the fraudulent attempts to extract payments from property owners with respect to ground rent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42597/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Deputy will appreciate that it is not open to me as Minister to give legal advice on specific matters concerning the operation of the law in this area.

### Visa Applications.

360. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position of a visa application by a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42599/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I have been informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that they have recently been in contact with the person referred to by the Deputy in relation to their immigration status. Further documentation has been requested from the person concerned in order to facilitate the Immigration Division in examining their case.

### Garda Operations.

361. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42603/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the area referred to is in Santry Garda District. The personnel strength of Santry District on 31 October 2008, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 264. The number of Community Gardaí in this district on that date was 20.

Local Garda management is aware of difficulties being experienced by residents concerning anti-social behaviour type incidents involving youths loitering around this area. A member of the local Community Policing Unit has been allocated to the area for the past number of years and attends the regular meetings of local Residents' and Business Groups in the area and any specific issues raised receive appropriate attention by local Gardaí.

The area is also regularly patrolled by uniform and plain-clothes units, including the Community Policing Unit. Patrols are supplemented by the District Garda Mountain Bike Unit, Detective and Drugs Units and the Divisional Crime Task Force and Traffic Corps personnel and records indicate that people and vehicles are regularly stopped and searched in this area. Public disorder and anti-social behaviour type incidents are dealt with under the provisions of the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act, 1994.

Current policing plans in the area are designed to address issues of crime and public order offences. Community policing is a central feature and core value of An Garda Síochána's policing policy and current policing strategies are predicated on the prevention of crime, public order offences and anti-social behaviour. This is designed to bring about an environment conducive to the improvement of the quality of life for residents in the community. This strategy is, and will continue to be, central to the delivery of a policing service to the area in question.

### Residency Permits.

362. **Deputy Bernard Allen** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if a person (details supplied) is free to re-enter the State; and if not, the action they need to take in order to re-enter. [42611/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am informed that the permission to remain in the State granted to the person concerned expired in November, 2007. As the person has resided outside the State since 2005 this permission has not been renewed. It should be noted that since the closure of the IBC/05 scheme in March 2005 there is no separate procedure for the consideration of applications for permission to remain in the State as the parent of an Irish citizen child. The position of the person concerned as regards

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entry into the State is the same as that of any other national of a non-EEA Member State whose citizens are not visa-required to enter Ireland.

### **Departmental Expenditure.**

363. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42628/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The travel and subsistence allocation for the Head Office of my Department (Subhead A.2.) in 2007 was €1.092million of which €662,000 was spent in that year. Included in this amount is expenditure in respect of mileage of approximately €111,000 and refers to 93 claimants. The detailed categorisation sought by the Deputy is not readily available and the compilation of same would require a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

### **Citizenship Applications.**

364. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for citizenship in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42633/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** Applications for certificates of naturalisation from the first person referred to in the Deputy's Question were received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in February 2007 & November 2008 and from the second person in November 2008. On examination of the applications submitted by the first named applicant it was determined that the person in question did not meet the statutory residency requirements on both occasions as set out in the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956, as amended. It is open to the person in question to lodge a new application if and when she is in a position to meet the statutory residency requirements applicable at that time.

On examination of the application submitted by the second named person it was determined that the Statutory Declaration was not completed correctly and the application in its entirety was returned to the person concerned for further attention on 18 November, 2008. In order to be fair to all applicants, only valid applications can be considered. It is open to the person in question to re-submit the application to the Citizenship Section of my Department at any time.

### **Residency Permits.**

365. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding the residency status in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42634/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I refer the Deputy to Parliamentary Question No. 852 of Tuesday 10 July 2008 and the written Reply to that Question. The first named person concerned arrived in the State on 2 February 2005 and applied for asylum. His asylum application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.

Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the first named person concerned was informed, by letter dated 30 September 2005, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. Representations have been submitted on behalf of the first named person concerned and these representations will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, before the file is passed to me for decision.

In relation to the case of the second named person concerned, it is not the practice to comment in detail on individual asylum applications where a final decision has not been made. As the Deputy will be aware, applications for refugee status in the State are determined by an independent process comprising the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal which make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. A final decision on each application is made following receipt of the recommendation of the Refugee Applications Commissioner or the decision of the Refugee Appeals Tribunal, as appropriate.

#### **Asylum Applications.**

366. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if extended leave to remain here will be granted in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 12; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42635/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 2 June 2000. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 1 March 2002, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State. Representations were received on behalf of the person concerned.

Following consideration of his case under Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, a Deportation Order was signed in respect of the person concerned on 27 April 2005. Notice of this order was served by registered post, dated 4 May 2005, placing a legal requirement on the person concerned to 'present' himself to the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB), 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2 on 12 May 2005 in order to make arrangements for his removal from the State. The person concerned presented, as required, on this occasion but failed to present on a subsequent occasion and was therefore classified as a person who was evading his deportation.

By letter dated 24 June 2008, the legal representative of the person concerned lodged an application for revocation of the Deportation Order, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended). Following consideration of the information submitted, the Deportation Order was affirmed and the person concerned and his legal representative were advised of this decision by letter dated 14 November 2008. In addition, the person concerned was required to present himself to the GNIB on 20 November 2008 in order



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to make arrangements for his removal from the State. He presented as required and was given a further presentation date of 27 November 2008. The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the State and remain thereafter out of the State. The enforcement of the Deportation Order remains an operational matter for the Bureau.

367. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in relation to an application for family reunification in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42636/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I refer the Deputy to my answer to his previous Parliamentary Question. I am informed by the Immigration Division of my Department that the legal representative of the person in question has requested the application to be held in order to allow them to make further submissions.

368. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if extended leave to remain here will be arranged in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry based on an application under subsidiary protection; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42637/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The person concerned applied for asylum on 12 December 2005. His application was refused following consideration of his case by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and, on appeal, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal. Subsequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was informed, by letter dated 29 August 2006, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why he should be allowed to remain temporarily in the State.

Representations have been submitted on behalf of the person concerned and will be fully considered, under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act, 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement, before the file is passed to me for decision. There is no record in my Department of an application for Subsidiary Protection having been received from the person concerned.

#### **Citizenship Applications.**

369. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position regarding an application for naturalisation for persons (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** An application for a Certificate of Naturalisation from the first-named person in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in May 2005 and from the second-named person in April 2006. Officials in that Section inform me that processing of both applications has commenced and the files will be forwarded to me for decision in the near future.

#### **Control of Firearms.**

370. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if the Firearms (Restricted Firearms and Ammunition) Order 2008 made on 12 February 2008 and



due to come into operation on 1 May 2008, is in operation; if not, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

371. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006, which inserts a new section 3A into the Firearms Act 1925, conferring on the Garda Commissioner power to issue guidelines in relation to the practical application and operation of the Firearms Acts, is in operation; if not, the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Firearms (Restricted Firearms and Ammunition) Order — S.I. 21 of 2008 — came into effect on 1st May 2008. Since that date, any firearms dealer wishing to deal in restricted firearms has had to apply for and be granted an authorisation under section 39 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006. That Order will also be relevant in the context of changes which I have announced in the firearms licensing regime which I will be bringing forward in the Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill due to be published in the coming weeks.

Section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 (Issue of guidelines etc. by Commissioner) was commenced by S.I. No. 390 of 2006 (Criminal Justice Act 2006 (Commencement Order)) on 1st August 2006. It is intended that the Commissioner will issue guidelines in the context of the new licensing regime.

#### **Deportation Orders.**

372. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will intervene to prevent the deportation to Nigeria of persons (details supplied) to protect them from female genital mutilation; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The persons in question are the subject of deportation orders signed on 23 November, 2005, following the refusal of their application for asylum. Judicial review proceedings were instituted on 13 January, 2006 challenging the decision to make the deportation orders. The proceedings were determined on 30 January, 2008 when all reliefs sought were refused by the High Court. A certificate to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court was sought but this was refused by the High Court on 13 March, 2008.

The applicants submitted applications for subsidiary protection pursuant to the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 S.I. No. 518 of 2006 ('the Regulations') on 3 March, 2008. These applicants, as persons in respect of whom deportation orders were signed before the coming into force of the Regulations on 10 October, 2006, are not automatically entitled to apply for subsidiary protection. In such cases, I may exercise discretion pursuant to Regulation 4(2) of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 S.I. No. 518 to accept and consider an application for subsidiary protection where an individual has identified new facts or circumstances which demonstrate a change of position from that which pertained at the time the deportation order was made.

The applicants were informed on 19 March 2008 that my predecessor had decided to refuse to exercise his discretion pursuant to Regulation 4(2) of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006, S.I. No. 518 of 2006 as no new or altered circumstances had been demonstrated. Judicial review proceedings were instituted on 20 March, 2008 challenging this decision.

On 18 November, 2008 the High Court refused an application on behalf of the applicants for an injunction restraining their deportation pending the hearing of the substantive appli-

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ation for judicial review of the decision to refuse to exercise discretion to consider the applications for subsidiary protection. The applicants had sought to adjourn the case behind a similar case, Gavryluk. In Gavryluk, the Court held that the Minister retains a discretion to accept and consider an application for subsidiary protection in circumstances where an applicant can demonstrate changed circumstances from the time the deportation order was made. The decision in Gavryluk is now under appeal, by the applicant, to the Supreme Court.

A case was lodged by the applicants' solicitor to the European Court of Human Rights on 11 September, 2008 under Article 34 seeking a declaration that the decision to deport the applicants represents a violation of their rights under Articles 3, 6, 13 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

My Department was informed on 18 November, 2008 that the President of the Third Chamber of The European Court of Human Rights had indicated that as an interim measure under Rule 39 of the Rules of the Court, the applicants should not be deported before midnight (Irish time) on 10 December, 2008, in order to give the Third Section of the Court the opportunity to consider the applicants' case at its meeting on 9 December 2008. The European Court was informed on 19 November, 2008 that the applicants would not be deported while the Rule 39 interim measure remains in place.

The facts of this case have been aired in court on numerous occasions over almost three years and on each occasion the courts have firmly endorsed the validity of the deportation orders made in respect of the applicants. In his decision on 30 January 2008, Feeney J. noted that: "The applicants' applications for asylum were rejected on the basis that the Tribunal found that on the present evidence that there was no substantiation of the alleged risk to the applicant or of her children when considered objectively. The history was not disbelieved but rather, on a forward looking test, it was deemed that it had not been demonstrated that there was a reasonable degree of likelihood of a well founded fear of persecution in the future."

The Court was also satisfied that an examination of additional evidence which the applicants' sought to put forward did "not in fact materially alter the factual matrix" in the case. Should the European Court of Human Rights determine that the applicants' case is inadmissible, in the interests of upholding the integrity of the asylum and immigration system of the State, I intend to enforce the validly made deportation orders in respect of the applicants.

### **Visa Applications.**

373. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will confirm that his Department has received an appeal against the refusal of a tourist visa application from a person (details supplied); when same will be reconsidered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42721/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that the visa application referred to was approved following appeal on 17 November 2008.

374. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if he will take steps to have issued a two week holiday visa to a person (details supplied) to enable them to visit their long-term girlfriend here from 22 December 2008 to 5 January 2009; if same will be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42740/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The visa application referred to by the Deputy was received in the Visa Office on 10 November 2008. Following

consideration by a Visa Officer it was refused on the 17 November 2008 for the following reasons. There was no clear link shown to the reference. The obligations to return to the home country were not deemed sufficient. It was the opinion of the Visa Officer that the applicant may not observe the conditions of the visa if granted. The decision of the Visa Officer may be appealed within two months of the date of decision, in this case before 17 January 2008. Guidelines on making an appeal can be found on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service at [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie).

### **Garda Equipment.**

375. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of Garda stations that do not have PULSE; the plans he has to install it; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42744/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that the PULSE system is available at 319 Garda Stations including all Divisional, District Headquarters and 24 hour stations. The system is also available at a further 23 networked locations. In total all these locations account for over 85% of incidents. The extension of the PULSE network to the remaining 384 Garda stations is reviewed on an ongoing basis by Garda management and additional stations are added to the network on a case by case basis.

The Deputy will be aware that the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC), which is based in Castlebar, allows Gardaí, who would otherwise have to return to their station to input or update incident data, to log the information over the telephone with the GISC, thus releasing Garda resources for visible, frontline policing across our communities.

### **Citizenship Applications.**

376. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform if a review can or will be undertaken regarding an application for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42795/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act, 1956, as amended provides that the Minister may, in his absolute discretion, grant an application for a certificate of naturalisation provided certain statutory conditions are fulfilled. One such condition is that the applicant must be of good character. An application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in December 2006 and I decided to refuse the application. The reason for the refusal was disclosed to the applicant in a letter dated 6 November, 2008.

It is open to the person in question to lodge a new application if and when she is in a position to satisfy the statutory requirements applicable at that time. However, in doing so she should bear in mind the reasons for refusal of her previous application.

377. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the position in relation to an application for citizenship in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42796/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** An application for a certificate of naturalisation on behalf of the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was

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received in the Citizenship Section of my Department in June 2008. Officials in that Section inform me that processing of the application is complete and the file will be forwarded to me for a decision in due course.

### Ministerial Staff.

378. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42907/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The number, grade and salary range of staff employed in my Private Office and Constituency Office are set out in the tables below.

#### Private Office

Grade	Number	Salary Range
Administrative Officer Established	1	€35,132 – €62,210
Executive Officer All Established	4 (including 2 × 50% work-sharers)	2 @ €32,179 – €51,054 2 @ €30,566 – €48,504
Clerical Officer All Established	4	€24,397 – €39,558
Special Advisor Unestablished	1	€86,168 – €106,582
Press Advisor Unestablished	1	€86,168 – €106,582

#### Constituency Office

Grade	Number	Salary Range
Clerical Officer All Established	4	3 @ €24,397 – €39,558 1 @ €23,174 – €37,584
Personal Assistant	1	€46,558 – €59,097
Personal Secretary	1	€30,566 – €50,410

Staff in both offices would be entitled to travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with relevant Department of Finance Circulars.

### Departmental Properties.

379. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform when the national property services authority office was opened; the cost of the lease of the building per annum and per month; the number of staff working in the office or attached to the office; the wage bill connected with the running of the office; the estimated outlay on ancillary costs including information and communication technology costs, heating, lighting and other costs associated with the opening and running of this office from its opening to date in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42912/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** I can inform the Deputy that the Property Services Regulatory Authority's office at Abbey Road, Navan, Co.

Meath was opened on 15 November, 2007. The accommodation has been provided by the Office of Public Works and the Authority is sharing the building with the Revenue Commissioners. The annual rental cost apportionment to the Authority is €143,840. The Deputy may wish to note that the estimated annual rental cost provided in my reply to Question Number 199 of 5 June, 2008 has been updated as outlined above. Currently there are nine staff working with the Authority and between 1 January and 31 October, 2008, the latest date for which figures are available, total expenditure by the Authority was €394,026 of which €252,424 was staff costs.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

380. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43233/08]

**Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern):** The Deputy will be aware that the Office of Public Works has responsibility for the acquisition, refurbishment and maintenance of State buildings, including storage facilities. With the exception of one document storage centre, all the premises where my Department stores its files, both on-site and off-site, are provided by the Office of Public Works. For the one document storage centre availed of specifically by my Department, the storage costs for this year up to the end of October were €19,650 excluding VAT.

#### **Foreign Conflicts.**

381. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the meetings he had at EU, international or government level as to the present situation in the Congo; his plans to assist the problems in the affected areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42200/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The ongoing crisis in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a matter of grave concern, both in terms of its implications for the humanitarian situation, and for the stability of the wider Great Lakes region. I am particularly distressed by reports of attacks by all sides against the civilian population, by the prevalence of sexual and gender based violence as part of the conflict, and by the plight of over a million people who are now displaced people in the eastern part of the DRC.

The Government fully supports the international efforts currently underway to find a solution to the crisis in eastern DRC. UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, has been heavily engaged in discussions in an effort to stabilize the situation. The appointment of the former Nigerian President, Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, an experienced mediator in regional disputes, as the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General is a particularly helpful development. I welcome also the efforts of DRC's neighbours to come together to help solve this problem at the Nairobi Regional Conference on 7 November, and I urge them to persist in their efforts.

My EU colleagues and I discussed the crisis in DRC at our informal meeting in Marseilles on 3 November, and again, most recently, at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 10 November 2008. At that meeting, we were briefed by French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, on his recent visit to eastern DRC with the UK Foreign Secretary, David Miliband. We agreed on Council Conclusions, which urged all parties to respect the ceasefire and the Goma and Nairobi peace agreements. The EU is extremely concerned by the difficulties facing MONUC, but at present we believe it would be more effective to strengthen our cooperation with MONUC rather than to initiate steps towards a separate ESDP military



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mission. In addition, the EU will, of course, continue to contribute to diplomatic efforts. Work is ongoing at official level to flesh out how the EU can best support peace efforts in the eastern DRC, and my colleagues and I will discuss the issue again at the General Affairs and External Relations Council on 8 December.

Ireland has been quick to respond to the humanitarian dimension of this crisis. Already in 2008, we have committed over €12 million in humanitarian aid funding to DRC, and our support to the country since 2006 totals over €33 million. In response to the worsening situation in the east, the Government promised up to €1 million in extra funding for humanitarian relief in North Kivu.

### **Departmental Bodies.**

382. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42222/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** There are three Advisory Committees and one Educational Commission operating under my Department's aegis the details of which are outlined below. None of them have recently been eliminated or amalgamated.

The Advisory Board for Irish Aid, which replaced the Irish Aid Advisory Committee, was established in August 2002 to provide general oversight and advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State for Overseas Development on the strategic direction of the Government's programme of assistance to developing countries.

The Development Education Advisory Committee (DEAC) was appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2003 following the recommendations of the Ireland Aid Review Committee. Its purpose is to advise the Minister, Minister of State and Irish Aid on policy regarding development education.

The Government Emigrant Services Advisory Committee (previously known as Díon) was set up in 1984 to advise the Government on the welfare of the Irish community in Britain. The Committee makes recommendations on Emigrant Services funding to voluntary organisations that work with vulnerable Irish people resident in Britain.

The Ireland — United States Commission for Educational Exchange (the Fulbright Commission) finances study, research, teaching and other educational activities between Ireland and the United States of America. The Fulbright Commission operates on a statutory basis and enjoys autonomy of management and administration in accordance with the Educational Exchange (Ireland and the United States of America) Act, 1991. The annual Grant-in-Aid figure for 2008 is €254,000, the same amount which has been paid annually since 2001.

### **Human Rights Issues.**

383. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if his attention has been drawn to the circumstances of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42327/08]

384. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there are approximately 30 detainees who have been labelled "Guantanamo's refugees" (details supplied); if he has had contact with the US authorities or



with lawyers for the detainees regarding their relocation to safe countries; if he would be willing to offer them refuge here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42329/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 383 and 384 together.

These questions have also been addressed to my colleague, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Deputy Dermot Ahern. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform is the lead Department on the issue of resettling citizens of third countries into Ireland and the Minister is, I understand, providing a comprehensive response to the Deputy's questions.

385. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will review the situation of the Bahai's in Iran; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42351/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The situation of members of the minority Baha'i faith in Iran has long been a matter of serious concern to the Government and to members of the Oireachtas, and has been discussed here on many occasions. There is in Iran no tolerance of the Baha'i faith, which is regarded as a heretical or apostate offshoot of Islam. In recent years, as conservative forces have again asserted control in Iran, there has been a progressive increase in harassment of individual Baha'is, and worrying indications that these are part of a concerted effort by the Iranian authorities to destroy the Baha'i faith and community as a whole. Baha'i property has been confiscated and organisations suppressed, and burial places closed. Individual Baha'is have been excluded from certain jobs, and in particular from participation in higher education. Media linked closely to the Government have systematically misrepresented the Baha'i faith and attempted to promote hatred against its members.

Earlier this year a group of seven Baha'is, who have been active in providing informal leadership or coordination for their community, were arrested and detained in Tehran. Their continued detention is a source of particular concern. In 1980, in the early days of the Islamic Republic, their predecessors in the formal Baha'i leadership, the National Spiritual Assembly, were arrested and never seen again. The successor leadership were arrested in 1981 and executed. There is therefore naturally concern about the fate of the recent detainees, and I call in particular on the Iranian authorities to release them and other Baha'is detained because of their faith.

I am deeply concerned about the ongoing oppression of the Baha'i community in Iran and made my concerns known to Iranian Foreign Minister, Mr Mottaki when I met him in New York in September as well as to the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Safari, when he visited Dublin in June. I will continue to do so. Our position is very clear: Iran must act to uphold fully the right to adopt and practise a religion of choice and must end the persecution of the Baha'i community. My Department continues to keep in close touch with the National Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is in Ireland in monitoring this situation.

The EU has also been active in drawing international attention to the oppression of Baha'is in Iran. In 2008 alone, the Union made a public Declaration in February on the deteriorating situation of Iranian Baha'is, and in September made a further declaration on the situation of Baha'is and other religious minorities. Ireland has been active in keeping this issue to the fore among the many human rights problems in Iran of concern to the EU. Ireland and our EU partners have also co-sponsored a Resolution on human rights in Iran, including this issue, at the current session of the UN General Assembly in New York.

### Northern Ireland Issues.

386. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if it is acceptable, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, that the half-mile ferry crossing from Greencastle, County Donegal, to Magilligan, County Derry, is classed as an international crossing; his views regarding the fact that users of this ferry are subjected to greater scrutiny than those who cross the Border by road; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42385/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The progress made under the Good Friday Agreement has been underpinned by the strengthening of economic and transport ties between the two jurisdictions. The opening in 2002 of the ferry connection between Greencastle and Magilligan Point was an important demonstration of the expanding nature of these links and of the Government's commitment to the North West.

I am aware that in the recent past considerable concern has been expressed at the introduction of increased security checks at this crossing. I have instructed that these concerns be raised with the British authorities, including through the British Irish Joint Secretariat in Belfast, and my officials have also been in contact with Limavady Borough Council which has responsibility for carrying out the security checks. We have stressed in all these contacts our wish to facilitate traffic on the ferry with the least possible disruption.

The current position is that, on the Magilligan side, responsibility for security rests with the British Department of Transport. The Department of Transport in this jurisdiction is in contact with their British counterparts with a view to streamlining the arrangements in place, and to minimise inconvenience. My Department continues to monitor the situation closely, and to seek a satisfactory resolution to the difficulties which have arisen.

### Consultancy Contracts.

387. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42588/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The Department of Foreign Affairs is responsible for two Votes — Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs) and Vote 29 (International Cooperation). The amount of expenditure on consultancy by my Department in 2006 and 2007 is as follows.

Year	Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs)	Vote 29 (International Cooperation)	Total (Vote 28+ Vote 29)
	€	€	€
2006	587,648	1,791,396	2,379,044
2007	283,174	3,033,339	3,316,513

I have set out in the accompanying tables the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts over that period, including the nature and value of the contract in each case.

I am very conscious of the need to achieve value for money on such expenditure. The Department commissions external advisory services only where specialised knowledge and/or skills are not available within the Department and, particularly in the case of Irish Aid (Ireland's

official development assistance programme), where ongoing independent evaluation of programmes and projects is required. Given the overall scale of the Irish Aid Programme, I am satisfied that this level of monitoring, review and evaluation is both prudent and proportionate. I should add that, in accordance with the Government's decision, the budgetary provision for consultancies in my Department will be reduced by 50% in 2009.

Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs) Consultancies 2006

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Bearingpoint	Development of the Department's Automated Passport System	€ 300,974
Cornwell	Technical services to assist delivery of ICT Programmes	26,464
Dr. Tom Hardiman	Services in relation to Asia-Europe Foundation	63,602
Eugene Downes	Cultural Programme Coordinator	11,394
Goodbody Economic Consultants	Value For Money and Policy Review of the Support for Irish Emigrant Groups Programmes	19,360
Mason Hayes and Curran	Contract and legal advice in relation to the Automated Passport System	49,403
Microsoft	Technical design of ICT Infrastructure	45,027
Rits	ICT Security Services and advice	70,694
Tim Dalton	Procurement audit for Biometrics project	730
Total		587,648

## Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs) Consultancies 2007

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Bianconi Research Limited (trading as RITS)	Technical advice on the maintenance and development of the Department's ICT security infrastructure.	€ 151,250
Sysnet Ltd.,	ICT Security Review	28,133
Cornwell Management Consultants Ireland Limited	Development of technical specifications and tender documents for the support and maintenance contract for the Automated Passport System.	19,965
Goodbody Economic Consultants	Value for Money and Policy Review of the Support for Irish Emigrant Groups Programmes	25,894
Annesley Resource Partnership	Quality Assurance Assessment of the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Support for Irish Emigrants Groups Programmes	3,751
BCT Communications Limited	Evaluation of the capacity building programmes provided by the Institute of Public Administration in 2006 to the Bulgarian Institute of Public Administration and the Romanian National Institute of Administration.	20,469
Version 1 Software Limited	Software Programming for Secure Document Repository	1,481
(i) Mr. Eugene Downes (to 28 May 2007)	Cultural Events Coordination and Advisory Services for State and Official Visits	9,883,520
(ii) Long Road Productions Ltd. (from 18 September 2007)		
Mr. Peter Brown	Taxation advice provided to the Irish Embassy, London.	3,835
Mr. Richard Townsend	Assist with a review of the mandate and structures of the Irish United Nations Association (IUNA)	3,993
Total		283,174

## Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2006

Company	Service Provided	Cost
		€
KPMG	Provision of Recruitment Service	5,383
Achilles Procurement Services	Secondment of Procurement Specialist	50,535
Agenda Consulting	Rwanda Assessment	6,444
Annesley Resource Partnership	Review of Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme	33,529
DAI/Bannock	Tigray Regional Support Evaluation	123,235
Marlou Bijlsma	Attendance at WHO/Global Fund Meeting	3,492
Brunel University	Policy Study of Good Practice	25,969
Catherine A Butcher	Technical Support on HIV/AIDS	38,787
Centre for Global Health	Provision of Technical Support on Health	19,315
Nicholas Chisholm	Consultancy Work for Civil Society Section	4,573
Anne Conroy	Monitoring Recovery Programme in Malawi	14,707
Áine Costigan	Technical Support on HIV/AIDS	78,496
Bernie Crawford	Fellowship Training Programme	3,639
Thomas Crowley	Technical Consultant to Civil Society	8,145
Susan Enfield	Joint review of HIV/AIDS	45,700
Deirdre Farrell	Development Aid Grants Committee	5,000
Arthur M. Fell	Attendance at PAEG meetings	16,950
Cathy Gaynor	Gender Equality Consultant	27,776
Cathy Gaynor	Mainstreaming Consultant	34,059
Margaret Gaynor	Consultant on Rapid Response Initiative	15,560
Getinet W Giorgis	Joint Donor Evaluation — UNICEF	11,552
Clodagh Harris	DAC Meeting London	1,474
The Helm Corporation Ltd	DAC Reporting Assignment	7,714
Cathal Higgins	Participation IN Zambia Joint Assessment	27,555
Anne Holmes	Tsunami Follow Up	90,400
Inst of Public Administration	Central America Regional Strategy	43,009



Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2006 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Interworks Europe Ltd	Tsunami Evaluation	€ 944
Mary Jennings	Mainstreaming Strategy	38,935
Maura Leen	PAEG Meetings	2,774
Imelda Torres Lopez	Central America Consultant	13,460
Donatella Magliani	Joint Donor Evaluation — Unicef	14,420
Joanne Manchester	Consultant for HAPS Review	26,186
Joanee Manchester	Technical Support on HIV/AIDS	1,372
Mary Immaculate College	Technical Support on Education	8,214
Mary McCann Sanchez	Central America Consultant	27,264
Owen McCarthy	Consultant re Teaching Resources	14,850
Diarmuid McClean	Technical Support to Health Sector	134,360
Brid McGrath	Public Information Consultant	49,280
Mary McKeown	Consultant re Civil Society Funding Proposals	36,918
Rev. Michael Joseph Kelly	UNAIDS Symposium on HIV and AIDS	1,500
Mokoro	Review of Country Programme	111,729
Kevin Moore	Private Sector Development	86,342
Patrick Murphy	Consultant re Education for All Programme	9,563
Una Murrat T/A Nua Consulting	Gender Equality Policy	3,801
Mary Myaya	Join Review of HAPS	18,849
Godfrey Mutahi Ngunyi	Consultant Re Kenya Recovery Programme	10,193
Jerry O'Dwyer	Global Fund to Fight Aids	33,988

Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2006 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Helen O'Neill	Irish Aid Mentoring Programme	€ 11,750
Johnny O'Regan	Provision of Audit and Evaluation Support	74,597
Pádraig Ó Ruairc	Pre-positioning of Humanitarian Supplies	24,828
Oxford Policy Management	Consultant re UN funding	15,972
Rural Development Unit — UCD	Working Group on Agriculture	12,958
Rothwell Performance Consulting	Consultant re Internal internship programme	47,687
Rothwell Performance Consulting	Facilitation of UNV Internships	87,097
Tara Shine	Environment and Emergency and Recovery Consultant	64,163
Marie Smith	Civil Societ Funding Schemes	13,605
Sulley Gariba	Join Donor Evaluation of UNICEF	34,407
Richard Townsend	Review of Staffing Needs	37,343
University of Glasgow	Consultancy re Multi- Annual Programme Scheme	9,232
Barnaby Willits/ John Telford	Support for Emergency and Recovery Work	16,493
Mr. B. Abd/Ms S Willitts — King	Development and Implementation of Humanitarian Relief Policy	18,984
Total		1,791,396

Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2007

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Achilles Procurement Services Ltd. Aidan Pender	Provision of procurement expertise To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	€ 86,656 11,375
Aine Costigan Aisling Swaine Andre Barsony	Technical Support on HIV/AIDS Technical Advice on Gender Equality To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	27,453 112,797 10,523
Ann Nolan Ann Pesic	Provision of Technical Support on HIV/AIDS Independent Consultant for the Partnership Programme for Europe and Central Asia Funding Committee	104,023 2,294
Anne Conroy Anne Holmes	Monitoring of Irish Aid Recovery Programme, Malawi Technical Support Tsunami	20,328 69,579
Annesley Resource Partnership John Shiels	Quality Review of Irish Aid Report re. Tsunami Independent Consultant for the Partnership Programme for Europe and Central Asia Funding Committee	2,723 6,579
Annesley Resource Partnership Aodh O'Connor Aodh O'Connor Arthur Fell	Review of the Irish Aid Fellowship Training Programme Technical Consultants to the Civil Society Section Funding Schemes Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	34,388 9,800 7,974 21,086
Ross Golden Bannon Barnaby Wilitts-King	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid. Hunger Task Force- Media Consultant	5,082 21,326
Ben Siddle	Technical Consultant supporting the work of the Emergency & Recovery Section of Irish Aid Provision of Technical Support for Emergency and Recovery Section, Rapid Response Initiative	41,393
Bernard McLoughlin	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	7,800

Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2007 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Bernard Wood	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	€ 27,137
Bernadette Crawford	External Member of Fellowships Selection Committee Meetings	3,712
Bernadette Crawford	Final Monitoring of the NGO HIV/AIDS Partnership Scheme (HAPS)	5,384
Brid McGrath	Assistant Public Information Officer	31,196
Cathal Higgins	Support to the Zambia/Ireland Teacher Education Initiative	33,895
Cathal Higgins	Provision of Technical Support for Education for All	28,615
Kate Butcher	Technical Consultant for the Multi-Annual Programme Scheme	4,369
Catherine Gaynor	Mainstreaming; Building Strategy and Practice within Irish Aid	20,110
Catherine Gaynor	Technical Consultant for the Multi-Annual Programme Scheme	20,429
Catherine Gaynor	Provision of Technical Support for Education for All	32,658
Daire Higgins	Irish Aid Centre Public Relations and Outreach Consultant	24,750
Dalberg Global Development Ad.	Evaluation of Learning and Training Programme for Development Workers (Dtalk)	26,245
Dalberg Global Development Ad.	Mapping of Irish Aid Approval Processes	55,358
Daniel Rowan	Temporary Communications Specialist	43,774
Debbie Thomas	Production of publication material for communication about Irish Aid's health programming	10,000
Deirdre Farrell	Member of the Development Education Grants Committee	5,000
Diarmuid McClean	Provision of Technical Support on Health and HIV/AIDS in area of R&D for new drugs, vaccines and microbicides	148,450
Diarmuid O'Donovan	Technical Consultant to the Board of the European Malaria Vaccine Initiative	5,101
Eamonn O'Reilly	Facilitation of Irish Aid funded internship Programmes (General Level)	6,750
Ecorys Research and Consulting	Evaluation of the Mozambique Country Programmes 2001-2006	93,191
Eleanor O'Gorman	Consultant to Conflict Resolution Unit	65,285
Farrell Grant Sparks	Provision of Consultancy Services for Irish Aid Management Review	92,767
Geraldine McDonald	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	16,586
Helen Newman	Development Education Strategy	18,150

Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2007 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Helen O'Neill	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	€ 12,350
Hunter McGill	Participation in the Projects Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG) Meetings	10,888
Imelda Torres Lopez	Programme Consultant in Central America	3,049
Institute of Public Administration	Quality Assessment of Mozambique CSP Evaluation	2,904
Intrac	Public Expenditure Review of the Irish Governments Support to Tsunami affected countries	31,181
Intrac	Review of the Irish Missionary Resource Service (IMRS)	66,105
James H. Polhemus, PhD	Consultancy on Good Governance	58,430
Jim Sheehan	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	12,233
Jane Salvage	Support to the AMAR Health Rehabilitation Project for the Marsh Arabs of Southern Iraq	12,135
Jerry O'Dwyer	Support to Irish Aid on the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB & Malaria	40,690
Jill Nesbitt	Irish Aid Centre Content Consultant	10,000
Jim Kinsella	Irish Aid Seminar- Presentation on OECD/DAC agriculture Task Team	300
Jim Kinsella	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	3,264
Joanne Manchester	Provision of Technical Support on HIV/AIDS	2,751
John Grindle	External Evaluator for Development Cooperation Ireland Project Proposals for the Balkans and CISs	8,500
John Grindle	Support to Review of the Staffing Needs of the Diplomatic Missions in Programme Countries, Sierra Leone and South Africa	15,426
John Telford	Technical Consultant supporting the work of the Emergency & Recovery Section of Irish Aid	10,176
John O'Regan	Provision of Audit Management Support to the Evaluation and Audit Unit	78,035
Kate Dyer	Support to the revision of Irish Aids Country Strategy Planning (CSP) Guidelines and Procedures	29,371
Kevin Moore	Support for Private Sector Development	105,086

Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2007 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
KPMG	Value for Money Review of the Passport Service	€ 35,406
Luis Enrique Bran Reyes	Interim Programme Consultant for the Central America Programme	33,064
Maeve Martin	Evaluation of the Development and Intercultural Education (DICE) Project	15,000
Margaret Fitzgerald	Provision of Technical Support on Health and HIV/AIDS, October to December 2006	31,807
Margaret Fitzgerald	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	9055
Mags Gaynor	Provision of Technical Support for Emergency and Recovery Section: Rapid Response Initiative	14,058
Mags Gaynor	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	7,939
Mags Gaynor	Support Irish Aid in the Areas of Vulnerability and Infrastructure	44,828
Margo O'Sullivan	Review of Primary Teacher Education (PTE) Curriculum	145
Marie Smith	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	11,081
Mary Immaculate College	Provision of Technical Support for Education for All	4,868
Mary Jennings	Mainstreaming Building Strategy and Practice within Irish Aid	3,020
Mary Jennings	Technical Consultant for the Multi-Annual Programme Scheme	31,433
Mary McCann	Interim Programme Consultant for the Central America Programme	45,330
Mary McKeown	Technical Consultant for the Multi-Annual Programme Scheme	4,727
Mary McKeown	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	5,227
Maura Leen	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	25,129
Maura Leen	Irish Aid Representative on the Appraisal Panel for the Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes	4,750
Maura Leen	To inform and advise the work of the Project Appraisal and Evaluation Group (PAEG), providing independent and objective advice and external examination and appraisal of projects and programmes, as part of the overall approval mechanisms in Irish Aid.	5,371
Michael Scott	Participation at Mekong Private Sector Development Facility Planning and Review Meeting, and Vietnam Business Forum, December 2006	6,357



Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2007 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Morina O'Neill	Irish Aid Centre Content Consultant	€ 5,000
Morina O'Neill	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	6,708
Dr. Nick Chisholm	Technical Consultants to the Civil Society Section Funding Schemes	1,500
Owen McCarthy	Consultancy Support to the Irish Aid Hunger Task Force	22,268
Oxford Policy Management	Dissemination of an Irish Aid Teaching Resource entitled "Our World, Our Future"	9,065
Oxford Policy Management	Strategic review of Irish Aid engagement with the United Nations funds and programmes	61,316
Pat McMullan	Consultancy support to Irish Aid Hunger Task Force	5,283
Patrick D Murphy	On-going Support to Ireland Aid Funding of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)	24,783
Philip Regan	Provision of Technical Support for Education for All	8,774
Reginald Terrence Allsop	Facilitation of Irish Aid funded Internship Programmes (Senior Level)	11,875
Roberto ED. Martinez	Support to the Zambia/Ireland Teacher Education Initiative	21,960
Richard Townsend	Contract No: 10 — Maintenance of DCI Spanish Language website in Central America & Promotion of the Website	2,186
Richard Townsend	Report on staffing needs of missions in Irish Aid Programme Countries	8,556
Karen Rothwell	Irish Aid Representative on the Appraisal Panel for the Programme of Strategic Cooperation between Irish Aid and Higher Education and Research Institutes	2,811
Karen Rothwell	Facilitation of DCI funded UNV internship programme	45,590
Karen Rothwell	Facilitation of Irish Aid funded Internship Programmes (Senior Level)	29,887
Rowan Oberman	Piloting of Organisational Assessment Guidelines	24,421
Ruairi Brugh	Irish Aid Centre Groups' Programme Consultant	5,250
Sean Drysdale	Provision of Technical Support on Health and HIV/AIDS	8,450
Siobhan Mullally	Provision of Public Health Specialist Support	84,294
	Independent/External Mid-term Evaluation of the Justice System Programme in Timor Leste	5,197

Vote 29 (International Cooperation) Consultancy Costs 2007 — *continued*

Company	Service Provided	Cost
Steve Packer	Evaluation of the Irish Aid World Bank Education Trust Fund	€ 23,001
Tara Shine	Provision of Technical Support on Environmentally Sustainable Development	79,347
Tara Shine	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	5,072
Tom Crowley	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	16,889
Una Murray	Civil Society Fund and Micro Projects Fund	9,413
Una Murray	Completing and handing over work on mainstreaming gender through business plans and facilitating action planning on gender based violence with joint consortium gender based violence	3,721
University of Glasgow	MAPS II.; Technical Consultants to the Civil Society Section Funding Schemes	5,748
Grosso & Maldonado	Legal Advice regarding the establishment and operation of the Rapid Response Initiative	2080
James Saunderson	Rapid Response Initiative — Manager of Standby Register	520
Irish Aid Advisory Board Consultancy Costs 2007		
Company	Service Provided	Cost
Theta Eta Advisors Limited	Preparation of a report entitled: Best Practice in the Governance of Aid Programmes	€ 6,050
Oxford Policy Management	Research study entitled: “Measuring Impact: The Global and Irish Aid Programme Context”	42,258
Mr Tony Killick	(i) Preparation of a report entitled: “Selectivity in Action: Choosing Irish Aid’s Tenth Programme Country”	25,410
	(ii) Editorial Work on Research Findings Volume 1 Governance Trade and Aid Effectiveness.	
Achilles Procurement Services Limited	Public Procurement Advice on establishment of Framework Agreements for Research	1,270
North South Institute	Provision of external reader services to ABIA research programme	2,542
Overseas Development Institute	Research study entitled: “Good Governance, A id Modalities & Poverty reduction”	141,284
TOTAL		3,033,339

**Departmental Expenditure.**

388. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42626/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** In 2007, my Department made payments of €344,138 in respect of mileage costs incurred for official travel by 278 officials based in Ireland and throughout our network of 75 Missions abroad. Payments of €63,152 were made to 57 members of staff under the Vote 29 (Irish Aid) budget. Costs of €280,986 were incurred in payments to 221 officials from within the Vote 28 (Department of Foreign Affairs) budget. A substantial element of the latter related to costs incurred by officials travelling to Northern Ireland, particularly to destinations outside of Belfast.

The vast majority of payments made used the motoring allowances of 99 cent a mile for vehicles between 1,201cc and 1,500cc (up to 4,000 miles) and 1 27 cent a mile for vehicles above 1,500cc (up to 4,000 miles) . 18 individuals exceeded 4,000 miles a year in mileage costs and, therefore, qualified for the lower rates of motoring allowances.

While no cycling allowances were claimed in 2007, it should be noted that as the Department of Foreign Affairs headquarters in Dublin are in the city centre, most official meetings are within walking distance. The accounting systems used by my Department do not facilitate the more detailed breakdown of payments in the format requested by the Deputy.

**Passport Applications.**

389. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the mechanism available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare to obtain a passport; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42709/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The person in question called to the Irish Embassy in Hanoi on 28 October 2008 and reported the loss of his passport. At that time he was provided with a passport application form and the details of how he could obtain a replacement passport through the Embassy. The cost of the passport is 1,612,000 Vietnamese Dong which is equivalent to €75. As of Friday 21 November the person in question had not submitted a passport application to the Embassy for processing.

**Ministerial Staff.**

390. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42905/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The requested details for my Offices in the Department are set out in tabular form below.

Private Office	Constituency Office
10	5

[Deputy Micheál Martin.]

2008 (projected)

Private	Constituency
€558,300	€193,080

The above cost estimates include those related to the staff of my predecessor for the period 1 January 2008 — 6 May 2008. I would point out that the number of staff assigned to my Offices complies with the relevant Department of Finance guidelines.

### Departmental Expenditure.

391. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43236/08]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin):** The Department Of Foreign Affairs employs the service of an off-site document storage centre in Dublin and Cork. The cost per ‘banker box’ in these locations is €5 and €4 respectively.

### Sports Funding.

392. **Deputy Tony Gregory** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the main items funded in 2006 and 2007 under the horse and greyhound racing fund and funded from the approximate €74 million budgetary grant in each of those years. [42164/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) and Bord na gCon, are the statutory bodies responsible for the promotion and development of the horse and greyhound racing industries, under the terms of Section 10 of the Irish Horse-racing Industry Act, 1994 and Section 16 of the Greyhound Industry Act, 1954 respectively. Since 2001, income from the Fund has been used by both bodies towards increasing prize money levels, meeting administration and integrity costs alongside a programme of capital investment, which has underpinned a growth in both sectors. Details of the specific projects and initiatives which have been funded by HRI and Bord na gCon from the proceeds of the fund are available directly from the agencies.

### Departmental Bodies.

393. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42214/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions reference Nos. 41242/08, 41248/08 and 41250/08 on 19th November 2008.

394. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the scope of the reforms to be undertaken in respect of the three proposed agency rationalisations set out in the budget 2009; the expected savings in staffing and functions; the measures being taken to ensure that the savings are confined to the administrative overheads and do not impinge on the front line work of these agencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42228/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** I refer the Deputy to my reply to Questions reference Nos. 41242/08, 41248/08 and 41250/08 on 19th November 2008.

### Sports Capital Programme.

395. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism when his Department will be accepting applications for lottery funding for development purposes by sporting organisations. [42294/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** The Deputy will be aware that allocations under the 2008 Sports Capital Programme were announced in July last. No decision has yet been made about the timing of further rounds of the Programme.

### Olympic Games.

396. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism when he will publish the report to analyse and evaluate the potential economic benefits to Ireland in the sporting, business and tourism areas from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42296/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** I am presently considering the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics Task Force Report taking account of the current economic situation and my meetings with the key high performance stakeholders to identify the challenges which must be met in the preparation of our team for the London Games. The publication of the London 2012 Task Force Report will be considered when this process is complete.

### Consultancy Contracts.

397. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42585/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** An amount of €488,656 was paid by the Department to the 18 consultants listed below for the years 2006 and 2007.

Consultancy	Purpose	Year
Murray Consultants	PR Consultants for Department	2006
Laura Barnes	Coordinator of the Beckett Centenary	2006
John Grenham	Church Records Framework Survey	2006
Tim Dalton	Report on certain matters affecting Bord na gCon	2006
Red Dog Design Consultants	Provision of graphic design services in respect of the nomination form and Guidelines for the National Awards to Volunteers in Irish Sport	2006
Shane Holland Design	Design and Manufacture of awards for the National Volunteers in Irish Sport	2006
Petrus Consulting Ltd	Quality Assessment of Expenditure Review on Irish Film Board	2006
Russell Brennan Keane	Report on effect of possible tax changes on Section 481 (Film Relief Scheme)	2006
Dowling Consultancy Services	Chairing Implementation Group for Horse Sport	2006

[Deputy Martin Cullen.]

Consultancy	Purpose	Year
Raymund Burke Consulting,	Ireland Independent evaluation of the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme Expenditure Review	2006-2007
O'Herlihy Communications	PR Consultancy for the Department	2006-2007
Systems Dynamics Solutions Ltd,	To set up a database to record the results of a public swimming pool usage survey.	2007
Séan Cromien	Review of operation of the Heritage Fund Leading to revised updating legislation	2007
Q4PR	PR /Media services for Culture Ireland in the US	2007
CHL Consulting	Review of The James Joyce Centre	2007
Indecon International Economic Consultants	To research and prepare an economic evaluation of the benefits to Ireland arising from the proximity of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games	2007
Charlie Pike The Pacello Group (Europe) Ltd	Website maintenance for Culture Ireland	2007
Holohan Leisure	To provide consultancy advice in relation to an analysis of sports facility provision in the development of a strategy for sports facilities	2007

This Department observes the Department of Finance Guidelines for Engagement of Consultants in the Civil Service. Consultants are only employed by the Department in circumstances where specialised knowledge or expertise, which is not available in the Department or elsewhere in the public service, is required for a temporary period or a specialist study/project must be completed within a very short time scale.

#### Departmental Expenditure.

398. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42618/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** An amount of €284,000 was spent on travel and subsistence for my Department in 2007 of which €82,981.34 was in respect of mileage. The number of claimants in respect of categories under which mileage was paid is detailed in the table.

Category	Rate per Kilometre	No. of Claimants
Up to 1200CC	@ .5216	7
1201 – 1500CC	@ .6166	22
1201 – 1500CC	@ .3096	1
1501CC +	@ .7832	40
1501CC +	@ .3665	5
1501CC +	@ .7721	2

#### Official Engagements.

399. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism his proposed itinerary for the St. Patrick's week celebrations in 2009; the areas and countries involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42739/08]



**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** I wish to inform the Deputy that at this point there are no arrangements in place in respect of the St. Patrick's week celebrations in 2009.

#### Ministerial Staff.

400. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42897/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** The staffing of my private office is as follows:

1 Private Secretary at Higher Executive Officer level;

3 Executive Officers.

All of these are full time established civil servants.

The staffing of my constituency office is as follows:

1 Personal Assistant remunerated at Higher Executive Officer level;

1 Constituency Assistant remunerated at Higher Executive Officer level;

1 Personal Secretary;

1 Staff Officer 1 Clerical Officer.

My Personal Secretary, Personal Assistant and Constituency Assistant are political appointees. The Staff Officer and Clerical Officer are full time established civil servants.

The costs below relate to the staffing levels in the offices including those under my two immediate predecessors as Ministers.

	2007	Estimate 2008	Budget 2009
	€	€	€
Private Office	362,000	370,000	230,000
Constituency Office	215,000	280,000	225,000

#### Departmental Expenditure.

401. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43228/08]

**Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism (Deputy Martin Cullen):** The current cost for off site rental storage of Departmental files and documents is €339 per month plus VAT. Some additional expenditure is incurred on an occasional basis in respect of associated delivery costs and the purchase of boxes and labels.

#### Security of the Elderly.

402. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs

[Deputy Deirdre Clune.]

if he continues to provide funding to support the provision of panic alarms for the elderly; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42125/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy John Curran):** The Scheme of Community Support for Older People, operated by my Department, provides funding to local community and voluntary groups who identify vulnerable older people over the age of 65 years in their communities and arrange for the installation of socially-monitored alarms and other items of physical security equipment. Any local voluntary or community-based organisation, especially those working with or providing support for older people, can apply to my Department for funding under the Scheme and applications are accepted throughout the year. The value of grants paid out in the past three years is set out in the table.

Table

Year	Value of the Grants Paid
	€
2006	2,201,885
2007	3,708,019
2008 to 19.11.2008	3,371,175

Total expenditure on the Scheme in 2008 is likely to exceed €3.7 million. I anticipate funding of the order of €3.5m in 2009. Full details of the Schemes is available on my Department's website ([www.pobail.ie](http://www.pobail.ie)).

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

403. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42216/08]

**Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív):** I would refer to Deputy to my answers to questions numbers 90 and 128 on the 18th November 2008. As outlined in that answer, the functions and funding of Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge transferred to Foras na Gaeilge with effect from 1 January 2008 in accordance with a decision made by the North South Ministerial Council in 2007 and in order to secure good practice and value for money. The Council also decided at its meeting on 4 July 2008 that the functions, staffing and funding of Colmille in Ireland should transfer to Foras na Gaeilge and arrangements to that end are in hand. Both these decisions were taken to ensure a more coherent organisational context and improved corporate governance for these language initiatives, rather than to save money. While some savings on administrative expenses are expected, the allocation for each initiative is not being reduced.

As previously mentioned, I am not in a position to comment on any specific future plans at this stage. For completeness, I should also mention that the Charities Bill 2007, which was passed by Dáil Éireann on 5th November 2008, provides for the dissolution of the Office of Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests for Ireland. The Bill further provides that the Office of Commissioners will be replaced by a new Charities Regulatory Authority, which will take on the statutory functions of the Office of Commissioners, as well as having broader statutory regulatory functions relating to charities operating in the jurisdiction. Second Stage of the Bill in the Seanad is scheduled to commence on 26th November 2008.

**Consultancy Contracts.**

404. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42584/08]

**Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív):** My Department has made available on its website details regarding consultancies (excepting those of minor value i.e. less than €5,000 excluding VAT) from June 2002 to the end of October 2008. The relevant link in relation to expenditure on consultancies by my Department is: [www.pobail.ie/en/CorporateSupportServices/Finance/Consultancies](http://www.pobail.ie/en/CorporateSupportServices/Finance/Consultancies). The relevant information is set out in the tables. The use of consultants by my Department is kept to a minimum consistent with the resources available internally. In addition, procedures are in place to ensure that consultancy expenditure is strictly controlled and contained within the overall limit set by the Department of Finance.

Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs  
 Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT)	Paid to end October '08 €	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
1	Review of aspects of Irish Charity Law	L	Arthur Cox Solicitors	24-Jan-02	22-Nov-02	76,714	76,714	×	×	×	×	×	76,714
2	Assistance in the specification and selection of a new financial management system for the Department	IA	Deloitte & Touche	01-Feb-02	31-Oct-03	117,250	117,250	×	×	×	×	×	58,625
3	Assessment of project proposals received under the CAIT II Initiative	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates	01-Apr-02	31-Dec-02	64,433	64,433	×	×	×	×	×	64,433
4	Review of statutory funding of the community and voluntary sector	IA	Goodbody Economic Consultants	01-May-02	31-Dec-02	28,738	28,738	×	×	×	×	×	28,738
5	Assistance in the specification and selection of a Gaeltacht and Islands clients database system	ICT	IBM	01-May-02	30-Jun-03	112,530	112,530	×	×	×	×	×	89,177
6	Review of the property and equity portfolio of Údarás na Gaeltachta	PA	Farrell Grant Sparks	01-Jun-02	31-Mar-03	83,883	83,883	×	×	×	×	×	0
7	Professional accounting service between June 2002 and October 2003	F	Deloitte & Touche	01-Jun-02	31-Oct-03	71,513	71,513	×	×	×	×	×	50,010
8	Joint cross-border studies (two) regarding issues affecting cross-border rural communities	IA	Venture International	18-Jun-02	31-Jul-02	6,702	6,702	×	×	×	×	×	6,702
9	Evaluation of the Community Development programme (commenced in Dept of Social, Community & Family Affairs)	IA	Nexus Research	18-Jun-02	31-Dec-02	72,600	72,600	×	×	×	×	×	72,600
10	Consultancy to Working Group on the creation of employment in the Gaeltacht	PA	Transition Management	18-Jun-02	31-Dec-02	10,277	10,277	×	×	×	×	×	10,277
11	Provision of audit services to the CAIT I Initiative	F	Mazars	18-Jun-02	31-Jan-03	30,261	30,261	×	×	×	×	×	28,577
12	Researching the impact of projects commissioned under the CAIT I Initiative	IA	WRC (Work Research Co-Operative)	18-Jun-02	31-Jan-03	37,800	37,800	×	×	×	×	×	0
13	Evaluation of the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund	IA	WRC (Work Research Co-Operative)	18-Jun-02	31-Dec-03	101,719	101,719	×	×	×	×	×	0
14	Development of Information System to support administration of the LEADER+ and the National Rural Development Programmes	ICT	System Dynamics	01-Jul-02	20-Dec-06	330,279	330,279	×	26,861	27,266	72,036	140,108	64,008

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — *continued*

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT) €	Paid to end October 108 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
15	Review of the Language Assistants Scheme and the Summer Camp Scheme for the youth of the Gaeltacht and a scientific analysis on the payments made to Gaeltacht households who accommodate students under the Learners of Irish Scheme	IA	Gearóid de Faoite	01-Nov-02	31-Jul-03	21,303	21,303	×	×	×	×	×	21,303	0
16	Review and analysis of proposed grant aid of Cargo Apron at Knock Regional Airport	IA	DKM Consultants	01-Jan-03	28-Feb-03	17,818	17,818	×	×	×	×	×	17,818	×
17	Assessment of applications received under the funding scheme to support the role of Federations, Networks and Umbrella Bodies in the Community and Voluntary sector	IA	Goodbody Economic Consultants	01-Jan-03	31-Aug-03	34,182	34,182	×	×	×	×	×	34,182	×
18	Review of Area Development Management Ltd	PA	Indecon International	01-Jan-03	31-Oct-03	99,559	99,559	×	×	×	×	×	99,559	×
19	Mid-term evaluation of the LEADER+ Operational Programme (2003 review)	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates with Brendan Kearney & Associates	01-Jan-03	01-Dec-03	100,370	100,370	×	×	×	×	×	100,370	×
20	Assessment of applications received in respect of the funding scheme to provide training and supports in the Community and Voluntary Sector	IA	Colgan & Associates	01-Jan-03	31-Dec-03	25,168	25,168	×	×	×	×	×	25,168	×
21	Development and roll-out of a data collection software package (SPEAK) to projects funded under the Community Development Programme	ICT	Nexus Research	01-Jan-03	20-Apr-06	89,988	89,988	×	×	545	1,416	67,039	20,989	×
22	Economic appraisals of PEACE II applications	IA	Pricewaterhouse Coopers	01-Mar-03	31-Dec-03	15,668	15,668	×	×	×	×	3,134	12,534	×
23	Specialist advice re charity law	L	Oonagh Breen	18-Mar-03	10-Jul-03	6,500	6,500	×	×	×	×	×	6,500	×
24	Legal research and related assistance concerning charities regulation	L	Arthur Cox Solicitors	02-Apr-03	15-Dec-03	64,850	64,850	×	×	×	×	×	64,850	×
25	Study of the transport service requirements of a number of offshore islands	IA	Malachy Walsh & Partners with Raymond Burke Consulting	01-Jun-03	22-Apr-04	95,642	95,642	×	×	×	×	52,557	43,084	×
26	Development of the Department's ICT Strategy	ICT	Deloitte & Touche	01-Jun-03	30-Apr-04	101,882	101,882	×	×	×	×	23,466	78,416	×

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — *continued*

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT)	Paid to end October '08 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
27	Advisory services to the Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursements Board (ceased to exist on 4 Jan 2006)	GA	Lovegrove & Associates	01-May-03	28-Feb-06	114,708	114,708	×	6,534	13,794	34,485	36,663	23,232	×
28	Development of a Gaeflacht & Islands clients database system	ICT	Quest Computing Ltd	01-Jun-03	31-Dec-05	454,318	454,318	×	×	×	99,585	292,066	62,667	×
29	Review of Department's Internal Audit function	GA	IPA	01-Sep-03	31-Oct-03	10,890	10,890	×	×	×	×	×	10,890	×
30	Study of official supports for rural enterprise	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates	01-Sep-03	05-Nov-04	76,351	76,351	×	×	×	×	25,450	50,901	×
31	Evaluation of National Drugs Awareness Campaign	IA	NUI, Galway	01-Sep-03	31-Dec-05	66,550	66,550	×	×	×	24,200	42,350	0	×
32	Implementation of new HR system	ICT	Bearing Point	01-Oct-03	28-Feb-04	148,351	148,351	×	×	×	×	98,901	49,450	×
33	Implementation of new Travel and Subsistence module of finance system and interface from Corepay to finance system	ICT	Core Computing Ltd	01-Nov-03	30-Sep-04	29,959	29,959	×	×	×	×	29,959	0	×
34	Implementation of new financial management system	ICT	Software Resources Ltd	01-Nov-03	30-Sep-04	821,374	821,374	×	×	×	14,992	739,357	67,025	×
35	Advice and support in the areas of project management, quality assurance, business process redesign, user acceptance testing, change and risk management and post go-live support in relation to the implementation of a new financial management system in the Department	IA	Deloitte & Touche	01-Nov-03	31-Mar-05	288,838	288,838	×	×	×	47,062	201,402	40,374	×
36	Review of capital appraisal procedures in Department	IA	Bluett Conran & Co	01-Jan-04	15-Aug-04	6,050	6,050	×	×	×	×	6,050	×	×
37	Investigation into matters in Waterways Ireland	IA	Tom Carroll	01-Jan-04	30-Nov-04	22,020	22,020	×	×	×	×	22,020	×	×
38	Professional accounting service in February/March 2004	F	Deloitte & Touche	01-Feb-04	31-Mar-04	13,096	13,096	×	×	×	×	13,096	×	×
39	Review of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs	PA	Talbot Associates	10-Feb-04	31-Oct-04	47,878	47,878	×	×	×	×	47,878	×	×
40	Expenditure review of Local Drugs Task Forces	IA	Goodbody Economic Consultants	01-Mar-04	31-Jan-05	79,619	79,619	×	×	×	26,539	53,080	×	×
41	Advice on procurement and management aspects of ferry and air services for certain offshore islands	IA	Saltire Management Ltd	01-Mar-04	31-Oct-05	142,773	142,773	×	×	×	97,693	45,080	×	×



Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — *continued*

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT)	Paid to end October '08 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
42	Specialist legal research, public consultation and recommendations concerning charitable trust law reform	L	Law Reform Commission	01-Apr-04	28-Feb-05	35,000	35,000	×	×	×	10,000	25,000	×	×
43	Audit of Foras na Gaeilge (joint cross border assignment)	IA	Mazars	01-Apr-04	20-Dec-05	26,318	25,765	×	×	×	7,343	18,422	×	×
44	Linguistic study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht as a means of strengthening the linguistic development of the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking area and as a basis for a review of the official Gaeltacht areas	PA	NUI, Galway (Acadamh na hOllscoilae Gaeilge) with NIRSA, NUI Maynooth	01-Apr-04	10-Jul-08	606,883	606,824	56,600	×	×	165,067	220,089	×	×
45	Assessment of Cohesion Schemes and Integrated Target Plans for Social Inclusion from City/County Development Boards in 2004	IA	ERM (Environmental Resources Management)	01-Jun-04	30-Nov-04	18,004	18,004	×	×	×	545	17,459	×	×
46	Mid-term review of the National Drugs Strategy	IA	PA Consulting	01-Jun-04	30-Nov-04	74,431	74,431	×	×	×	4,268	70,164	×	×
47	Transfer of Job Analysis and Process Mapping skills to staff of the Department	GA	Irish Productivity Centre (IPC) / IPC Associates	01-Jun-04	01-Jul-06	22,900	17,575	×	×	×	3,800	6,650	×	×
48	Expenditure review on Gaeltacht Improvement schemes	IA	Éamon Ó Donnhaill	28-Jun-04	22-Oct-04	32,670	32,670	×	×	×	32,670	0	×	×
49	Research and development support to Comhairte na Tuaithe from 28/06/04 to 31/12/04	IA	Sinéad O'Connor	28-Jun-04	31-Dec-04	34,312	34,312	×	×	×	19,312	15,000	×	×
50	Report on the public consultation process regarding Charities regulation	L	Oonagh Breen	01-Jul-04	31-Jul-04	15,000	15,000	×	×	×	×	15,000	×	×
51	Core information on Irish Sectoral Regulators (Charities)	L	Dermot V Cahill	01-Jul-04	30-Nov-04	6,500	6,500	×	×	×	×	6,500	×	×
52	Provision of network services for LEADER+ Community Initiative	ICT	Tipperary Institute (Irish Leader Support Unit)	01-Jul-04	31-Dec-06	1,179,580	1,022,624	×	×	×	568,084	113,635	×	×
53	Economic appraisals of PEACE II Programme applications	IA	ASM Horwath	19-Aug-04	01-Feb-05	12,880	12,880	×	×	×	12,880	0	×	×
54	Evaluation of Coolamber Residential Rehabilitation Programme	IA	QES	01-Sep-04	30-Nov-04	13,425	13,425	×	×	×	4,475	8,950	×	×
55	Assistance with end of year (2004) payroll processes	F	Mazars	15-Nov-04	31-Dec-04	17,407	17,407	×	×	×	×	17,407	×	×

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — *continued*

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT)	Paid to end October '08 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
56	Review of 1999 Study re Inishbiggle cablecar	IA	Malachy Walsh & Partners with McClure Watters	10-Jan-05	10-Feb-05	€ 25,676	€ 25,676	€ x	€ x	€ x	€ 25,676	€ x	€ x	€ x
57	Research and development support to Comhairle na Tuaithe from 1/03/05 to 31/05/05	IA	Sinéad O'Connor	01-Mar-05	31-May-05	€ 17,500	€ 17,500	€ x	€ x	€ x	€ 17,500	€ x	€ x	€ x
58	Verification checks of once-off grants made under the 2004 programme of grants to locally-based community and voluntary organisations	IA	RSM Robson Rhodes	01-Mar-05	30-Nov-05	€ 34,788	€ 34,788	€ x	€ x	€ x	€ 34,788	€ x	€ x	€ x
59	Review of departmental expenditure on NUIG education projects in the Gaeltacht	IA	Éamon Ó Dómhnaill	01-Apr-05	31-Mar-06	€ 27,830	€ 27,830	€ x	€ x	€ 27,830	€ 0	€ x	€ x	€ x
60	Mid-term evaluation of the LEADER+ Operational Programme (2005 review)	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates with Brendan Kearney & Associates	01-May-05	30-Nov-05	€ 63,812	€ 63,812	€ x	€ x	€ x	€ 63,812	€ x	€ x	€ x
61	Evaluation of the Community Research Grants Scheme	IA	Kate Ennals & Associates	01-May-05	ongoing	€ 22,640	€ 18,710	€ 0	€ 0	€ 8,710	€ 10,000	€ x	€ x	€ x
62	Assessment of Cohesion Schemes, Integrated Target Plans and Volunteering Measures for Social Inclusion from City/County Development Boards in 2005	IA	ERM (Environmental Resources Management)	24-Jun-05	30-Nov-05	€ 30,250	€ 30,250	€ x	€ x	€ x	€ 30,250	€ x	€ x	€ x
63	Brief background report to assist with updating of the White Paper on Rural Development	IA	Brendan Kearney & Associates	20-Jun-05	31-Aug-05	€ 7,198	€ 7,198	€ x	€ x	€ x	€ 7,198	€ x	€ x	€ x
64	Review of the operation of the Rural Development Fund incorporating stand-alone evaluations of a number of projects supported by the Fund	IA	Brendan Kearney & Associates	17-Oct-05	30-Nov-05	€ 7,741	€ 7,741	€ x	€ x	€ 7,741	€ 0	€ x	€ x	€ x
65	Consultancy on the White Paper on a Framework for Supporting Voluntary Activity	PA	Indecon International	01-Jul-05	30-Apr-06	€ 94,234	€ 94,235	€ x	€ x	€ 94,235	€ 0	€ x	€ x	€ x
66	Evaluation of pilot cocaine projects	IA	Goodbody Economic Consultants	01-Jul-05	ongoing	€ 45,012	€ 33,759	€ 0	€ 11,253	€ 0	€ 22,506	€ x	€ x	€ x
67	Review of Ros an Mhírl ferry pontoon proposal	IA	Michael Punch & Partners	01-Sep-05	30-Apr-06	€ 27,903	€ 27,903	€ x	€ x	€ 27,903	€ 0	€ x	€ x	€ x
68	Risk Review of the Department's Dublin-based operations and business, both in the context of decentralisation and in terms of advancing and deepening risk management in the Department generally	GA	Deloitte & Touche	01-Oct-05	31-Mar-07	€ 41,455	€ 41,455	€ x	€ 13,818	€ 13,818	€ 13,818	€ x	€ x	€ x

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — *continued*

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT) '08 €	Paid to end October '08 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
69	Review of capital expenditure on the islands from 1998 to 2004	IA	Petrus Consulting	01-Oct-05	22-Oct-07	56,034	56,034	×	3,086	€ 52,948	0	×	×	€ ×
70	Assistance with end of year (2005) payroll processes and documentation of those processes	F	Mazars	20-Nov-05	28-Feb-06	15,000	14,750	×	×	€ 14,750	0	×	×	€ ×
71	Television Advertising Campaign to promote use of the Irish language	PR	Quinn McDonnell Pattison	20-Nov-05	30-Jun-06	202,293	202,293	×	×	€ 202,293	0	×	×	€ ×
72	Implementation of Cohesion Plans in relation to improving Local and Community Development structures and programmes	IA	ERM (Environmental Resources Management)	23-Apr-06	31-Dec-06	61,728	61,728	×	×	€ 61,728	×	×	×	€ ×
73	Feasibility study in relation to a roll-on/roll-off transport service to the Aran Islands	IA	Saltire Management Ltd	14-Jun-06	ongoing	72,552	72,552	0	17,336	€ 55,216	×	×	×	€ ×
74	Appraisal of projects at C&S Chill Ronáin and C&S an Chaladh Mhóir	IA	FGS / McClure Watters	21-Aug-06	ongoing	19,058	15,750	×	0	€ 15,750	×	×	×	€ ×
75	Evaluation of the RAPID Programme	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates	20-Jan-06	30-May-06	62,530	62,530	×	×	€ 62,530	×	×	×	€ ×
76	Verification checks of once-off grants made under the 2005 programme of grants to locally-based community and voluntary organisations	IA	RSM Robson Rhodes	01-Feb-06	27-Feb-06	25,168	25,168	×	×	€ 25,168	×	×	×	€ ×
77	Appraisal of project at C&S Inis Oírr	IA	FGS / McClure Watters	30-Oct-06	29-Aug-07	7,895	7,896	×	7,896	€ 0	×	×	×	€ ×
78	Evaluation of the White Paper Funding Schemes (Federation & Networks Funding Scheme, National Anti-Poverty Networks Funding Scheme, Training & Support Funding Scheme under the White Paper on Supporting Voluntary Activity)	IA	Goodbody Economic Consultants	01-Jul-06	27-Apr-07	77,924	77,924	×	77,924	€ 0	×	×	×	€ ×
79	Update of Island Airstrip Study	IA	Air Transport Group, Cranfield University	13-Sep-06	ongoing	14,000	0	0	0	€ 0	×	×	×	€ ×
80	Preparation of Strategic Outline Case re restoration of Ulster Canal	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates	01-Oct-06	31-Jul-07	48,958	48,958	×	40,246	€ 8,712	×	×	×	€ ×
81	Audits of subsidised transport services to the islands	F	Saltire Management Ltd	13-Nov-06	28-Feb-07	56,447	0	0	0	€ 0	×	×	×	€ ×
82	Evaluation of Local Drugs Task Force funded projects	IA	Horwath Consulting Ireland Ltd	30-Jan-07	ongoing	539,751	542,442	45,871	496,571	€ ×	×	×	×	€ ×
83	Follow-up joint review, by DCRGA and Dept of Arts & Culture (DCAL) (N Irl), to ensure that recommendations, made in original audit report of December 2005, have been implemented and that they are operating effectively	F	Mazars	05-Mar-07	01-Aug-07	10,890	10,890	×	10,890	€ ×	×	×	×	€ ×

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — *continued*

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT)	Paid to end October '08 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
84	Value for Money Review of Local Development Social Inclusion Programme	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates	15-Mar-07	30-Sep-07	96,135	96,134	16,183	79,951	×	×	×	×	×
85	Provision of assistance in relation to guidance on the governance and the selection and recruitment of chief executives and other key personnel in the new unified structures	IA	A&L Goodbody	01-Feb-07	30-May-07	12,190	12,190	×	12,190	×	×	×	×	×
86	Chairing of expert group established to examine and make recommendations on the legal issues of land access for recreational use and provision of report to Minister on same	IA	Alexander Owens SC	20-Feb-07	30-Apr-07	25,894	25,894	×	25,894	×	×	×	×	×
87	Assessment of Ferry Service Tenders	IA	Eihos Multimedia Ltd	27-Jun-07	ongoing	12,197	12,196	6,679	5,517	×	×	×	×	×
88	Professional advice in relation to development of Guidelines and model Memorandum and Articles of Association for companies involved in the Cohesion Process Phases 1 & 2	IA	Arthur Cox Solicitors	11-Jul-07	31-Oct-07	83,755	76,678	0	76,678	×	×	×	×	×
89	Assessment of Tenders	IA	Saltire Management Ltd	26-Sep-07	30-Nov-07	7,000	6,239	0	6,239	×	×	×	×	×
90	Phase 3 Review of Corporate Governance	IA	Arthur Cox Solicitors & Oonagh Breen	08-Oct-07	ongoing	82,280	103,101	103,101	0	×	×	×	×	×
91	Professional advice in relation to development of Guidelines and model Memorandum and Articles of Association for companies involved in the Cohesion Process Phases 1 & 2	IA	Dr Oonagh Breen	01-Jul-07	31-Dec-07	24,500	24,500	×	24,500	×	×	×	×	×
92	Evaluation of RDP Business Plans	IA	Fitzpatrick Associates	29-Nov-07	31-Dec-08	124,055	41,352	0	41,352	×	×	×	×	×
93	Value for Money Review of the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund	IA	Horwath Consulting Ireland Ltd	06-Dec-07	30-Apr-08	228,007	238,007	181,530	56,477	×	×	×	×	×
94	Audit of the Assessment Process for a Funding Scheme for National Community & Voluntary Organisations	IA	Goodbody Stockbrokers	01-Apr-08	ongoing	9,619	0	0	×	×	×	×	×	×

Departmental Management Consultancies of €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) and above — continued

ID	Consultancy Description	Category (refer to footnote)	Consultant	Start Date	End Date	Estimated Cost (incl VAT) '08 €	Paid to end October '08 €	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002 – from 18-Jun
95	Quantifying the economic value of the non-profit sector in Ireland	GA	Centre for Nonprofit Management	01-Apr-08	ongoing	17,000	0	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
96	Professional Consultancy Assistance to North/South Peace II and Interreg IV Programmes	F	Robert Browne	25-Feb-08	11-Apr-08	14,376	14,376	14,376	€	€	€	€	€	€
97	Advise in relation to the formulation of a 20 year Strategic Plan for the Irish Language	IA	Frontar DCU	08-Feb-08	08-Feb-09	299,281	119,712	119,712	€	€	€	€	€	€
98	The provision of HR Services to Local Development Companies — Cohesion Process	IA	Mazars	01-Jun-08	31-Dec-08	85,622	0	0	€	€	€	€	€	€
99	To provide technical advice and guidance in relation to the procurement process	IA	Achilles Procurement Services Ltd	01-May-08	ongoing	9,287	3,470	3,470	€	€	€	€	€	€
100	To assist with the tender process for the provision of Management Services in respect of airstrips located off the west and north east coast of Ireland	IA	Dr George Williams	01-Oct-08	28-Feb-09	33,880	0	0	€	€	€	€	€	€
101	Support to the Steering Group responsible for developing a new National Drugs Strategy for Ireland to cover the period 2009-2016	PA	PA Consulting	07-Apr-08	08-Aug-08	183,582	104,203	104,203	€	€	€	€	€	€
						9,300,637	8,580,639	651,724	1,014,351	1,233,629	1,427,229	2,405,857	1,297,988	549,860

Notes accompanying the List of Management Consultancies:

1 The List includes management and IT-related consultancies costing more than €6,050 (€5,000 plus VAT) since the Department was established on 18 June 2002.

2 Research, public relations and legal advice contracts commissioned by or on behalf of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs are not included.

3 Consultancy advice/assistance contracts commissioned by or on behalf of the Dormant Accounts Board are not included. The Board was established on a statutory basis in early 2006.

4 Construction-related consultancies are not included.

5 Engagements in respect of training and financial matters of a routine nature are not included.

6 Where the Start Date is shown as 18 June 2002, it signifies that the consultancy was entered into prior to the establishment of the Department and the expenditure recorded is that incurred since 18 June 2002.

Categories of Consultants:

F — Finance;

GA — General Admin;

IA — Independent assessment;

ICT — Information and Comm Tech;

L — Legal advice/assistance;

PA — Policy Advice;

T — Training and training-related contracts;

PR — Public Rel / Publicity.

### Community Development.

405. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs when the local action groups under the Leader programme will be launched; the budget the Tipperary LAG will have; the programmes it will be expected to deliver; and the number of staff that will be employed there. [42608/08]

**Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív):** The Deputy will be aware that I announced the results of the process for selecting Local Action Groups to deliver the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme and the respective funding allocations for the successful Groups on the 4th November last. I hope to be in a position to sign contracts with the Groups in the near future. However, contracts will only be signed with those Groups who are fully cohesed and who have completed the transfer of Rural Social Scheme participants from the old LEADER companies.

With regard to the delivery of the LEADER elements of the Programme in Tipperary, two LEADER Groups have been selected to deliver the Programme, one each for North & South Tipperary. The Groups selected are North Tipperary LEADER Partnership Company and South Tipperary Local Development Company and they have been awarded allocations of €9,708,008 & €11,106,187 respectively under Axes 3 & 4 of the Programme.

Funding will be available for project activity under the following measures of the Programme:

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities
- Support for business creation and development
- Encouragement of tourism activities
- Basic services for the economy and rural population
- Village renewal and development
- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage
- Training
- Implementing co-operation projects

The Groups in question are private companies limited by guarantee. Although the companies will be contracted to deliver a number of programmes on behalf of my Department, my Department has no role to play in the management and staffing of the company.

### Departmental Expenditure.

406. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42620/08]

**Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív):** My Department made payments totalling €387,640 in 2007 to 185 claimants in respect of mileage claimed on foot of official travel. The Deputy will appreciate the constraints attached to a Question put down in “details supplied” format and accordingly I am arranging for the relevant information to be sent directly to him.



### Community Development.

407. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the percentage of the budgets of the Leader and Partnership programmes spent on administration; if he has plans to rationalise these costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42665/08]

**Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív):** The percentage of LEADER funding allocated for administration is of the order of 20% and, while firm data is not to hand, my understanding would be that costs for Partnerships generally would not be less than that amount. As the Deputy will be aware, my Department has over the past number of years been pursuing a process of cohesion of local delivery structures in order to simplify and enhance the effectiveness of the delivery of a range of local development programmes. I am eager that the implementation of the revised arrangements emerging from this process will contribute to the achievement of administrative efficiencies by LEADER and Partnership companies.

### Ministerial Staff.

408. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office set out in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42899/08]

**Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív):** The details requested by the Deputy in relation to my private office are set out below. For completeness, I have also included details in relation to my Special Advisor and Media Advisor in the information provided in respect of my private office.

Number of staff in Private Office	Annual Salary	Expenses to date in 2008
11	€533,478	€14,351

The details requested by the Deputy in relation to my constituency office are set out in the following table.

Number of staff in Constituency Office	Annual Salary	Expenses to date in 2008
5	€214,504	€75

### Social Welfare Benefits.

409. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if funding is available, including humanitarian funding, for residents who were affected by the flooding in August 2008; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42137/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The supplementary welfare allowance (SWA) scheme, which is administered by the community welfare division of the Health Service Executive (HSE), is designed to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qualify for payment under other State schemes. Under the legislation governing the scheme, the HSE may make a single payment to meet an exceptional need to people on social welfare or health service executive payments. This is a once-off payment to meet an unforeseen or special need that cannot be met from a person’s basic income.

[Deputy Mary Hanafin.]

Assistance in the form of an Urgent Needs Payment (UNP) can be also made to people who would not normally be entitled to SWA, to assist, for example in cases of flood damage with immediate needs, such as food, clothing, fuel, household goods and shelter. Assistance can be provided to people affected in cash or in kind. There is no automatic entitlement to these payments. Each application is determined on the particular circumstances of the case. In assessing income, consideration is given as to whether a person is in receipt of a social welfare or health service executive payment or to the gross household income with allowance made as appropriate under normal SWA means assessments.

Over the past few months, flooding has been experienced in a number of areas of the country. The Department's role in response to the recent flooding primarily involves supporting the community welfare service in the provision of ENP and UNP funding in the short term and other supports where applicable to cater for the long term effects of the flooding. Any support given relates to damage to a person's home or loss of essential items. It does not extend to business or commercial losses. Over €80,000 has been paid out in response to flooding incidents this year to date. Local community welfare officers are available to provide assistance on an individual basis where that is warranted. Any person experiencing hardship as a result of the recent flooding should contact their local community welfare officer in the first instance.

### **Social Insurance.**

410. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs her views on a matter (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42193/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** Permanent and pensionable employees in the public service — other than those who were recruited after 6 April, 1995, registered doctors and dentists employed in the Civil Service, Gardaí, commissioned army officers and members of the Army Nursing Service — are liable to pay social insurance contributions at the modified PRSI Class D rate during their working lives. While these contributors are not eligible for social insurance-based pensions on retirement, they can accrue entitlement to the widow's/widower's (contributory) pension, the guardian's payment (contributory), occupational injuries benefits, bereavement grant and carer's benefit. This reflects the reduced 0.90% PRSI rate that they paid as permanent and pensionable workers and the fact that their former employers cover them directly for occupational pensions.

Holders of occupational pensions are required, under statutory provisions set down by the Department of Health and Children, to pay a health contribution of 2.00% on all income exceeding €500 per week and to pay an additional contribution of 0.50% on all income exceeding €1,925 per week. The Department of Social and Family Affairs collects this contribution on behalf of the Department of Health and Children and nominally denotes the contribution as PRSI Class K.

Health contributions are channelled into the funding of national health services by the Department of Health and Children and are consistent with the solidarity principle of the PRSI system. Entitlement to health services in Ireland is not related to these contributions but is primarily based on residency and means. Health contributions do not in any way relate to private health insurance which is used to pay for private care in hospital or from various health professionals in hospitals or in their practices.

### **Social Welfare Benefits.**

411. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the reason a person (details supplied) in County Clare has been refused payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42245/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** All applicants regardless of nationality, from 1 May 2004, are required to be habitually resident in the State in order to qualify for supplementary welfare allowance. The Executive has advised that the person concerned was refused supplementary welfare allowance on the grounds that he is regarded as not being habitually resident in the State. If the person is not satisfied with the decision of the community welfare officer it is open to him to appeal against the decision to the Executive's designated Appeals Office.

412. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she will intercede in a case of a person (details supplied) in County Sligo who has had their mortgage interest supplement taken away in full after six weeks in view of the fact that the applicant is still on sick benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42606/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The supplementary welfare allowance scheme, which includes mortgage interest supplement, is administered on behalf of the department by the community welfare division of the Health Service Executive. Mortgage interest supplement provides short-term income support to eligible people who are unable to meet their mortgage interest repayments in respect of a house which is their sole place of residence. The supplement assists with the interest portion of the mortgage repayments only. Mortgage interest supplement is not payable where a person or their spouse/partner is in full time employment.

The Executive has advised that the person concerned was initially refused mortgage interest supplement by the community welfare officer. He successfully appealed this decision. The Executive issued payment of €1,711.50 to him on 3 November 2008. The Executive has further advised that his partner has commenced full time employment and consequently he no longer qualifies for mortgage interest supplement. If he is not satisfied with the decision of the community welfare officer it is open to him to appeal against the decision to the Executive's designated Appeals Office.

#### **Social Welfare Code.**

413. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs her views on allowing free schemes to be retained by persons on pension, when a son or daughter who is still in full-time education turns 23 years of age. [42186/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The household benefits package includes the electricity and gas allowance, telephone allowance and free television licence schemes. People aged 70 or over and people in receipt of carer's allowance qualify for the package regardless of household composition. In order to qualify for household benefits people aged under 70 years of age must be in receipt of a qualifying payment or satisfy a means test and be living alone or only with excepted people. Excepted people for the purposes of the scheme include dependent children under age 18 or under age 22 and in full-time education. I have no plans to extend the criteria for the household benefits. Further extensions to the schemes could only be considered in a budgetary context and taking account of the financial and other needs of those not covered by the existing arrangements.

#### **Social Insurance.**

414. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of PPS numbers issued for each of the years 1997 to 2007, and for each month in 2008. [42209/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The Department assumed sole responsibility for the registration of customers and subsequent allocation of PPS Numbers

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in June 2000. Prior to this, the issue of PPS Numbers was a shared function between the Department and the Revenue Commissioners. The annual total of PPS Numbers issued by the Department (i.e. from 19 June 2000) is as follows:

2000 (from 19-Jun)	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
102,756	221,956	215,536	191,565	219,954	271,202	311,850	305,610

The monthly total of PPS numbers issued in 2008 is as follows:

2008

Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
24,086	22,086	18,141	21,722	20,105	22,789	26,125	19,503	21,912	21,812	218,281

### Departmental Bodies.

415. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number and names of organisations or agencies under her auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42225/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** In Budget, 2009 the Government announced proposals in relation to the future of two of the agencies under the aegis of the Department — the Combat Poverty Agency and the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS). The Combat Poverty Agency is to be integrated with the Office for Social Inclusion within the Department of Social and Family Affairs. The decision on integration was informed by the findings of a review of the Combat Poverty Agency undertaken on foot of a Government Decision of 6th of June 2007. The Department is working with the Board of the Agency in finalising a plan for the smooth integration of both bodies. This will include meetings and workshops with the staff involved before the plan is finalised and subsequently in the course of its implementation.

The integration of the Combat Poverty Agency and the Office for Social Inclusion will create a stronger, more cohesive and better resourced body to support the Government's anti poverty and social inclusion strategies, including engagement with the social partners and other stakeholders. The quality and extent of the support provided will be much greater than each body can provide separately at present. Integration will represent much better value for money not only for taxpayers but also for those experiencing poverty and social exclusion in terms of the improved overall support which can now be provided. There will be additional direct savings in terms of accommodation and support services. The extent and timing of these savings will be identified and dealt with as part of the implementation process which is under way.

The MABS is the main Government funded service which provides assistance to people who are over-indebted and need help and advice in coping with debt problems. It is widely recognised as providing a high quality, confidential, personal service to the public that makes a significant difference to the lives of many people. There are 53 independent MABS companies with voluntary boards of management and over 240 money advice staff operating the local services throughout the country.

However, it has been recognised for some time that the service needs a proper legislative basis and structure. The Programme for Government envisaged that such a new structure for

the MABS should provide strong national leadership and at the same time maximise the current local and voluntary involvement in the service.

The Government decided that these objectives can best be achieved by placing the MABS with the Citizens Information Board. It is not envisaged that significant savings or additional costs will arise on the assignment of the provision of the MABS to the Citizens Information Board. Rather the intention is, in line with the Programme for Government, to provide strong management support to the local voluntary companies in the provision of a high quality service to meet the needs of people encountering debt difficulties in today's society. However cost efficiencies will be realised in the medium to longer term through the integration of support services such as administration and IT. The legislative provisions to give effect to the proposed changes are being provided for in the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2008.

### **Social Welfare Code.**

416. **Deputy Seán Fleming** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of issues that can be taken into consideration for a person to be granted a payment under the occupational injury benefit scheme; the way these matters are assessed and by whom; if she will outline the medical qualification of assessors; if reports from the applicant's medical consultants are given full or partial weight in this process; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42282/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** Disablement benefit, payable under the Occupational Injuries Scheme, is a compensation payment for loss of faculty arising out of or in the course of insurable employment. The legislation governing the Occupational Injuries Scheme provides entitlement to benefit for persons suffering from loss of faculty arising out of an accident at work or from certain prescribed diseases which are listed in the legislation and where that person has contracted that disease in the course of their employment.

Where a person has contracted one of the diseases listed in the legislation, benefits are payable if he/she was employed in an occupation which is specifically prescribed in relation to that disease. In addition, benefits may be payable if the claimant can show that the disease was contracted through an employment not specifically prescribed in relation to that disease.

Employment under a contract of service is insurable for occupational injuries benefit under the Social Welfare Acts. People who are unable to work due to an accident arising from their employment may be entitled to occupational injury benefit for the first 26 weeks of their claim. If their incapacity extends beyond that period they may receive illness benefit or invalidity pension, subject to meeting the qualifying conditions for these payments.

A person may be entitled to Disablement Benefit if he/she suffers a loss of physical or mental faculty as a result of an accident at work or a disease prescribed in legislation that they contracted at work. Medical assessments are undertaken in all such cases to determine the degree of disablement, which is calculated by comparison to the state of health of the applicant with a person of the same age and gender. The degree of disablement is expressed as a percentage of loss of faculty and the compensation payable varies accordingly. Loss of faculty may be determined within a range of less than 1% to 100%, depending on the severity of the condition. A person must be assessed as having a minimum of 20% loss of faculty before he/she may be considered as being incapable of work due to his/her disablement. A person in receipt of disablement benefit may at any time request a review of his/her award.

The Department's medical staff consists of a Chief Medical Adviser and 20 Medical Assessors who carry out the medical assessments. Medical Assessors are fully qualified and experienced practitioners who provide a second opinion to that of the person's own doctor for the guidance of the Department's Decid-



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ing Officers. Their assessments conform to the ethical conduct and behaviour guidelines of the Medical Council.

Medical Assessors are required to be medical practitioners who are on the general register of medical practitioners while holding an appointment. They must have at least six years satisfactory experience in the practice of medicine since registration. Many of the Medical Assessors have specialist post-graduate qualifications and all have received special training in Human Disability Evaluation. The Medical Assessors have an ongoing commitment to continuing medical education to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced.

When conducting an assessment the Medical Assessor does not dispute the existence of the certified cause of incapacity but rather s/he assesses the degree to which the loss of function resulting from the disease or injury affects the person's ability to perform normal day to day functions and how it impacts on their quality of life.

In carrying out assessments the Medical Assessor reviews any medical evidence available, e.g. GP/specialist reports, results of investigations, X rays, MRI's, etc and expresses an opinion based on findings. All Medical Consultants Reports are given full consideration when assessing applicants for Occupational Injury Benefit/Disablement Benefit purposes. Occasionally, in certain other cases where complex illness is involved, the services of a specialist may be employed to examine the patient and to assess an impairment rating. If a claimant is dissatisfied with his/her disablement benefit award he/she may seek to have it reviewed by a senior officer or appeal it to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office.

417. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, further to Parliamentary Question No. 1357 of 24 September 2008, the reason a Minister may not apply backdating to a non-statutory scheme such as the free fuel allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42283/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The national fuel allowance scheme assists householders on long-term social welfare or health service executive (HSE) payments with meeting the cost of their heating needs during the winter season. The allowance represents a contribution towards a person's normal heating expenses. It is not intended to meet those costs in full.

Fuel allowance is paid to eligible people from the date of application. Backdating of payment may be made where there are extenuating circumstances in individual cases. It is open to any individual to request a review of entitlement to fuel allowance from a date prior to the date of application, outlining the reasons for the late application and indicating why payment should be backdated, for example, incapacity on the part of the applicant, wrong information given by the Department or financial hardship. The backdating of payment of fuel allowance in all cases of late claims, regardless of the circumstances for the delay in claiming, could give rise to significant costs and make the forecasting of expenditure on the fuel scheme difficult to predict. Any such change to the scheme would have to be considered in a budgetary context.

#### **Social Welfare Benefits.**

418. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the status of the exceptional needs payment application by a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24. [42286/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** Under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme, which is administered on behalf of the Department by the com-



munity welfare division of the Health Service Executive, an exceptional needs payment (ENP) may be made to help meet an essential, once-off cost which the applicant is unable to meet out of his/her own resources. There is no automatic entitlement to this payment. Each application is determined by the Executive based on the particular circumstances of the case.

The Executive has advised that it has no record of an application for an exceptional needs payment from the person concerned. The Executive has further advised that the person concerned should contact the community welfare officer at his local health centre if he wishes to discuss any entitlements he may have under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme.

419. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be approved and granted a State non-contributory pension. [42321/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** An application for State Pension (Non-contributory) was received from the person concerned on 9th October 2008 and was referred to the local Social Welfare Inspector for investigation. On receipt of the inspector's report a decision will be made on her claim and she will be notified of the outcome.

420. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the extent of the State's liability in respect of the backdating of disability payments arising from the decision of the High Court on 17 November 2008 to award a patient of a psychiatric hospital €60,000 in settlement of their case against the Health Service Executive and herself; the number of claimants affected by this decision; the way she will facilitate claims; the location where affected claimants can get information on making claims; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42342/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The case referred to by the Deputy was settled without prejudice for a sum significantly less than the plaintiff sought and without any admission of liability on the part of the State. In so far as this Department is concerned, the plaintiffs sought a declaration as to the Constitutionality of the legislative measures introduced by this Department in 1999 governing entitlement to the Disability Allowance. Since no admission has been made by the Department in this regard, the question of potential liability does not arise from this case.

421. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if there are further supports available, in addition to the fuel allowance and household benefits package, for an elderly couple to meet the cost of heating their home where one of the spouses is suffering from a terminal illness. [42350/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The Department's role is to assist social welfare recipients with heating costs, both through basic payments, fuel allowance and the household benefits package of electricity and gas allowances. These schemes have been improved significantly in recent years. In addition, if a recipient of a social welfare or Health Service Executive (HSE) payment has exceptional heating costs due to ill health, infirmity or a medical condition which s/he is unable to meet out of household income, the person may apply for a special heating supplement or an exceptional needs payment under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme. The people concerned should contact the Community Welfare Officer in the local health centre, in order that entitlement to additional assistance to meet heating expenses can be examined.

### Social Welfare Code.

422. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the payments that are made to those in receipt of social welfare in respect of a bank holiday. [42395/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** Under the Organisation of Working Time Act for each of the nine public holidays in a year an employee is entitled to either: (a) a paid day off on the holiday; (b) a paid day off within a month; (c) an extra day's annual leave; (d) an extra day's pay, as the employer may decide. If the public holiday falls on a day on which the employee normally works, the employee is entitled to a paid day off in lieu of the day. If the public holiday falls on a day on which the employee does not normally work, the employee is entitled to one fifth of his/her normal weekly wage in lieu of the day or to either (b) or (c) above as the employer may decide. If the employee is asked to work on the public holiday, the employee is entitled to (b) (c) or (d) above as the employer may decide.

Full-time employees are paid in respect of public holidays, there is no service requirement. Part time employees qualify for public holidays entitlement provided they have worked at least 40 hours during the five weeks ending on the day before a public holiday. If a part-time employee is claiming a jobseeker's payment for a period which includes a bank holiday for which they are not entitled to a payment from their employer, then they will be entitled to jobseeker's benefit or allowance for that day. If the Deputy wishes to supply me with details of the person concerned I will be happy to have their jobseeker's entitlement examined.

423. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the financial implications of a voluntary redundancy for a person; the way such a payment affects their unemployment assistance payment; if there is a threshold on the amount of redundancy that is taken into account; if this payment is treated as means; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42568/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** A person claiming jobseeker's benefit who is under age 55 will be disqualified for receiving benefit for up to nine weeks if they receive a redundancy payment of €50,000 or more. The period of disqualification applies on a sliding scale based on the amount of the redundancy payment as follows:

Amount of Redundancy Period of Disqualification

€	Weeks
50,000.00 – 55,000	1
55,000.01 – 60,000	2
60,000.01 – 65,000	3
65,000.01 – 70,000	4
70,000.01 – 75,000	5
75,000.01 – 80,000	6
80,000.01 – 85,000	7
85,000.01 – 90,000	8
90,000.01 and over	9

If the person intends to use some of the redundancy payment to clear or reduce household debts which have accrued, this will reduce the amount taken into account in determining the period of disqualification. Similarly account will be taken of any expenditure the customer intends to incur in relation to any exceptional needs, for example building costs associated with making the home more accessible to a disabled family member.

In relation to jobseeker's allowance, redundancy payments are assessed as means in the same manner as any savings or investments as follows:

- the first €20,000 is disregarded
- amounts between €20,000 and €30,000 are assessed at €1 per €1,000
- amounts between €30,000 and €40,000 are assessed at €2 per €1,000 and
- any amount over €40,000 is assessed at €4 per €1,000

The weekly rate of jobseeker's allowance is reduced by the amount of the weekly means assessed against the customer.

### **Consultancy Contracts.**

424. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the amount of expenditure on consultancy by her Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by her Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by her Department in these years and for the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42587/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The Department has a major programme of business, organisational and technological change under way to enable it to modernise the services which it provides to its customers. Ensuring that we maximise the potential of Information Technology is a significant aspect of this.

Major IT projects require a high level of specialised technical expertise that often cannot be found within the department. For this reason, the Department has a specific budget provision for IT External Service provision. In 2007, expenditure on this area amounted to €7,084,611. IT External Service Provision is defined by the Department of Finance guidelines as where a person or organisation provides the services or the human/physical resources to meet the ICT needs of a Department. These requirements could include software development, network installation and management; infrastructure management, data centre hosting, managed services etc.

Consultancy is defined in the Department of Finance guidelines as where a person or organisation provides intellectual or knowledge based services (e.g. expert analysis and advice) through delivering reports, studies, assessments, recommendations, proposals etc that contribute to decision or policy making. In 2007, expenditure on consultancy services amounted to €1,013,604. For example, the Department has used external consultancy expertise to support it in undertaking the review of the Social Insurance Fund and the equality review of the Social Welfare Code.

This distinction in the Estimates between IT external service provision and consultancy services was introduced in 2007 to provide greater public clarity as to the nature of expenditure on external IT services and general advice and policy work. In 2006, the total expenditure on both areas was €8,728,000. The Deputy will be interested to know that the 2009 Estimates provision for consultancy services represents a 67% decrease on the 2008 allocation.

The names of the companies awarded contracts for IT External Services Provision and Consultancy Services in 2006 and 2007 are listed in Appendix 1.

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## APPENDIX 1

Companies Engaged in 2006	Companies Engaged in 2007
Accenture	Accenture
Accourt Ltd	Bearing Point Ireland Ltd
Alldocs Limited	Conal Devine
Bayberry Consulting Limited	Core International
BearingPoint Ireland	Data Conversion
Collette Gaughran	Deloitte & Touche
Core International	Dr. Muireann Cullen
Data Conversion	Edmond Cussen
Deloitte & Touche	Fujitsu Services CFS Ireland
ESRI	Goodbody Economic Consultants
Fujitsu Services CFS Ireland	Hewlett Packard
Goodbody Economic Consultants	Informatica Ireland Ltd.
Horwath Consulting Ireland Limited	Mel Cousins & Associates
Hewlett-Packard	Mercer Human Resource Consulting
IBM	Naked Objects Group Ltd
Informatica Ireland Ltd	National Council for the Blind
Insight Multimedia	OECD
IQ Content Ltd	Open Interface Ltd
Irish Sign Link	Polaris HR Ltd
Waterford Area Partnership	Price Waterhouse Cooper
Mel Cousins	Prospectus Ltd
Mel Cousins & Prof. Gerry Whyte	Red Dog
Mercer Human Resource Consulting	Steve Wylie
NTTX Limited	Technical Guidance Ltd
Open Interface Ltd.	UCD Bursar's Office
PA Consulting	
Petrus Consulting	
Polaris HR Ltd. 2005	
Policy Institute	
Price Waterhouse Coopers	
Propylon	
Prospectus Consultants	
Qualbase Ltd.	
Red Dog Design	
REHAB Care	
RITS	
Similarity Systems	
SoftLaw Corporation (Europe) Ltd	
Technical Guidance Ltd	

**Social Welfare Appeals.**

425. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the entitlements a person is eligible for whilst their appeal for carer's allowance is being processed and as the carer's benefit has been withdrawn. [42609/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The supplementary welfare allowance scheme (SWA) which is administered on behalf of the Department by the community welfare division of the Health Service Executive (HSE), is designed to provide immediate and flexible assistance for those in need who do not qualify for payment under other State scheme. A number of categories are specifically excluded from receiving SWA i.e. people in full-time work, people in full-time education and people involved in trade disputes.

Apart from the excluded categories, anyone in the State who satisfies a habitual residency condition and a means test, has registered for employment, unless they have a physical or mental disability, and can prove unemployment, or anyone who is awaiting the outcome of a claim or an appeal for a primary social welfare or HSE payment, may qualify for SWA. In addition, a person can also apply for payments such as rent supplement, diet supplement and exceptional needs payments under the SWA scheme.

In order to claim any payment under the supplementary welfare allowance scheme a person should contact their local community welfare officer (CWO). While there is no automatic entitlement to supplementary welfare allowance, pending the receipt of another social welfare payment, the CWO may award SWA in any case where the circumstances of the case so warrant.

#### **Social Welfare Benefits.**

426. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs if she will ensure that a person (details supplied) in Dublin 16 will receive the carer's allowance as a matter of urgency in view of the urgent family crisis resulting from an acutely ill child forcing the mother to give up work and the inability of the family to meet their mortgage repayments in these circumstances; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42610/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The person concerned applied for Carer's Allowance on 29 August 2008. Her application was refused on 28 October 2008 on the grounds that her means exceed the statutory limit for receipt of Carer's Allowance. She is assessed with means of €280.59 per week derived from income from her spouse's insurable employment. She was notified of this decision, the reasons for it and of her right of appeal to the Independent Welfare Appeal's Office.

On 11 November 2008 she appealed this decision and an appeal was opened in the case. Her file will be submitted to the Appeal's Office this week. Under Social Welfare legislation, decisions in relation to claims must be made by Deciding Officers and Appeals Officers. These Officers are statutorily appointed and I have no role in regard to making such decisions.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

427. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the estimated spend on mileage allowances for her Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42629/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** Details of mileage are not recorded separately but are included in the overall Travel and Subsistence subhead. There is a significant level of travel expenditure in the Department's budget, arising from the dispersed nature of our services, and inter alia, the fact that a considerable level of investigative work must be carried out in the course of delivering the Department's services. The total amount of home travel paid out by the Department in 2007 was €2,314,400. This amount includes car mileage, bus/train fares and other miscellaneous travel costs.

### Social Welfare Benefits.

428. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of people in receipt of rent supplement in Waterford city and county; the number of people in Waterford city and county in receipt of rent supplement in each of the years 2003 to 2007. [42658/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** There are 2,040 people in receipt of rent supplement in Waterford City and County at present. The tabular statement shows the number of recipients of rent supplement in Waterford city and county from 2003 to date. Number of Recipients of Rent Supplement in Waterford (city and county).

Year	Recipients
2003	1,563
2004	1,578
2005	1,804
2006	1,737
2007	1,776
2008*	2,040

\*At 14 Nov. 2008.

429. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs when a one parent family allowance payment to a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be reviewed; and when they will receive arrears of their payment. [42675/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The person concerned is in receipt of a one-parent family payment since 18 May 2006. Her current weekly rate of payment is €226.80, based on a means assessment of €85.00 per week, calculated at the time of her application. At the request of the person concerned her entitlement is currently being reviewed. When the report of a Social Welfare Inspector is completed a decision will be made as soon as possible and she will be notified of the outcome. Under Social Welfare legislation decisions in relation to claims must be made by Deciding Officers and Appeals Officers. These officers are statutorily appointed and I have no role in regard to making such decisions.

### Social Welfare Appeals.

430. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the position regarding an appeal for a person (details supplied) in County Kildare for rent allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42710/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** Rent supplement is administered on behalf of the Department by the Health Service Executive (HSE), as part of the supplementary welfare allowance scheme. The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term income support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation, whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source.

The person concerned is in receipt of rent supplement but is not satisfied with the amount of the supplement. The Executive has advised that she has lodged an appeal against the decision on her entitlement to rent supplement to the Executive's designated Appeals Officer who will contact her directly when a decision has been made on her appeal.



### Social Welfare Benefits.

431. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the average time a person has to wait before their application for jobseeker's allowance or benefit is dealt with; if in view of the significant period of time that people have to wait to receive their due benefits, she will take steps to have additional staff provided in her Department to deal with same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42719/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** The Department is committed to providing a quality customer service to all its customers. This includes ensuring that applications are processed and that decisions on entitlement are issued as expeditiously as possible having regard to the eligibility conditions which apply. These conditions vary between the two jobseeker schemes and involve, among other things, the need to establish the person's social insurance record, establish the person's identity or their place of habitual residence and to assess means where appropriate. In some cases delays arise where the person fails to supply all pertinent information in support of his/her application.

For claims processed in October 2008 the average processing time was 3 weeks for Jobseekers Benefit and 5 weeks for Jobseekers Allowance. Because of the increased number of claims for jobseeker payments the Department undertook a review of staffing levels in Local Offices in May and June of this year. This resulted in the assignment of an additional 31 staff to some 15 Local Offices. Following on the most recent review of the staffing levels in Local Offices, an additional 115 staff are to be assigned to some 48 offices.

### Social Insurance.

432. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the reason PRSI credit is not available to self-employed persons on the same basis as it is to employed persons; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42746/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** PRSI for self-employed people was introduced in 1988. Class S contributions were then introduced in order to provide cover for a limited range of benefits and pensions for self-employed persons, as follows:

- Widow's or Widower's (Contributory) Pension;
- Guardian's Payment (Contributory);
- State Pension (Contributory);
- Maternity Benefit;
- Adoptive Benefit, and
- Bereavement Grant.

The range of benefits and pensions to which different groups of workers may establish entitlement reflects the risks associated with the nature of their work. This in turn is reflected in the rate of contribution payable. Self-employed persons are liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 3% and are consequently eligible for a narrower range of benefits than general employees who, together with their employers, pay a total social insurance contribution of 14.05%, excluding levies, under the full-rate PRSI Class A.

Self-employed workers are not insured against short-term benefits such as illness and jobseeker's payments — these are only available to persons covered by PRSI Classes A, E, H and P. Contributors who do not qualify for an insurance-based benefit may establish entitlement

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to assistance-based payments by satisfying certain conditions — including a means test. Recipients of assistance-based payments, such as Jobseeker's Allowance and Disability Allowance, are awarded 'ordinary employment' credits.

There are no plans to introduce specific credited contributions for self-employed workers. Any such measure would have significant financial implications and would have to be considered within a budgetary context. Consideration would also have to be given to an appropriate increase in the rate of the PRSI Class S contribution.

### **Ministerial Staff.**

433. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of persons employed in her private office and her constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42908/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** There are currently 8 staff in the private office and 5 staff in the constituency office, as detailed below. Only 3 of these, the Policy Adviser, Personal Assistant and Personal Secretary, are non-civil servants. In total, including the Press Officer mentioned below, there are 15 staff between both offices. There are no staff assigned to a Minister of State in the Department.

The Deputies may be interested to know that, as detailed below, there were more than twice as many Ministerial staff in this Department in 1996. At that time, there were 17 staff in the Minister De Rossa's office, 3 of whom were non-civil servants. Minister De Rossa also had a policy unit with 6 staff, 5 of whom were non-civil servants. No such unit has been put in place by any Minister since 1997. The Department also had a Minister of State in 1996, Bernard Durkan TD, who had 13 staff. The total staffing, therefore, was 36 in 1996, compared with 15 now. The total number of non-civil servants was 12 at that time, compared with 2 at present. The details of the current staffing and that in 1996 are below.

#### **CURRENT STAFFING**

*Minister's Office —*

*Civil Servants*

1 Press Officer on a salary of €73,610.

I have appointed, on a contract basis for my term of office, a civil servant, Ms Geraldine Butler, as a Press Officer. She is currently on a salary of €73,610. This officer is on call on a seven day per week basis and is not entitled to overtime.

1 Private Secretary on the Higher Executive Officer pay scale (€46,558 to €59,097), with a private secretary allowance of €20,182 per annum.

1 Executive Officer on a pay scale of €30,566 to €48,504.

Three Clerical Officers on a pay scale of €22,609 to €36,667.

Two Clerical officers on a pay scale of €23,801 to €38,593 (these staff pay a class A PRSI contribution).

The total cost of overtime and expenses incurred to date in 2008 for these officers is €1,505.54 and €2,499.03 respectively.

*Non-civil servants*

1 Policy Adviser, Averil Power, paid on the Principal Officer scale, with a current salary of €97,109 per annum. This officer is on call on a seven day per week basis and is not entitled to overtime. No expenses have been incurred by this person to date.

*Constituency Office —**Civil servants*

1 Executive Officer on a pay scale of €32,179 to €51,054.

1 Clerical Officer on a pay scale of €22,609 to €36,667.

2 Clerical officers on a pay scale of €23,801 to €38,593 (these staff pay a class A PRSI contribution).

*Non-civil servants*

1 Personal Assistant, Mr. Peter O'Brien, currently being paid €55,030 per annum, plus an 11% contribution to a private pension account. 1 Personal Secretary, Ms Martine Lynch, who is paid a salary of €40,906, with a 10% Attraction Allowance.

The total cost of overtime incurred to date in 2008 for these officers is €3,442.90. No expenses have been paid to staff in this office in the year to date.

## 1996 STAFFING

*Minister's Office (including constituency office)**Civil Servants*

1 Programme Manager

1 Private Secretary

3 Executive Officers

7 Clerical Officers

2 Clerical Assistants/ Typists Non-Civil Servants

1 Special Adviser

1 Personal Assistant

1 Personal Secretary

*Policy Unit**Civil Servants*

1 Principal Officer level

## Non-Civil Servants

1 Senior Research Assistant

1 Research Assistant

2 Research Assistants (Part-time)

1 Administrative Assistant

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*Minister of State's Office*

*Civil Servants*

- 1 Private Secretary
- 2 Staff Officers
- 3 Clerical Officers
- 3 Clerical Assistants/ Typists

*Non-Civil Servants*

- 1 Personal Secretary
- 1 Personal Assistant
- 2 Civilian Drivers.

**Social Welfare Benefits.**

434. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of children in receipt of the early child care supplement here; the cost of this payment for 2008; the predicted cost for 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42918/08]

435. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Social and Family Affairs the number of children receiving the early child care supplement outside the State; the cost of this payment for 2008; the predicted cost for 2009; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [42919/08]

**Minister for Social and Family Affairs (Deputy Mary Hanafin):** It is proposed to take Question Nos. 434 and 435 together.

The Early Childcare Supplement is administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on behalf of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The total number of resident children in receipt of the Early Childcare Supplement (ECS) at 1st November 2008 was 389,000. The expenditure for these children in 2008 is estimated to amount to circa €476m, while the projected cost in 2009 is €390m.

The number of non-resident children currently in receipt of the ECS payment is approximately 3,800. The estimated ECS expenditure for these children in 2008 is €4.4m. There is currently a significant backlog of claims for ECS payments for non-resident children waiting to be processed. This backlog is expected to be cleared in the first half of 2009 and as a result the number of non-resident children qualifying for the ECS is estimated to reach about 7,000, at a projected cost of approximately €7m.

**Departmental Bodies.**

436. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Defence the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42217/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O'Dea):** No organisations or agencies under the auspices of my Department have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures.

### Army Barracks.

437. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Defence if he will confirm having received a detailed plan and economic approval of the decision to close Connolly Barracks in Longford which demonstrates the fact that the plan to pursue the closure is not soundly based from an economic perspective with no savings accruing to the Exchequer; if he will postpone the decision to close the said barracks pending a comprehensive economic and financial review of the decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42407/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** The decision to close a number of barracks was made in the context of the budget and was announced in the budget statement by my colleague the Minister for Finance, Mr Brian Lenihan T.D. While the decision was made in the context of realising savings in the Defence budget, the decision was not purely a financial one.

The closure of barracks and the consolidation of the Defence Forces formations into a smaller number of locations is a key objective of the White Paper on Defence. The consolidation process is designed to facilitate collective training and improved training standards, while also freeing up under-utilised resources and personnel for operational duties. The dispersal of personnel over an extended number of locations is a major impediment to essential collective training. It also imposes increased and unnecessary overheads on the Defence Forces in terms of barrack management, administration, maintenance and security. The current plan has been put together in close consultation and cooperation with the Defence Forces General Staff. It provides an overall package that will serve the needs of the Defence Forces into the future.

A detailed cost benefit was compiled by the Department on the overall package of consolidation proposals. I am fully satisfied that the proposals are justified on cost grounds, on the contribution which receipts from the sale of the properties will make to Defence Forces equipment and infrastructure funding and on the basis of the qualitative benefits accruing in terms of Defence Forces training.

### Consultancy Contracts.

438. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Defence the amount of expenditure in consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42577/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** The information sought by the Deputy in relation to consultants is outlined in the following table.

	Name of Consultancy firm	Work Carried Out	Cost
			€
2007	Petrus Consulting	Carried out Quality Assurance of Value for Money Review of Clothing Procurement	2,904
2007	Murray Consultants	Public Information and Awareness Campaign initiated	253,300

There is an ongoing capital building programme in my Department designed to modernise the living, training, operational and accommodation facilities available to the Defence Forces, both Permanent and Reserve. There has been an unprecedented level of spending on the programme to date with over €250 million spent since 1999. This year will see a further €26 million invested

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in the programme. As a result of this significant increase in the building programme, consultants with appropriate expertise are engaged by my Department as necessary to provide technical services in connection with building and engineering projects.

It should be noted that (as per Comptroller and Auditor General, Report on Value for Money “Consultancies in the Civil Service” 1998) such design and engineering consultancies for capital projects are better examined in association with the construction projects to which they relate. My Department spends approximately €2m annually on construction consultants’ fees. In addition, consultants with appropriate expertise are engaged by my Department as necessary to provide technical services in connection with psychometric testing for Army, Naval Service and Air Corps cadetships and trainee technicians.

My Department is always mindful of the costs involved in engaging consultants. External consultants are engaged only when there is a clear need for specialised expertise and following a rigorous examination of skills and resources available in-house. Considerable resources continue to be devoted to the training and development of staff. Particular emphasis has been placed on developing analysis and research capabilities. Four serving members of staff have been trained to Masters degree level in Policy Analysis in recent years.

### Departmental Expenditure.

439. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Defence the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42621/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** I have outlined in the following table the total number of claimants and the total amount spent in respect of mileage allowances for civil servants and civilian employees of my Department in 2007. However, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of mileage allowance into the other categories requested, except to say that no payments were made in respect of the cycling allowance. A breakdown of data into the other categories is not held in the required format on our Expenses System and it would take an inordinate amount of time and resources to manually compile the information.

Mileage Allowance payments	Total Amount	Number of Claimants
	€	
Civil Servants — Departmental	58,066	86
Coiste an Asgard Staff	1,858	1
Civil Defence Board and Staff	96,259	37
Army Pensions Board and Staff	4,539	2
Civilian Employees	100,058	37
Total	260,780	

### Army Barracks.

440. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Defence his plans to deal with the disposal of the Army campsite at Monaghan town; if and when it is fully closed, will special arrangements be made for those who have lived on the site for a long number of years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42686/08]



**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** It is anticipated that Monaghan Army Barracks will be disposed of, taking account of market conditions, so as to maximise the return to the Defence Forces and generate funding for reinvestment in Defence Forces equipment and infrastructure in accordance with Government policy. I am assured by the military authorities that there is a range of available accommodation and facilities in place and that any additional arrangements required will be in place by the time personnel will have to transfer to their new location.

### Overseas Missions.

441. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Defence when he last visited the Irish Army personnel (details supplied) in Liberia; the number of personnel he had accompanying him; the cost of the travel and the hotel accommodation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42687/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** I last visited Liberia during the period from 28 February 2006 to 2 March 2006 where I met with Irish personnel of 94th Infantry Battalion serving with UNMIL. A party of 10 people accompanied me on this trip which included five members of the media. The Gulfstream aircraft was tasked with this mission and all 10 members of the party travelled with me on this aircraft.

My Department follows the normal practice in the aviation business of costing aircraft by reference to the cost per flying hour under either of two headings: direct cost, i.e. the costs which are additional to those associated with having the aircraft and which only arise when the aircraft is flown including maintenance, fuel and support services; and total cost, i.e. the direct cost plus the costs associated with having the aircraft, such as depreciation and personnel costs.

Aircraft	Average Direct Cost Per Hour	Average Total Cost Per Hour
	€	€
Gulfstream	3,500	7,100

The total flying time of this mission to and from Liberia was 1,120 minutes. The total ministerial time on board was 840 minutes. An additional cost of €158.16 for taxi fares and mileage allowances associated with this trip was paid for by my Department. A total amount of €1,604.44 was paid by my Department for hotel accommodation for myself and my officials. No cost was incurred by my Department for hotel accommodation for members of the media.

442. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Defence the arrangements that were made by his Department to have letters, parcels and so on delivered to the 94th battalion UNMIL serving in Liberia; his views on the fact that the postal services had to be paid for by one of the national papers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42688/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Irish Battalion withdrew from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in May 2007 and no members of the Defence Forces are currently serving with UNMIL. While the Defence Forces were serving in UNMIL, there was no postal system operating to or within Liberia. The Defence Forces, therefore, contracted a commercial courier to deliver post to and from Defence Forces personnel serving with UNMIL. This contract was for letter post only which was dispatched through this contract twice weekly (Monday and Thursday) throughout the year. The contract was maintained until the Irish Battalion withdrew from UNMIL in mid-2007.

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A limited parcel post facility was extended to personnel serving with UNMIL over the Christmas periods, from 2004 to 2006 inclusive, through re-supply flights contracted by the Defence Forces. I have no information of any initiative by a national newspaper facilitating post or otherwise to Defence Forces personnel serving with UNMIL.

#### Army Barracks.

443. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied that sufficient rooms and other services will be available in Dundalk for the increased number of personnel who will be staying there as a result of the closure of Monaghan Army barracks; if there will be pressure on Dundalk especially when personnel return from Chad in 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42689/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** I am assured by the military authorities that there is a range of available accommodation and facilities in place in Dundalk Barracks and that any additional arrangements required will be in place by the time personnel from Monaghan Barracks will have to transfer to their new location.

#### Ministerial Staff.

444. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Defence the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42900/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out below.

#### My Private Office

Grade/Position	No.	Salary Scale as at 01/09/2008
Special Adviser(Non-established)	1	Principal Officer standard scale €86,168 – €106,582
Press Adviser(Non-established)	1	Principal Officer standard scale €86,168 – €106,582
Higher Executive Officer	1	Higher Executive Officer standard scale €46,558 – €59,097
Executive Officer	1	Executive Officer standard scale €30,566 – €48,504
Staff Officer	1	Staff Officer €34,941 – €46,655
Clerical Officer	1	Clerical Officer PPC scale €24,397 – €39,558

#### My Constituency Office

Grade/Position	No.	Salary Scale as at 01/09/2008
Personal Assistant (Non-established, (based in constituency)	1	Higher Executive Officer standard scale €46,558 – €55,030 (excludes long service increments)
Personal Secretary (Non-established, (based in constituency)	1	Secretarial Assistant contract scale €23,182 – €44,726
Executive Officer	1	Executive Officer PPC scale €32,179 – €51,054
Staff Officer	1	Staff Officer PPC scale €36,779 – €49,104
Clerical Officer	1	Clerical Officer Higher scale €24,255 – €38,397
Clerical Officer	2	Clerical Officer PPC standard scale €24,397 – €39,558
Clerical Officer	1	Clerical Officer standard scale €23,174 – €37,584

The employment contract of the non-established officers referred to in these tables is coterminous with the appointment of the relevant office holder. Overtime, travel and subsistence expenses are paid in accordance with normal Civil Service regulations. Personal Pension Contribution (PPC) scales apply where officers were employed since 6 April 1995, pay class A rate of PRSI and make a personal pension contribution.

### **Departmental Expenditure.**

445. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Defence the reason in respect of the published Estimates for the Public Service 2009, estimated expenditure for 2009 under sub-head A1 for his Department is estimated to be decreased by 1% from 2008 while the estimated decrease under sub-head B is 2%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42917/08]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Willie O’Dea):** The net effect in real terms of the provision under subhead A1 of the 2009 Defence Estimate is just over a 4% reduction in the payroll costs for the civil service staff of my Department in 2009. In the case of subhead B (Permanent Defence Forces pay), the precise reduction compared with 2008 is 1.6%, which was rounded up to 2% in the published Estimates. The approved allocation for that subhead took account of the need to provide for priority non-pay Defence Forces expenditure in the current budgetary situation. In that regard it should be noted that the Administrative Budget represents a small proportion (less than 3%) of the overall Defence Estimate.

### **Registration of Tenancies.**

446. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount collected by the Private Residential Tenancies Board in 2006 from the registration of tenancies; the amount allocated to each local authority to support their functions in relation to housing regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [43019/08]

454. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount collected by the Private Residential Tenancies Board in 2007 from the registration of tenancies; the amount allocated to local authorities to support their functions in relation to housing regulations; the amount allocated to each local authority under the second tranche of funding in respect of 2007 inspection activity; the funding allocated to each local authority for inspection activity to date in 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42302/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran):** I propose to take Question Nos. 446 and 454 together.

In 2006 and 2007, the amounts collected by the Private Residential Tenancies Board in fees associated with the registration of tenancies were €5,995,772 and €6,156,749, respectively. The purposes for which such fees are utilised include the provision of financial support to assist local authorities in discharging their functions under the Housing Acts in relation to private rented accommodation. The total amount of funding paid to local authorities for this purpose has been increased significantly in recent years, from €2,025,896 in 2006 to €3,010,756 in 2007, with a total of €4m being provided in respect of 2008 inspection activity. The amounts paid to each local authority in respect of 2006, 2007 and the first funding tranche for 2008 are set out in the following table.

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Until 2006, funding provided to local authorities for this purpose was based on the number of registered tenancies in each local authority area. However, since then, the allocation of funding has been increasingly linked to inspections performance as reported by each local authority in their returns for my Department's Annual Housing Statistics Bulletin. In 2008, 60% of the first tranche payment was made on the basis of each local authority's inspections targets for the year with the remaining 40% based on the number of registered tenancies within each local authority area on 30 June 2008. The second tranche of funding for 2008, which will issue in early 2009, will be based on actual inspection performance as reported by each local authority.

The significantly increased funding being made available to local authorities for inspection activity, and the increasingly performance-linked basis for allocations, are contributing significantly to a much improved inspections regime. In 2007, more than 14,000 inspections were carried out by local authorities, an increase of 40% compared to 2006.

Table: Funding to Local Authorities in relation to Private Rented Accommodation Standards and Rent Books

Name of Housing Authority	2006	First Tranche 2007	Second Tranche 2007	First Tranche 2008
<i>County Councils</i>				
Carlow Co.Co.	15,210	10,814	8,352	15,259
Cavan Co.Co.	7,430	5,552	22,808	29,949
Clare Co.Co.	19,547	17,540	21,095	19,278
Cork Co.Co.	44,815	45,322	37,157	117,230
Donegal Co.Co.	65,095	31,840	49,686	42,863
Dun L Rathdown Co.Co.	102,310	81,064	43,903	93,422
Fingal Co.Co.	117,205	75,035	66,069	97,899
Galway Co.Co.	22,482	23,094	13,492	31,744
Kerry Co.Co.	16,313	41,005	25,700	55,486
Kildare Co.Co.	52,473	37,434	31,268	39,208
Kilkenny Co.Co.	7,658	8,827	6,639	9,656
Laois Co.Co.	9,261	10,638	5,461	13,718
Leitrim Co.Co.	16,021	20,932	23,558	27,898
Limerick Co.Co.	18,157	20,438	23,237	25,871
Longford Co.Co.	13,955	12,295	20,346	19,163
Louth Co.Co.	19,396	16,498	3,212	18,073
Mayo Co.Co.	14,556	11,687	42,833	35,999
Meath Co.Co.	17,711	13,560	9,102	17,641
Monaghan Co.Co.	3,306	1,638	14,884	12,942
North Tipperary Co.Co.	9,549	14,427	25,807	17,758
Offaly Co.Co.	10,209	24,393	14,991	17,649
Roscommon Co.Co.	10,056	22,382	19,703	22,950
Sligo Co.Co.	7,318	6,160	2,784	8,216
South Dublin Co.Co.	95,842	113,998	56,967	83,235
South Tipperary Co.Co.	5,669	6,542	42,083	33,158
Waterford Co.Co.	10,529	14,106	12,314	18,753
Westmeath Co.Co.	14,995	15,637	90,484	42,085
Wexford Co.Co.	13,387	10,206	18,097	21,633
Wicklow Co.Co.	19,270	9,963	7,603	23,915

Name of Housing Authority	2006	First Tranche 2007	Second Tranche 2007	First Tranche 2008
<i>City Councils</i>				
Cork City Co.	136,019	91,319	75,278	100,546
Dublin City Co.	666,241	426,191	516,134	504,330
Galway City Co.	100,349	58,185	28,484	63,103
Limerick City Co.	60,948	41,441	17,883	61,306
Waterford City Co.	39,707	36,086	25,164	38,394
<i>Town Councils</i>				
Carlow T.C.	3,790	2,486	0	3,172
Cavan T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	801
Ennis T.C.	10,345	5,128	0	5,479
Kilrush T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	284
Fermoy T.C.	2,600	1,217	0	1,369
Macroom T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	712
Mallow T.C.	3,706	2,146	0	2,748
Kinsale T.C.	2,260	1,000	0	1,020
Midleton T.C.	3,339	1,819	0	2,440
Youghal T.C.	2,160	1,000	214	859
Clonakilty T.C.	2,000	1,000	107	571
Cobh T.C.	2,420	1,167	0	1,400
Skibbereen T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	876
Buncrana T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	342
Bundoran T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	99
Letterkenny T.C.	4,073	2,564	0	2,905
Ballinasloe T.C.	3,644	1,593	0	1,708
Killarney T.C.	6,522	3,416	107	3,867
Listowel T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	1,095
Tralee T.C.	21,215	8,332	12,100	17,455
Athy T.C.	2,170	1,000	0	1,297
Naas T.C.	5,177	2,978	0	3,282
Kilkenny B.C.	9,578	4,367	0	4,093
Longford T.C.	5,070	1,475	15,420	12,506
Drogheda B.C.	11,691	6,341	0	7,114
Dundalk T.C.	4,190	2,704	0	3,169
Ballina T.C.	3,040	1,450	1,071	3,751
Castlebar T.C.	4,032	2,597	107	5,188
Westport T.C.	2,553	3,881	8,031	10,403
Kells T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	534
Navan T.C.	3,172	1,757	0	2,358
Trim T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	551
Carrickmacross T.C.	2,000	1,000	5,889	9,339
Castleblayney T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	212
Clones T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	103
Monaghan T.C.	2,000	1,000	10,494	11,789
Nenagh T.C.	2,380	1,081	0	1,509
Templemore T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	175
Thurles T.C.	2,110	1,000	4,819	4,403

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Name of Housing Authority	2006	First Tranche 2007	Second Tranche 2007	First Tranche 2008
Birr T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	424
Tullamore T.C.	5,515	3,056	0	3,470
Sligo B.C.	14,636	12,121	0	9,178
Carrick-on-suir T.C.	2,000	1,000	964	274
Cashel T.C.	2,000	1,000	0	1,078
Clonmel B.C.	9,541	4,416	2,142	6,222
Tipperary T.C.	2,000	1,000	3,212	2,902
Dungarvan T.C.	3,266	1,655	8,567	22,571
Athlone T.C.	11,359	5,800	0	7,282
Enniscorthy T.C.	3,290	6,910	750	9,399
New Ross T.C.	2,210	1,086	0	1,242
Wexford B.C.	13,350	6,411	0	6,136
Arklow T.C.	6,373	3,543	2,998	11,478
Bray T.C.	11,090	5,818	0	5,160
Wicklow T.C.	3,130	2,194	428	1,879
Overall Total	2,025,896	1,510,758	1,499,998	2,000,003

#### Departmental Legal Costs.

447. **Deputy Deirdre Clune** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will seek legal costs from a group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42126/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The proceedings being taken in the High Court by the group against the State have been struck out. The State did not seek its costs in these matters and has also agreed not to pursue the Supreme Court costs orders recently awarded against the group.

#### Local Authority Funding.

448. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the total insured fire losses for dwellings and commercial premises for each local authority in each of the past five years for which figures are available, broken down by authority. [42166/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The information requested is not available in my Department.

#### Social and Affordable Housing.

449. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of funding available every year for social housing since 2004; the number of social housing units delivered since 2004; the funding expected for social housing in 2009; the amount of units expected to be delivered; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42195/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran):** The total capital investment in the supply of social housing for the years 2004-2007 was €4,222,092,455. The breakdown between the local authority prog-



ramme and the Capital Loan and Subsidy (CLSS) and Capital Assistance (CAS) Schemes for the Voluntary and Co-Operative Housing sector for this period is set out in the table below, together with the corresponding allocations for 2008. Co-Operative Housing sector for this period is set out in the following table, together with the corresponding allocations for 2008.

Supply Type	Housing Supply Expenditure/Allocations				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Local Authority	702,739,974	833,699,272	940,225,258	940,041,951	1,016,000,000
Voluntary & Co-Operative [CLSS]	95,968,000	85,538,000	83,545,000	159,999,000	240,000,000
Voluntary & Co-Operative [CAS]	86,555,000	80,661,000	99,361,000	113,766,000	130,000,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>885,262,974</b>	<b>999,891,272</b>	<b>1,123,131,258</b>	<b>1,213,806,951</b>	<b>1,386,000,000</b>

### Housing Grants.

450. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the grants available to elderly people here to upgrade or insulate their homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42199/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran):** My Department's Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, which is administered by local authorities, provides targeted support to improve conditions in the existing housing of older people. The types of works which may be grant aided under the Scheme are varied and may include the provision and upgrading of insulation works.

In addition, older people living in local authority housing may benefit from the central heating programme introduced by my Department in July 2004. The programme assists local authorities in providing central heating facilities in their rented dwellings and, where necessary, in implementing measures to ensure the energy efficiency of the dwelling. As announced in the context of Budget 2009, an audit of the social housing stock will commence in 2009, in preparation for a programme of retrofitting to deliver improved energy efficiency standards; this programme will be informed by a number of pilot projects for which €5m has been earmarked in 2009.

Sustainable Energy Ireland, under the auspices of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, operates a Low Income Housing Programme, set up to help establish and implement a national plan of action to address the problem of fuel poverty. Core delivery is through the Warmer Homes Scheme which aims at improving the energy efficiency and comfort conditions of homes occupied by low-income households, and at establishing the systems and growing the capacity in Ireland to install measures including attic insulation, draught proofing, lagging jackets, energy efficient lighting, and cavity wall insulation, and to provide energy advice.

Furthermore, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources launched a pilot Home Energy Saving Scheme on 24 April 2008. The scheme is designed to encourage owners of older homes to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, including through improved insulation measures. The regional pilot is designed to inform the roll-out of the full scale €100 million national scheme envisaged in the Programme for Government. The scheme will provide different incentives in each of the regional pilot areas in order to test their impact and effectiveness in encouraging householders to undertake energy efficiency investment works. The incentives will include varying levels of capital grants, advice on works required and information on banks offering reduced rate loans to scheme participants.

### **Departmental Bodies.**

451. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42220/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** Work to merge the Local Government Management Services Board and the Local Government Computer Services Board has been initiated and is expected to require the preparation of legislation. These Bodies are funded through the local government system rather than by way of direct Exchequer subvention, and their merging will be designed to promote further efficiency and effectiveness in shared service provision in local government. It is, accordingly, not possible to provide the requested level of detail at this time.

It is planned that the Rent Tribunal will merge with the Private Residential Tenancies Board. My Department is currently examining appropriate mechanisms for advancing the merger. I anticipate that legislation will be required and in that event it will be introduced through the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, 2008. No savings will accrue to the Exchequer in 2008 and the expected savings in 2009 will be dependent on the timing of the merger. The full year savings arising are estimated to be in the region of €70,000 to €100,000 per annum.

### **Planning Issues.**

452. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his views on the Comptroller and Auditor General's 2007 annual report with respect to the collection of development levies; if he has taken action or introduced measures to improve the efficiency of the collection and spending of development levies; if such measures are under consideration or judged necessary; the way development levies are charged and collected; if this differs between local authorities; if alternative revenue streams are being developed to fund local authorities in view of the decline in construction activity, and thus revenue from development levies; if he will provide the latest figures for the balance of development levies; the rationale for local authorities to keep significant amounts of revenue from development levies on hand and unspent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42246/08]

462. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, further to Parliamentary Question No. 502 of 30 September 2008 and his subsequent letter of 23 October 2008 providing the balances in regard to development contributions for 2006, if the equivalent figures for 2007 are now available; if they are not yet available, the reason for the delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42362/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I propose to take Question Nos. 452 and 462 together.

Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides that planning authorities may levy development contributions in respect of public infrastructure and facilities provided by, or on behalf of, the local authority that benefit development in the area. Development contribution schemes are drawn up by each planning authority and approved by the elected members following a public consultation process. It is a matter for the members of the planning authority to determine the level of contribution and the types of development to which they will apply; different amounts may be levied by different authorities. As Minister, my role is to provide the necessary statutory and policy framework within which individual contribution

schemes are adopted by each local authority; policy guidance on the issue was provided to planning authorities in 2003 and 2007.

The Comptroller and Auditor General 2007 Annual Report raised a number of matters in relation to development levies including the time taken to apply levies held by local authorities. My Department's response is detailed in the report, a copy of which is available at [www.audgen.gov.ie](http://www.audgen.gov.ie). The Secretary General of my Department, in her role as Accounting Officer, dealt with the matter at her appearance before the Public Accounts Committee on 16 October 2008; the proceedings of the Committee are a matter of public record and are available at [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie).

Details of individual development contribution schemes are available directly from each planning authority. Each planning authority is also required to include details of contributions received and contributions owing to it, together with information on how the contributions have been expended, in the statutory annual report of the authority. The most recent audited information available to the Department in relation to the amount of development contributions unspent by individual planning authorities relates to the year ended 31 December 2006 and is set out in the following table. Audited information for 2007 will not be available until the second quarter of 2009 when the independent audit by the Local Government Audit Service of the Local Authority annual financial statements for 2007 is completed. However, the 2007 Annual Planning Statistics which are available on my Department's website at [www.viron.ie](http://www.viron.ie), gives an unaudited breakdown of Development Contribution income for Local Authorities for 2007.

My Department is currently considering whether further guidance is required for planning authorities on the operation of the development contributions system. The need for any legislative changes will also be assessed as part of the preparation of a General Scheme for the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill.

	Balance @ 31/12/2006
	€
<i>County Councils</i>	
Carlow	9,109,158
Cavan	3,571,264
Clare	13,276,902
Cork	50,382,678
Donegal	20,357,574
Fingal	110,130,239
DLRCC	112,910,251
Galway	14,763,865
Kerry	14,104,057
Kildare	67,608,717
Kilkenny	23,225,909
Laois	26,493,087
Leitrim	13,893,142
Limerick	11,934,531
Longford	15,693,739
Louth	42,451,910
Mayo	22,237,424
Meath	65,243,294
Monaghan	2,233,414

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	Balance @ 31/12/2006
	€
North Tipperary	8,836,972
Offaly	12,379,285
Roscommon	19,839,765
Sligo	4,930,773
South Dublin	69,493,485
South Tipperary	16,506,663
Waterford	12,740,641
Westmeath	30,810,786
Wexford	53,438,311
Wicklow	36,577,354
<b>Total</b>	<b>905,175,192</b>
<i>City Councils</i>	
Cork City	18,340,198
Dublin City	62,529,375
Galway City	11,138,231
Limerick City	18,838,108
Waterford City	11,476,497
<b>Total</b>	<b>122,322,409</b>
<i>Town &amp; Borough</i>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>194,694,753</b>
<b>Combined Total</b>	<b>1,222,192,354</b>

453. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42271/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 205 and 208 of 13 November 2008. The position is unchanged.

*Question No. 454 answered with Question No. 446.*

#### **Fire Services.**

455. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he has determined the impact of the fire services change programme on the wider community and the fire services personnel. [42314/08]

458. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the future role of the four steering groups and if they will be used to provide expert advice to him; and when the local liaison teams will be selected and publicised. [42317/08]

459. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the way and the locations at which the competency in recruitment and advancement in the fire service project has been implemented outside of the Dublin fire service; and

if this training will be of the highest standards including the dynamic risk assessment process. [42318/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 455, 458 and 459 together.

In February 2005, the Government announced a Fire Services Change Programme, 2005 to 2007 which included four priority areas addressing the development of a risk based approach to safety management, the enhancement of health, safety and welfare programmes within the fire service, the development of community fire safety programmes and the introduction of a competency-based approach to recruitment, retention and career progression in the fire service.

Work under the Change Programme was carried out by a dedicated project structure which included a High Level Implementation Group and four Steering Groups, one for each of the priority areas. A Project Communications Strategy was developed which set out the methods to be used to ensure that stakeholders were aware of and involved in the development and change implementation processes. The Communications Strategy included the appointment of Project Liaison Teams in eight regions, with one representative in each fire authority. A report on progress achieved over the two year period was published in June 2007 and is available on my Department's website, [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie). With the publication of the Fire Services Change Programme progress report, the Project Structure stood down, including the four Steering Groups and the Project Liaison Teams.

The Department has continued to support the modernisation programme for the fire services with increased capital investment and the further development (having regard to best practice internationally) and implementation of programmes initiated under the Fire Services Change Programme. The Department's community fire safety programmes are aimed at shifting the focus from response to prevention and the Department is working with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, who have made significant progress in this area.

In relation to the development of a risk based approach to safety management, a tender contract has been awarded for the national procurement of a risk based utility software through Dublin City Council acting as contracting authority. This work is being developed through the CAMP (Computer Aided Mobilisation Project) structure.

As part of the Safety and Health Enhancement module of the Fire Services Change Programme, an updated fire service National Incident Command System was developed and training in the application of the new system was provided across the country. Regrettably, I understand that SIPTU has instructed its members not to cooperate with the introduction of the National Incident Command System and that this matter is due to be heard by the Labour Court early in December 2008.

The development of community fire safety programmes is being progressed through the ongoing support of the Primary Schools Programme and the Community Smoke Alarm Campaign. The annual National Fire Safety Week, which was organised by the Department jointly with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, ran from 6 to 15 October 2008. The associated television and other media campaigns will continue until the end of the year. The High Level Implementation Group established as part of the Fire Services Change Programme recommended that fire authorities should introduce a competency based approach to fire service training aligned to the FETAC (Further Education and Training Awards Council)/National Qualifications Authority of Ireland system.

My Department has engaged extensively with FETAC and there have been a number of strands where significant progress has been made towards implementation of the alignment with FETAC. From discussion with FETAC, it is envisaged that education and training pro-

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vision for fire services would be developed under a structure encompassing all fire authorities with a single interface between the fire services and FETAC.

My Department has prepared consultation documents in relation to a FETAC compliant training system for fire services in Ireland. These will be circulated in the near future to all fire authorities and the Fire Services Council for comment. The objective is to convert the existing fire service training programmes to a FETAC compliant system with its associated quality assurance arrangements.

456. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of people who were rescued alive from dwelling fires; the number of people who were harmed; and the number of people who were rescued unharmed. [42315/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** Returns from fire authorities indicate that the number of fire related deaths (attended by fire brigades) in 2006 and 2007 were 42 and 38 respectively. The returns do not contain statistics in relation to the number of people rescued.

457. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when funds allocated to a group (details supplied) for computers in every fire station will be released; and the action being taken to improve communications within the fire services. [42316/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The provision of a fire service, including the provision of fire fighting and associated equipment is a statutory function of the individual fire authorities. The Department supports the local fire authorities through the setting of general policy and the provision of capital funding, including the recoupment (within the overall funding available) of costs incurred by local authorities in relation to the purchase of fire appliances, emergency equipment and communications equipment.

Fire authorities have successfully worked together with my Department on a shared services initiative to develop a computer- based system to handle emergency calls for the fire service. Under the system known as CAMP (Computer Aided Mobilisation Project), all emergency calls for the fire service are channelled to one of three control centres at Dublin, Castlebar and Limerick and the appropriate fire brigade response is activated from the relevant centre. In addition to dispatching fire service resources, where appropriate, the CAMP control centre will also notify other emergency services e.g. An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive or the Irish Coast Guard. Similarly, other emergency services control centres may direct 999/112 calls to the CAMP system.

In addition, under this year's fire service capital programme provision was made to support the enhancement of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Infrastructure within the fire service generally. While it is my understanding that the majority of fire authorities have equipped retained fire stations with suitable ICT equipment, a survey is currently being undertaken to identify remaining stations which have not been equipped to date. Following the completion of this survey, applications from fire authorities for matching funding to network fire stations will be considered having regard to overall priorities and competing demands for available funding under the fire services capital programme.

*Questions Nos. 458 and 459 answered with Question No. 455.*



460. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if the risk assessments required from any or all of the 37 local authorities under the fire services change programme have been completed and are available to the public; if the preventative measures required to mitigate the risks identified have been published or implemented; and if the health, safety and welfare statements have been completed for stations, equipment, work ground, work from heights and water rescue. [42319/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, the provision of a premises and the making of such other provisions as it considers necessary or desirable, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under section 10 of the Fire Services Act 1981. The Department's role is one of supporting and assisting local authorities in delivering fire services through the setting of general policy and the provision of capital funding.

I assume that the question refers to risk assessment in the context of safety, health and welfare legislation. Risk assessment is used in multiple contexts, including major emergency management, by fire services. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 sets out statutory requirements for risk assessment. As part of the Safety and Health Enhancement module of the Fire Services Change Programme 2005-2007, a new Ancillary Safety Statement Template was developed, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and stakeholders, which included risk assessment methodologies for fixed work locations such as fire stations and generic risk assessment for different categories of incident. Furthermore, as fire authorities have to respond to incidents anywhere in their functional area, a dynamic risk assessment process in line with international best practice was developed and included as an integral part of the new fire service National Incident Command System.

#### **Special Areas of Conservation.**

461. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will confirm that under the destocking compensation, Connemara hill farmers who are complying with the habitats directive are entitled to a compensation package of €2,000 per annum for five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42358/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** In order to reduce the serious damage caused by overgrazing by sheep, all farmers who farm within the Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex and Maumturks Mountains SACs are obliged to enter an approved agri-environmental plan either Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) managed by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or a National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Farm Plan managed by my Department for a five year period from 1 November 2008. As these measures are additional to the existing Commonage Framework Plans, farmers in the REPS scheme will be paid further financial compensation of €2000 by NPWS for each year in which they have fully met the destocking and off-wintering provisions of their plans. In year one, payments will be reduced proportionally in line with delays in destocking, in order to provide an incentive to destock early.

Farmers who enter an NPWS farm plan are compensated on a different basis. The NPWS scheme is intended to cover lands designated for nature value only, whereas REPS is a whole farm scheme. Payments under the NPWS scheme are €27.75 for each sheep destocked per annum and €50.00 per annum for each sheep off-wintered for 5 months from commonage areas.

*Question No. 462 answered with Question No. 452.*

### **Local Authority Funding.**

463. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when his Department will make a decision on the draft rate scheme 2008 proposed by Cobh Town Council under section 2 of the Local Government (Rates) Act, 1970; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42363/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I received the draft rate scheme in late October, and will make a decision on the matter as soon as possible.

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes.**

464. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when the finance will be approved for augmentation works to the sewerage scheme at Castlecomer, County Kilkenny. [42366/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** Kilkenny County Council's application for funding for this proposal under the Serviced Land Initiative measure of the Water Services Investment Programme is being examined in my Department and a decision will be conveyed to the Council as quickly as possible.

### **Water Pollution.**

465. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the dates of all sewage spillages or discharges into Dublin Bay at Ringsend since January 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42367/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The management of the Ringsend wastewater treatment plant is a matter for Dublin City Council under the direction and supervision of the Environmental Protection Agency. I have no direct function in the matter and the information requested is not available in my Department.

### **Housing Grants.**

466. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will confirm the inadequate level of local government funding which has led to persons (details supplied) in County Longford being told that their application for a housing grant is not being awarded due to the fact that the 2008 funding to the local authority has been exhausted and the 2009 funding has also been fully exhausted in advance of the new year's commencement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42376/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran):** The Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability are funded by 80% recoupment available from my Department together with 20% contribution from the resources of the local authority. In May 2008, my Department made a combined capital allocation of €638,820 to Longford County Council for the operation of the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability. It is a matter for local authorities to decide on the specific level of funding to be directed towards each of the schemes, from within the combined allocation notified to them by my Department, and to manage the operation of the schemes in their areas from within this allocation.

In light of the high level of activity experienced by Longford County Council in respect of the grant schemes in 2008, my Department made a supplementary allocation of €100,000, in October, for the operation of the schemes this year. My Department is currently liaising with all local authorities regarding their funding requirements under the schemes next year, with a view to notifying authorities of their individual notifications early next year.

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes.**

467. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, further to Parliamentary Question No. 216 of 14 November 2007, the progress made to date on the Ennis water augmentation scheme; if the scheme will be delivered on time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42414/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I understand that Clare County Council expect construction work on this scheme to be fully completed in Spring 2009. More detailed information may be sought from the County Council.

468. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, further to Parliamentary Question No. 533 of 13 May 2008, the progress made to date on the Ennis sewerage scheme; if the project is proceeding to the original timeframe; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42415/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** My Department has approved, subject to certain amendments, Clare County Council's brief for the appointment of consultants to prepare tender documents for the scheme, and it is now a matter for the Council to arrange to have these documents drawn up.

### **Remediation of Mine Sites.**

469. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his policy regarding the clean up of old mining sites; if an old mine site clean up is mandatory; and if an old mine site clean up can be undertaken to ensure the protection of the tourism potential of the mine site. [42574/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** In accordance with Directive 2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the management of waste from the extractive industries (the Mining Waste Directive), Member States are obliged to ensure that an inventory of closed waste facilities, including abandoned waste facilities, located in their territory which cause serious negative environmental impacts or have the potential of becoming in the medium or short term a serious threat to human health, is drawn up and periodically updated. Such an inventory, to be made available to the public, is to be carried out by 1 May 2012. The Directive does not oblige the Member States to carry out any further studies or action on the included sites.

A national project is currently underway to establish such an inventory of historic mine sites and my Department understands it will shortly be completed. The EPA, the Geological Survey of Ireland and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR) are undertaking the project which is entitled Historic Mine Site — Inventory and Risk Characterisation (HMS — IRC) (details can be accessed at [www.epa.ie/whatwedo/enforce/pa/mines](http://www.epa.ie/whatwedo/enforce/pa/mines)). The objectives of the project are to carry out detailed site investigations at priority mine sites (metal and coal) in Ireland and to assess the potential risk posed by these sites to human health and safety and the environment.

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The sites will be ranked according to their potential risk and recommendations will be made in relation to their management. Areas in Ireland significantly affected by historic mining activities include the Silvermines area in County Tipperary, the Avoca river and surrounding area in County Wicklow and the Tynagh mine site in County Galway. DCENR has made funding available for remediation of the Silvermines area, with the work carried out by Tipperary North County Council, and has also commissioned a feasibility study for the management and remediation of the Avoca mining area.

The remediation of mine sites is not a matter for my Department. The standing Government position is that Ministers are responsible for the environmental implications of their own policy areas and programmes.

### Consultancy Contracts.

470. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42578/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** My Department continues to ensure best practice in the engagement of consultants having regard to the appropriate Department of Finance guidelines in this regard. Proposals for use of consultancy services by my Department are examined on an ongoing basis at management level in light of key business needs and priorities and I am consulted on significant new consultancy proposals where these arise. In line with Government policy on increased efficiency and value for money, expenditure on consultancy has been reduced significantly in respect of 2009 and will be concentrated on providing expert advice where required to support new policy

The information requested in relation to consultants engaged by my Department in 2006 and 2007 is set out in the following table.

Consultancy	Consultant	Expenditure	Year
		€	
Construction Industry Review 2004 and Outlook 2005-2007	DKM Consultants LTD	110,000	2006
Legal Service: Rental Accommodation Scheme	McCann Fitzgerald Solicitors	11,859	2006
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	Brendan M Walsh	3,000	2006
Public Relations Services — Fire Services	Grayling Communications	17,050	2006
Design of Logo & Fire Safety Leaflets — Fire Services	Greenhouse Creative Consultants	13,552	2006
Internet Advertising campaign — Fire Services	ICAN Ltd	26,674	2006
Call Centre — Fire Services	IDS Media Group	11,136	2006
Radio Promotion — Fire Services	Independent Radio Sales	2,674	2006
Market research on Smoke Alarm ownership	Lansdowne Market Research	2,420	2006

Consultancy	Consultant	Expenditure	Year
		€	
Expert consultancy to assist a review of major emergency response framework in Ireland	Operational Command Training Organisation Ltd (OCTO)	1,645	2006
Security and risk assessment on the electronic voting and counting system and to devise an end to end testing programme	RITS	13,929	2006
To establish clear and formal systems for regulating lobbyists in public life in place in Germany, USA , Canada and European institutions, thereby facilitating an assessment of their reliance to Irish public life	Trinity College Dublin In Collaboration With Dublin City University.	6,960	2006
Study on EN 1991 Eurocode — Wind Study (EN 1991 -1-4)	ARUP — Consulting Engineers	7,500	2006
Timber Frame Code of Practice	Building Research Establishment Ltd. (BRE)	6,777	2006
Media Buying & Advertising — Fire Services	Ardmore Advertising	119,738	2006
Art Work on Safety Team Pack — Fire Services	Ardmore Advertising	6,088	2006
Graphic Design Consultancy — Fire Services	Avid Design	1,379	2006
Radio Promotion — Fire Services	Broadcast Media Sales	6,270	2006
Preparation of Accounting manual for local authorities to ensure conformity of accounting standards and procedures across local authorities	Campbell Consulting & Accounting Services Ltd	10,100	2006
Video on fire safety	Carr Communications Ltd	3,015	2006
Monthly survey of repairs and maintenance 2005	ESRI	20,869	2006
To assist the Department in securing a new sponsorship agreement for the National Tidy Towns and City Neighbourhoods Competitions and the all Ireland cross-border initiative, Ireland's Best Kept Towns	Slattery Communications	6,806	2006
Apartment Size and Space Standards Study	Toal O'Muiré	25,000	2006
Monthly survey of repairs and maintenance	Monthly survey of repairs and maintenance	42,000	2006
Review of Operation Local Authority Capital Expenditure	Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants Ltd	58,504	2006
U Value Calculations for Technical Guidance Document — L	Energy Research Group (ERG) UCD	871	2006
To convert Technical Guidance Document — M in to XML format	XML Workshop	598	2006
Inch Island	Digital Land Surveyors	1,331	2006
Assessment and validation of ICW data	Dr Miklas Scholz, Edinburgh University	10,000	2006
Advice / opinion on statutory penalty provisions	Dr. Yvonne Scannell, TCD	4,574	2006
Architectural Services Sheskinmore NR Donegal	G A Slowey	3,319	2006
Professional Services at Killarney National Park	Hickey Moynihan Design	4,219	2006

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Consultancy	Consultant	Expenditure	Year
		€	
Professional Services at Killarney National Park	Hickey Moynihan Design	42,736	2006
Conservation report on statues in the gardens — Glenveagh	Jason Bolton	7,800	2006
Transport Report — Glenveagh	Jennings O'Donovan & Partners	2,420	2006
Brief footpath to Castle — Glenveagh	Jennings O'Donovan & Partners	4,840	2006
Brief for Education Centre Glenlake — Glenveagh	Jennings O'Donovan & Partners	1,815	2006
ICW Groundwater Studies	Jer Keohane, Geotechnical Environmental Services, Carlow IT	5,000	2006
Report on tearooms Castle — Glenveagh	M H Consultancy	6,050	2006
Bridge at Ardnamona	Michael Carr Chartered Engineer	1,452	2006
Engineering Drawings, Planning, Bridge	Michael Friel	6,050	2006
Engineering drawings, Planning, carpark	Michael Friel	1,000	2006
Veterinary inspections and reporting on Ward Union Hunt	Mr Gerard O'Reilly, retired Senior Veterinary Inspector	5,000	2006
Research into the economic and social aspects of biodiversity	Optimize, Barracks House, Croghan, Co Roscommon	9,200	2006
Preparation of Conservation Plan for Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex, Co Roscommon	Oxford Archaeology Ltd.	12,487	2006
Health & Safety Survey	QTS Ltd,	4,840	2006
Public Awareness Campaign on Biodiversity	RPS Group	129,944	2006
Rhododendron project — production of Best Practice and management guidelines	Thérèse Higgins	16,952	2006
Development works at Inch Island	WD Buchannan	14,036	2006
Race Against Waste awareness campaign which includes PR element.	Consortium Led By Lyle Bailie International (Formerly Known As McCann Erickson) PR element provided by Mary Murphy and Associates	2,889,235	2006
Review of National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents	Environmental Resources Management Ireland Ltd	24,200	2006
Consultancy support and review of nuclear emergency plan exercise	Operational Command Training Organisation Ltd. (OCTO)	7,588	2006
Development/Management of the National Litter Pollution Monitoring System	Tobins Consulting Engineers	183,564	2006
Communications Advice on Emergency Planning	Grayling Communications	4,840	2006
Review & update of greenhouse gas emission projections in the Kyoto period 2008-2012	ICF Consulting / Byrne Ó Cléirigh Consulting	97,500	2006
Legal Advice on the Drafting of Regulations SI 406 of 2006	Noel J. Travers	3,630	2006
Organising 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	Conference Partners	42,093	2006
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	Craig Bullock	3,025	2006
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	David Brown	3,000	2006



Consultancy	Consultant	Expenditure	Year
		€	
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	David Styles	3,750	2006
ICT Strategy 2006 — 2009	Deloitte & Touche Management Consultants	37,067	2006
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	Feasta	3,000	2006
Alterations to design drawings	Gerard Slowey, Architectural Design Services	4,500	2006
Synthesis review of County/City Development Board Strategies	Indecon International Economic Consultants	93,170	2006
Assistance with planning submission to Caherciveen planning area.	Malachy Walsh & Partners	2,723	2006
Identity Management requirements assessment	Novell Ireland Consulting Ltd	18,876	2006
Provision of Consultancy for INEX 3	OCTO	7,588	2006
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	Dr. Peter Doran	3,560	2006
To extend contract with QTS to prepare safety statements fro Ballina, Shannon, Glenveagh NP and Wicklow NP	QTS Ltd.	11,867	2006
Briefing Papers for 2006 Annual Conference — Comhar	Thomas Legge	7,250	2006
Draft Register of Electors 2007/2008 Campaign	Young Euro	999,460	2006
Develop and run and Emergency Planning exercise	Octo Ltd.	43,449	2007
National Litter Pollution Monitoring System Fees	Tobin Consulting Engineers	104,398	2007
Consultancy contract for analysis of the national emissions of pollutants	AEA Technology Plc	36,240	2007
Litter GIS Training and Support Charges 2007	Local Government Computer Services Board	4,740	2007
Sustainable Development Indicators Research	Enviro Centre	5,445	2007
Peter Clinch and Susana Ferreira “Understanding and measuring quality of life” contribution to Comhar SDC 2006 Annual Conference.	University College Dublin.	3,800	2007
Public Relations Fees for Comhar	Financial Dynamics	13,904	2007
Briefing Paper for 2006 conference — Comhar	The Marine Institute	3,000	2007
Ongoing Public Relations Services — Comhar	DHR Communications Ltd.	12,269	2007
COMHAR ESD Research Project	ECO — UNESCO	10,187	2007
Fees for Paper on Sustainable Consumption and Production and associated expenses.	Dr. Peter Doran	6,107	2007
Public Awareness Campaign on Biodiversity	RPS Group	238,936	2007
Energy Efficiency Regs for New Dwellings & Options for Improvements	UCD Energy Research Group	108,779	2007
To advise Minister on Energy Conservation	Gaunt Francis Architects.	4,160	2007

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Consultancy	Consultant	Expenditure	Year
		€	
Code of Practice on Timber Frame Housing	NSAI	33,883	2007
Eurocode 2 Study	Eurocode 2 Study	36,754	2007
Eurocode 6 Study — First Payment	Lee McCullough	16,251	2007
Consultancy on Irish Heritage Trust	Indecon International Economic Consultants	14,520	2007
Preparation of Conservation Plan for Rathcroghan Archaeological Complex, Co. Roscommon	Oxford Archaeology Ltd.	25,619	2007
Supplementary Research Project — Woodstown 6	ACS Ltd.	115,629	2007
Urban Design Guide	O'Mahony Pike Planning Consultants	121,000	2007
Evaluation of European Spatial Network Research to Ireland	National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis	48,376	2007
Examination & modification of draft revised homeless strategy	Mary Higgins	4,978	2007
Economic and Social Review of Proposed Revised Terms of the Tenant Purchase Scheme	Indecon International Economic Consultants	58,564	2007
Drafting forms of contract for the Rental Accommodation Scheme	William Fry solicitors	13,311	2007
Preparation & Facilitation of Risk Assessment Training	Operational Command Training Organisation	3,981	2007
Register of Electors Awareness Campaign	Brindley Advertising	167,903	2007
Work re: storage of electronic voting equipment	DTZ Sherry Fitzgerald	35,090	2007
Review of County/City Development Board Strategies and proposals for Strengthening and Developing the Boards	Indecon International Economic Consultants	31,057	2007
Security Audit for Met Eireann	RITS	8,500	2007
Financial Review of Muckcross House Trustee arrangements	Mazars	28,647	2007
Contribution to Regulatory Impact Analysis — Surface Water Regulations	Environmental Protection Agency	50,000	2007
Seven Grouped Villages Sewerage Schemes (Waterford ) Process Audit	Owen Boyle	9,443	2007
Mullingar Sewerage Scheme — Process Audit	Gus Cummins	5,261	2007
Final Account Reports — Water Services Investment Programme	John Murphy	16,425	2007
Construction Indicators (Issue 9) and Preliminary Forecast for 2007	DKM Economic Consultants	14,908	2007
Construction Indicators (Issue 10)	DKM Economic Consultants	7,230	2007
Annual review of the Construction Industry 2006 and Outlook 2007-2009	DKM Economic Consultants	73,822	2007
Survey of Repairs & Maintenance	ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute)	24,200	2007
Review of Operation Local Authority Capital Expenditure	Fitzpatrick Associates Economic Consultants Ltd	29,252	2007
Quality Assessment of VFM Review of Rural Water Programme	Dr. Richard Browne, IPA	3,630	2007

### **‘Departmental Expenditure.**

471. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42624/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The total mileage spend for my Department for 2007 was €1,490,322.28. The extraction of information on the number of claimants in each category of vehicle capacity would involve a disproportionate allocation of staff time and resources. The total number of claimants in 2007 was 618. There were no claims made in respect of a cycling allowance during the year.

### **Sport and Recreational Development.**

472. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if the €150 million community development fund has been established as per the Agreed Programme for Government; the involvement of his Department in ensuring that this community development plan to support the development of community facilities such as community centres and playgrounds is easily accessible to rural communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40964/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The Programme for Government provides for a Community Development Plan to be underpinned by a Fund of €150 million and to be established over a five-year period. The Plan is intended to deal with the provision of community facilities such as playgrounds, community centres, local markets, recycling, sports and recreational facilities and to be implemented in a way which would maximise impact in local communities and complement existing relevant programmes.

As a first step, and in keeping with the recommendation in the Task Force Report on Active Citizenship, an audit of community, sports and arts facilities at local level is currently being undertaken by each county and city council, under the auspices of the relevant County/City Development Board. Earlier this year, my Department issued guidelines in relation to the audit to county and city councils. These guidelines were developed in consultation with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, the Department of the Taoiseach and local authorities. A Steering Group representative of these bodies, as well as the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, is overseeing the audits. The individual audits are to be completed by the end of this year. Subsequent consideration of the matter will be carried out in the context of the public services expenditure estimates.

### **Hunting Licences.**

473. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if the legal opinion of the Attorney General was sought regarding the licensing of a hunt (details supplied) prior to the issuing of the stag hunting licence on 8 September 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42661/08]

474. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if in view of the definition of wild animal in the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000,

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that is, an individual of a population which primarily lives independent of human husbandry and the fact that deer hunted by a group (details supplied) are captive animals entirely dependent on human husbandry, the continued inclusion of such domesticated animals under the remit of the Wildlife Act 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 by the Attorney General is justified; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42662/08]

475. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if farmed deer are considered to be included in section 26.1(ii) of the Wildlife Act 1976; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42663/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 473 to 475, inclusive, together.

Section 26(1) of the Wildlife Act 1976 provides that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government may grant to the master or other person in charge of a pack of stag hounds, a licence authorising the hunting of deer by that pack, during such period or periods as is or are specified in the licence.

As part of my consideration of the application from the Ward Union Hunt for a licence under Section 26(1) of the Wildlife Act 1976 for the 2007/2008 season I sought and obtained advice from the Attorney General. The Attorney General confirmed that Section 26 provides for the licensing of hunting of deer by stag hounds irrespective of whether the deer are wild or captive-bred. The advice of the Attorney General in this regard was taken into account in my consideration of the licence applications from the Ward Union Hunt for both the 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 seasons.

#### **Building Regulations.**

476. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when he will implement a provision that was in the Building Control Act 2007 (details supplied). [42673/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I am currently undertaking a comprehensive review of Part M of the Building Regulations, which deals with Access for People with Disabilities, in consultation with the statutory Building Regulations Advisory Body. The proposals will shortly be the subject of a public consultation process, following which revised and updated Part M Regulations and a related Technical Guidance Document will be published. I also intend to commence the relevant provision of the Building Control Act 2007 to provide for Disability Access Certificates for buildings at an early date.

#### **Water and Sewerage Schemes.**

477. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government when stage two of the Castleisland sewerage scheme will go to tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42691/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The Castleisland Sewerage Scheme is included for funding under my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2007-2009 at an estimated cost of €5.7 million. My Department

is awaiting submission of additional information in relation to Kerry County Council's Preliminary Report for the scheme.

### **Social and Affordable Housing.**

478. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government his views on the use and disposal of housing units in a National Association of Building Co-Operatives development (details supplied) in Dublin 11; and when a decision is expected to be made. [42706/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran):** The housing units referred to were developed by the National Association of Building Co-operatives (Nabco), on behalf of Dublin City Council, under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme. In conjunction with Nabco and my Department, the City Council is considering how these dwellings can, as soon as possible, be utilised in meeting housing needs.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions.**

479. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the proposals he has put forward to achieve the 6% cut in carbon emissions for 2008 and 2009; the amount each carbon savings measure is expected to make towards this 6% goal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42707/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I refer to the reply to Question No. 457 of 18 November 2008. The position is unchanged.

### **Animal Welfare.**

480. **Deputy Edward O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding regulations (details supplied). [42712/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** Work is underway in my Department in drafting measures to implement the majority recommendations of the Working Group to review the Management of Dog Breeding Establishments. The issues involved are quite complex and have required detailed consideration. The question of whether or not to provide exemption for specific types of organisations, or breeding establishments, from the requirements of the proposed regulations is being considered in the context of this work. It is my intention to advance this matter as quickly as possible.

### **Water and Sewerage Schemes.**

481. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he has received tender documents from Kildare County Council in respect of the Kildare town waste water treatment system; when a tender will be approved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42717/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** I refer to the reply to Question No. 202 of 23 October 2008; the position is unchanged.

### **Offshore Islands.**

482. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local

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Government if he will purchase land on the Great Blasket Island and initiate a plan for the conservation of the old village on the island; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[42725/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** In light of the 15 October 2008 decision of An Bord Pleanála to grant permission for a café, services building and ancillary works on the Great Blasket Island, my Department, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and the Office of Public Works are now considering the available options for the purchase of land interests on the island and other related matters having regard to the overall budgetary position in respect of 2009.

### **Register of Electors.**

483. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the plans he has in place to ensure the register of electors is correct; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42743/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** In law, the preparation of the Register of Electors is a matter for each local registration authority. It is their duty to ensure, as far as possible and with the cooperation of the public, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the Register. In working to compile the Register for 2007/8, local authorities undertook and completed, with assistance from my Department, the most extensive registration campaign in decades. On the basis of the work undertaken, I am satisfied that local authorities achieved a significant improvement in the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the Register compared to previous years. The task for local authorities, in relation to the Register for 2009/10, has been to maintain and build on the progress made to date.

Local authorities were required to publish the Draft Register on 1 November 2008 and people had until 25 November to check it to ensure that their details are accurately entered on the Register. My Department ran an advertising campaign to encourage people to check that they are on the Draft Register and to notify their city or county council of any errors or omissions no later than 25 November. If any person is omitted from the Final Register, they will still have the opportunity to apply for entry onto the Supplement to the Register up to 15 days before any polling day.

Looking to the future, the programme for Government contains a commitment to establish an independent Electoral Commission. The Commission's responsibilities will include taking charge of the compilation of a new national rolling electoral register. My Department has appointed consultants to carry out preliminary research on issues arising in relation to establishment of the Electoral Commission. The research conclusions will inform further consideration of the approach to be taken in progressing the Government commitment.

### **Ministerial Staff.**

484. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42903/08]

**Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):** The information requested is set out in the following tables.



## Private Office

Grade	No of staff	Salary Scale
Special Adviser	2	Annual Salary €89,819 × 2
Private Secretary — Higher Executive Officer	1	
Executive Officer	3	
Clerical Officer	3	

## Constituency Office

Grade	No of staff	Salary Scale
Personal Assistant-Higher Executive Officer	1.0	
Personal Secretary-Executive Officer	0.5 × 2	
Executive Officer	2.0	
Clerical Officer	2.5	

The salary scales for all administrative grades are available on the Department of Finance website, [www.finance.gov.ie](http://www.finance.gov.ie). Expenses attributed to my offices from 14 June 2007 to 31 October 2008 amount to €222,436.76. The figures include travel and subsistence expenses for the above staff and general running costs associated with these offices.

**Energy Conservation.**

485. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the funding for the energy saving upgrades at a heritage centre (details supplied) in County Donegal which was promised in 2007, will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42700/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** I am informed by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI) that no funding application was received from the Colmcille Heritage Centre in 2007. However, I understand that the Centre is seeking to establish if any funding is available for improving the level of energy performance.

There are no grant programmes available at present to support an upgrade to the building. However, the Centre may apply to SEI for a grant for the installation of a renewable heat supply (e.g. wood chip boilers, solar thermal or heat pumps) under the Renewable Heat Deployment Programme (Reheat) or for the installation of a small scale fossil-fired combined heat and power (CHP) or biomass CHP system under the CHP Deployment Programme. Further details are available from the SEI website ([www.sei.ie](http://www.sei.ie)).

In addition, I have provided €4 million to SEI in 2008 for a range of energy advice and support programmes to the non-residential sector, including a new advice and mentoring programme for SMEs. I have asked SEI to make contact with the Centre to offer their services.

**Telecommunications Services.**

486. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding MANS broadband for Boyle and Castlerea in County Roscommon; and when is it envisaged it will be up and running. [42129/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** Future investment decisions, including any investment in any new Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) will be guided by (i) the final policy paper on Next Generation Broadband, which I expect to publish shortly, (ii) the recommendations of the Value for Money and Policy Review of Phase I of the MANs Programme published on 4 July last and (iii) availability of resources.

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

487. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42215/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** As the Deputy will be aware, measures announced in Budget 2009 included proposals to rationalise State Agencies. In the context of this Department, a new national inland fisheries body will be established, which will replace the existing central and seven regional fisheries boards. The most immediately identifiable cost savings will result from the reduction in the costs of servicing eight separate boards and associated board members expenses. The saving in expenses is estimated to be in the region of €300,000 per annum. It is expected that further savings and increased efficiencies will arise from the restructuring. Further opportunities to rationalise agencies operating under the aegis of the Department will be examined and considered in due course.

#### **Proposed Legislation.**

488. **Deputy Niall Blaney** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when the proposed Broadcasting Bill will be complete; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42281/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** The Broadcasting Bill has been referred to the Select Committee following the completion of Second Stage in Dáil Éireann on 6 November, 2008 and having been passed by Seanad Éireann on 25 June 2008. The Select Committee on Communications, Energy and Natural Resources will commence in Dáil Éireann on 25 November, 2008.

#### **Energy Conservation.**

489. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the way, in relation to the recent announcement regarding additional funding for the warmer homes scheme, this additional funding will be administered; the works and schemes in the Dublin area that will benefit from this funding injection; and the qualifying criteria for such works. [42352/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** The Warmer Homes Scheme, which is overseen by Sustainable Energy Ireland (SEI), invests in insulation and other energy efficiency measures for low income homes across Ireland. The scheme is targeted at householders in receipt of the Fuel Allowance, Disability Benefit or Invalidity Benefit. This service is provided either free of charge or for a nominal fee (less than €100). The service is delivered principally through community based organisations. There are 20 such groups currently approved by SEI, two of which operate in Dublin and the surrounding areas, namely Energy Action and Clondalkin Home Improvement Project (CHIP).

Detailed planning for the delivery of the Warmer Homes Scheme in 2009 is currently underway and while detailed targets for the Scheme are not yet finalised, the additional funding allocated for the Scheme in 2009 will significantly increase the number of homes that can receive energy efficiency improvements. The expanded Scheme will also be available in areas not previously covered.

### **Telecommunications Services.**

490. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when broadband will be available to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal. [42365/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** The provision of telecommunications services, including broadband, is a matter for the private sector. Broadband service providers operate in a fully liberalised market, regulated, where appropriate, by the independent Commission for Communications Regulation, ComReg. The role of the Government is to formulate regulatory and infrastructure policies to facilitate the provision of high quality telecommunications services, by competing private sector service providers. It is important to note that in addition to fixed landline broadband, otherwise known as Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) or broadband over telephone lines, broadband services are available from competing service providers over multiple platforms including cable, satellite, fixed wireless and increasingly mobile. I understand that Glenties already has broadband on offer from a number of service providers.

### **Consultancy Contracts.**

491. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42575/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** The identification of records prior to January 2007 cannot be facilitated without undue commitment of staff resources and administrative cost. However, if the Deputy has a question in relation to a specific item I will make appropriate enquiries. In the following table details of consultants engaged by my Department in 2007 are provided. The table also contains data on Marine consultancies that were undertaken prior to the transfer of fishery functions to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food during 2007. The data covers both consultancies incurred under subhead A7 of my Department's Vote as well as consultancies associated with Programme spend.

In general, I would emphasise that Value for Money is a high priority issue. I fully support the efficient and effective use of taxpayers' money and the continuous achievement of Value for Money. My Department continuously seeks to deliver programme and administrative expenditure, as approved each year by the Dáil, in a Value for Money way while meeting the policy objectives underpinning this expenditure.

In light of the current need to achieve savings and efficiencies no area was considered exempt from critical scrutiny. In the 2009 estimates for my Department the funds available for the use of consultants has been reduced accordingly, including a reduction of 37% on the A7 subhead.

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This will lead to a significant reduction in the number of consultancies by reference to 2007 levels.

Consultant	Consultancy	2007 Outturn
		€
Chair & Board of Audit Committee	DCENR Audit Committee	5,000
Helm Corporation Ltd	Temporary Head of Internal Audit Unit	27,091
Mason Hayes + Curran	HR Advice	11,494
John O'Dowd	HR Advice	5,445
Mc Guinness Killen Partnership Ltd	HR Advice	1,634
O'Malley & Company	Preparation of five FHCF Accounts for 2005	1,162
ESB Independent Generation	Financial Adviser to DCMNR	93,170
Deloitte & Touche	2005-2006 EAGGF Audit	2,213
Stephen O'Connor	Financial Advisor to the Department	114,092
Employment and Safety Associates	Expert Advice on Health and Safety Audits	14,470
Miss Marguerite Brennan — Murphy	Healthy Eating Initiative	4,550
Norcontel (Ireland) Ltd	Technical Review of the Emergency Call Answering Service (ECAS)	171,858
Matheson Ormsby Prentice	Legal Advice on procurement of an ECAS Provider	91,143
Eric van Rongen	Non-Ionizing Radiation (NIR)	15,826
Dr. Michael Repacholi	Non-Ionizing Radiation (NIR)	7,190
Margaret O'Driscoll	Drafting of Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2007	28,435
INDECON	RTE Licence Fee Review	171,699
Mason Hayes + Curran	Legal advice against threatened legal actions	38,480
Analysys Mason Limited	Assistance on draft policy paper on Next Generation Networks	23,506
A & L Goodbody Solicitors	Legal Advice for BnM — ESOP documentation	11,108
Matheson Ormsby Prentice	Legal Advice re post sale of INPC / Whitegate Refinery	97,068
Arthur Cox Solicitor	Legal Advice on Biofuels Mineral Oil Tax Relief	1,431
Fingleton White & Co Ltd	Gas to the Northwest Study	141,699
Mason Hayes + Curran	Legal Advice to EU infringement proceedings	68,964
CSA Group	All Island LNG & Gas Storage Study	213,738
Dept Enterprise Trade & Investment NI	DETINI — Review of North South Pipeline	16,195
CAP ITA Resourcing Ltd	Single Electricity Market	35,091
Various via Dept Enterprise Trade & Investment NI	All Island Grid Study	218,608
Dara Design & Print Ltd	Corporate branding and website design	6,697
Kepler Consulting Ltd	UCD Portal Study	6,970
Marine Institute	Provision of international seabed mapping services	4,600
Dr. Ralph Horne	Advice on GSI library acquisitions & management 07	5,250
AG Education Services Ltd	Advice GSI to link data/outputs to LC Syllabus 07	18,150
Petra Coffey	Archivist Services for Archived Files	15,000
CDM (Camp Dresser & McKee Irl Ltd)	EPA Mine Wastes	40,000

Consultant	Consultancy	2007 Outturn
		€
Tobin Consulting Engineers	Groundwater Protection	81,675
Mr Michael Philcox	Aggregate Resource Mapping	16,093
Reid Geophysics	Geoenvironmental Surveys (Airborne Data Interpretation)	2,551
PetRos Eikom Ltd	Geoenvironmental Surveys (Airborne Data Interpretation)	4,060
Natural Environ Research Council	Geoenvironmental Surveys (Airborne Data Interpretation)	15,058
Aurum Exploration Ltd	GeoUrban (Dublin Pilot Project)	19,152
Glenbeigh Records Management	GeoUrban (Dublin Pilot Project)	2,142
DR ROBBIE MEEHAN	Geoheritage (Geoparks)	20,570
KEANE OFFSHORE INTEGRITY LTD	Corrib Verification Process	90,077
Members of EMG	Environmental Monitoring Group	4,981
INDECON	Review of Licensing Terms	30,710
ERT (Scotland) Ltd	Strategic Environmental Assessment — Porcupine	119,325
Louise Johnson	Strategic Environmental Assessment — Porcupine	1,324
CSA Group	Oil and Gas Industry Support Service	78,652
Grainne O'Shea	INFOMAR	2,458
Gartner Ireland Ltd	Provision of technology briefings and advise on ICT trends and implementation strategies	38,745
Petrus Consulting Ltd	Expenditure Reviews of MANS and GBS	3,388
Epsilon Consulting	Expenditure Review of EU & Exchequer Support of the Aquaculture Sector	5,808
NBI Consulting	ICT Project Consultancy	4,922
Richard Black Solicitors	ICT Project Consultancy	32,973
Magnum Opus Ltd	ICT Project Consultancy	1,939,135
Norcontel (Ire) Ltd	ICT Project Consultancy	22,267
Arthur Cox Solicitor	ICT Project Consultancy	114,406
KPMG	ICT Project Consultancy	18,150
Index Creative Communications	eBusiness Awareness Campaigns	34,500
Mazars	Group Broadband Scheme	48,666
Aneta Scieplek	NBS Consultancy	28,942
Commission for Communications Regulation	NBS Consultancy	157,397
ESRI Ireland	NBS Consultancy	28,433
John F O'Connor	Digital Terrestrial Television	6,150
Maxtel Communications	Digital Terrestrial Television	14,429
Gary Tonge	Digital Terrestrial Television	3,519
National Standards Authority of Ireland	Gas Technical Standards Committee	41,399
Network Resources Ltd	Energy Research Strategy	27,878
Network Resources Ltd (Dr Heather Greer)	National Energy Efficiency Campaign	3,969
Cawley Nea Ltd	National Energy Efficiency Campaign	4,953,031
Alan McGurdy	Review of Fisheries Act 1959 — 2006	4,966
Grainne O'Shea	INFOMAR	57,007
Ronan O'Toole	INFOMAR	13,777
Fugro Survey Ltd	INFOMAR	1,211
David Fox Associates	Petroleum Engineering Support (Sept 07 — Aug 08)	41,288

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Consultant	Consultancy	2007 Outturn
		€
David Fox Associates	Petroleum Engineering Support (May 06 — June 07)	175,879
DMAP Ltd	IT Consultancy (Landmark Software)	1,674
BDO Simpson Xavier	Advisory Services to CSSO re legal case Minister V's Mogul of Ireland Ltd	4,840
BDO Simpson Xavier	Corporate Recovery Services	3,630
John Barnett & Associates	Advice on closure / restoration scheme for new Dolomite Quarry, Co Tipperary	5,324
PGW Europe Ltd	Interpretation of Airborne Geophysical Data	4,840
Camp, Dresser & McKee Irl Ltd	Avoca Remedial Study	567,874
Scantech Geosceince Ltd	Airborne Geophysical Data Release Programme	11,519
Aaron Sheehan Clarke	IGH County Sites Audit	16,000
Cormac O'Suilleabhain	Provision of Interviews for site suitability Assessment Training Programme	1,452
Dr David A Falvey	Griffith Geoscience Research Awards	5,455
Dr David Drew	Galway Groundwater Vulnerability Maps	1,400
Dr JA Martin	EPA Mine Waste	1,736
Dr Robbie Meehan	Galway Groundwater Vulnerability Maps	41,019
Dr Robbie Meehan	Gwater Source Prot (Off / Ros / CK)	650
Dr Robbie Meehan	Wastewater Septic tank Course	1,089
Dr Vincent Gallagher	EPA Mine Waste	54,450
ESRI Ireland	EU Water Framework Directive	70,852
Fionnuala Ni Mairtin	Historic Mines Project	14,450
GWP Consultants	EPA Mine Waste	10,536
Laurence Gill	Wastewater Septic tank Course	726
Mr Aaron Clarke	IGH County Sites Audit	24,000
Mr Jason Bolton	Irelithos	47,094
Mr Pheilim Lally	EPA Mine Waste	45,375
Natural Environ Research Council	Griffith Geoscience Research Awards	1,105
Paul Johnston	Gwater Source Prot (Off / Ros / CK)	1,089
Prof CJ Hawkesworth	Griffith Geoscience Research Awards	3,280
Mr Pheilim Lally	Aggregate Potential Mapping	12,705
Edel O'Regan	GIS Technician Services — GeoUrban Dublin pilot project	14,888
Tobin Consulting Engineers	National Mapping Programme -	29,040
Geoff Wright	National Aquifer Report	14,625
National University Galway	PRISM Models Maintenance	24,000
National University Galway	Coast Protection Strategy Study	30,000
RPS Consulting Engineers	Coast Protection Strategy Study	91,264
Compass Informatics Ltd	Coast Protection Strategy Study	13,256
Blom Aerofilms Ltd	Coastal Surveys	16,220
Simmons Aerofilms	Coastal Surveys	6,738
Ormston Technology Ltd	Coastal Surveys	2,034
Martec NI Ltd	Independent Review of Fisheries Control Regime	202,217
Una Mary Tighe	Drafting of SI's in relation to Sales Notes	11,193
IGLS Ltd	Tarbet	2,752



### Telecommunications Services.

492. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the plans he has to provide broadband to Newhall, Ennis, County Clare; when it can be expected that residents will have broadband access in Newhall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42605/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** The provision of telecommunications services, including broadband, is a matter for the private sector. Broadband service providers operate in a fully liberalised market, regulated, where appropriate, by the independent Commission for Communications Regulation, ComReg. The role of the Government is to formulate regulatory and infrastructure policies to facilitate the provision of high quality telecommunications services, by competing private sector service providers.

It is important to note that in addition to fixed landline broadband, otherwise known as Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) or broadband over telephone lines, broadband services are available from competing service providers over multiple platforms including cable, satellite, fixed wireless and increasingly mobile. I understand that Ennis already has broadband on offer from a number of service providers.

### Departmental Expenditure.

493. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42619/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** It has not been possible in the timeframe available to provide the data in the format sought by the Deputy. The information is being compiled and will be forwarded directly to the Deputy.

### Nuclear Power.

494. **Deputy Mary Upton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, further to Parliamentary Question No. 480 of 18 November 2008, if he plans to launch a national debate on the merits and dangers surrounding nuclear power; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42708/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** I have consistently encouraged a debate on nuclear power in Ireland and it is clear that there is a range of views and perspectives on the matter. Informed debate on nuclear energy, as indeed with all dimensions of energy policy, is fundamental to ensuring informed policy making. In my view the appropriate forum for such a debate is the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security. The Committee could provide a forum for all parties of the House to contribute to a structured and informed debate on the issue. For my own part, I have stated firmly on the record that nuclear power is neither sustainable nor the answer to Ireland's energy needs. Our position is shared by several EU Member States and the EU Commission has made it repeatedly clear that it is for Member States to determine their own energy mix.

Any debate on nuclear power should be set in the context of the actions that the Government is taking to deliver fully sustainable and diverse energy resources in transport, heating and power generation. In each of the three areas of energy use, I firmly believe that we have sustainable solutions. It is a matter of accelerating delivery on our targets for renewable energies and energy efficiency. Radically improving energy efficiency and achieving the ambitious renewable energy target set by the Government will ensure that energy demand itself is more

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sustainable. Energy efficiency is a fundamental part of the Government's strategy to address energy costs, security of supply and sustainable energy use.

### Energy Conservation.

495. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of homes in County Kildare that have benefited from the greener homes scheme and the warmer homes scheme since both schemes were launched; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42736/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** Under the Greener Homes Scheme a total of 870 applicants to date in County Kildare have grant approval for the installation of renewable energy heating, 600 of whom have already installed their technology and received grant assistance. A total of 18 houses in County Kildare have been assisted under the Warmer Homes Scheme since 2005.

### Telecommunications Services.

496. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of telephone exchanges nationwide; the number that have not been broadband enabled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42742/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** The provision of telecommunications services, including broadband, is primarily a matter for private sector companies operating in a fully liberalised market, regulated by the Independent Commission for Communications Regulation, (ComReg). The statistical data sought by the Deputy is a matter for the infrastructure owners. I have no function in this matter.

### Ministerial Staff.

497. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42898/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** There are currently 9 staff employed in my private office and 3 in my constituency office. Salaries and expenses in regard of the previous 12 month period are in the following table.

Salary Cost Private Office	Salary Cost Constituency Office	Expenses Private Office	Expenses Constituency Office
€477,440	€113,592	€83,663	€400

### Departmental Expenditure.

498. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43229/08]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Office of Public Works (OPW) manages and operates dedicated Public Sector file storage facilities in Dublin. My Department uses these facilities for storage of files relating to the work of all functions of the Department that are Dublin based. The costs

of this storage is met by OPW. My Department also rents a file storage facility located at Belturbet, County Cavan that serves the Department's office in Cavan town. This facility costs €800 per month and this cost is not calculated on a per box rate.

499. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the proposals he has to address the concerns of a group (details supplied) in regard to the budget 2009 changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42320/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The budget for 2009 was framed against the background of a serious deterioration in the national finances. Difficult choices had to be made in allocating the resources available to me in 2009. I made these decisions in the best interests of the sector as a whole, following detailed analysis of my Department's programme of expenditure and careful consideration of the options available. Despite the economic and budgetary situation, funding of €1.8 billion gross is provided for my Department in the 2009 Budget. When combined with EU funding and co-funding of about €1.4 billion next year, this represents very substantial funding for the support and development of the agri-food sector.

My priority in framing the 2009 Budget for the Department was to focus available resources on protecting the most productive elements of the agriculture, food, forestry and fisheries sectors and to ensure that they will continue to develop. My objective is to continue to develop the sector within the budgetary constraints to ensure that it is well positioned to achieving its full potential and benefit from future economic growth. I will monitor all aspects of my Department's expenditure throughout 2009 and, in the normal course, I will review spending priorities in the context of the preparation of the 2010 Estimates.

#### **Foreshore Licences.**

500. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to a previous parliamentary question, if he will provide details on the situation of the applications for foreshore leases from companies (details supplied). [42192/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** In February 2007 Oriel Windfarm Limited applied for a foreshore lease for the purpose of constructing an off-shore wind farm in Dundalk Bay of up to 330 MW potential consisting of 55 turbines with tower height of up to 100m and rotor diameter of up to 120m. Negotiations between Oriel Windfarm Ltd and my Department regarding the terms of a proposed lease are at an advanced stage. Once these negotiations have been completed and taking all other relevant information into consideration in accordance with the Foreshore Acts, my Department will submit a recommendation in this case.

An application for a foreshore lease to construct a wind farm off the Skerd Rocks in Outer Galway Bay was submitted by Fuinneamh Sceirde Teoranta on 15 May 2008, and was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The application has been circulated to my Department's consultees for observations. This element of the process is almost complete and it is likely that the application and associated EIS will go to public consultation in early 2009.

#### **Grant Payments.**

501. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42211/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** An application under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 30 April 2008. Following processing of this application, an advance payment of €10,076.15 issued on 20 October 2008 to the bank account of the person named, via Electronic Funds Transfer. Balancing payments under the Scheme are scheduled to commence issuing on 1 December 2008.

#### **Departmental Bodies.**

502. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices which have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42213/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** Included in the Budget statement by the Minister for Finance on the 14th October was the decision to transfer the marketing functions of Bord Iascaigh Mhara to An Bord Bia and to merge the National Council for Forestry Research and Development (COFORD) into my Department. The Government's initiative in transferring the seafood marketing and promotion functions to Bord Bia will ensure the strengthening of seafood marketing as part of a more cohesive overall food marketing effort, while allowing BIM to focus all its energies in developing the seafood industry in line with the Cawley Strategy — Steering A New Course.

The integration of seafood marketing with the State's domestic and international food marketing body will deliver synergies and opportunities for seafood producers where Bord Bia can draw on its expertise in the food sector to identify key future trends and opportunities for growth while pre-empting and reacting to market, competitors and global changes. The amalgamation of the promotion and market development functions of BIM with Bord Bia, will enable one single agency to manage Ireland's food and drink marketing effort on domestic and international markets. This will facilitate a more effective and efficient marketing effort. It will include the merging of the agencies presence internationally, which overlap in the four markets where BIM currently has a presence.

As Bord Bia determines funding priorities and allocations within its Estimate it is not possible at this stage to estimate possible savings to the Exchequer for the years mentioned. The amalgamation of COFORD into the Forest Service of my Department early next year will produce savings in the area of accommodation currently taken for that Organisation. Further possible savings will be accessed as part of the overall estimate provision for the Forest Service in 2009 and beyond.

#### **Foreshore Licences.**

503. **Deputy Seán Connick** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to Parliamentary Question No. 121 of 1 May 2008, when an application (details supplied) to purchase a foreshore lease from his Department was received; when a decision on this matter will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42250/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** An application to purchase an area of reclaimed foreshore was made by Carroll's Ballyhack Boatyard Ltd on 18 October 2006. The application was made in respect of an area comprising 0.75 acres approximately, in respect of which the company holds a foreshore lease. This lease was issued for a period of 35 years from 1 April 1999. In accordance with current policy, my Department does not sell reclaimed foreshore unless it can be demonstrated that the sale in question is in the public interest. The company was informed on 21 August 2008 that the request to purchase the area of reclaimed foreshore has been refused and that it remains open to the company to apply for a further lease in respect of the area when the current lease expires.

### Grant Payments.

504. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the position in relation to an ongoing matter in regard to REP scheme payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42260/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** Under the EU Regulations governing REPS, a participant must make an application for each annual payment. Failure to do so means that the contract must be terminated and all payments recovered, unless exceptional circumstances apply. In this case, my Department wrote to the person named on 13 September 2001, advising him that he had to lodge his third year payment application form by 31 October 2001. As he failed to do so, my Department had no option but to terminate his participation in the Scheme and seek to recover all the payments he had received. My predecessor stated in reply to Parliamentary Question No 159 of 4 November 2004 on the same case that if appropriate medical evidence was supplied the matter could be reviewed. However no medical evidence has ever been submitted to my Department.

505. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when payment will be made under REP scheme four to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42276/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** Where a valid REPS 4 application has been submitted, advance payments of 75% under the EU regulations governing REPS 4 can issue only when all administrative checks on all 2008 applications for REPS 4 and the Single Payment Scheme are completed. The balancing 25% payment will follow when all 2008 REPS on-farm inspections have taken place. Following the resolution of industrial action in local offices of my Department, the administrative checking has been resumed with a view to releasing payments as soon as possible.

506. **Deputy Edward O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the position regarding a payment due to issue to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [42298/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** An application under the 2008 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 12 May 2008. During processing of this application, issues arose regarding the eligibility of one of the land parcels declared, which have now been resolved. Payment will issue shortly to the person named.

### Fisheries Protection.

507. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his attention has been drawn to the serious concern being expressed by fishermen engaged in the refrigerated sea water sector at any redistribution plans in the mackerel quota; if he intends maintaining a coherent system of distribution that will allay their fears; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42334/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** My colleague, Minister Tony Killeen has already received a range of diverse views from industry representatives and operators regarding how any additional mackerel quota for Ireland should be allocated. In that context, he is consulting with the industry representatives and has arranged a meeting of all interested parties for tomorrow 26th of November with a view to establishing whether an agreed industry approach to this matter can be found.



### Compensation Payments.

508. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will confirm the destocking compensation available for Connemara hill farmers who are complying with the habitats directive; that they are entitled to a compensation package of €2,000 per annum for five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42357/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** This question relates to an arrangement arising out of the EU Habitats Directive, and is a matter in the first instance for the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government who has responsibility for the implementation of that Directive. I understand that REPS farmers in the Maamturk/Twelve Bens complex who are required to observe additional farming restrictions for a five-year period will be paid an additional €2,000 by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for each of the five years in which they fully meet the additional destocking and offwintering provisions of their plans.

### Grant Payments.

509. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason for the delay in forwarding the previous forestry grant since 4 April 2008; the counties which have been paid to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42381/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** All eligible forestry premiums were paid in April 2008. In the case of the person referred to, payment of the 2008 forestry premium was delayed pending clarification as to the exact area which was removed from forestry to facilitate the ESB. I have directed that the 2008 premium be paid and that the exclusion issue be pursued as a separate matter.

510. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their REP scheme four payment. [42394/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** Where a valid REPS 4 application has been submitted, advance payments of 75% under the EU regulations governing REPS 4 can issue only when all administrative checks on all 2008 applications for REPS 4 and the Single Payment Scheme are completed. The balancing 25% payment will follow when all 2008 REPS on-farm inspections have taken place. Following the resolution of industrial action in local offices of my Department, the administrative checking has been resumed with a view to releasing payments as soon as possible.

### National Reserve Schemes.

511. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the position regarding the awarding of national reserve 2006, 2007 and 2008 for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42410/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The person named applied to the 2006 and 2007 National Reserve Schemes under Category B which caters for farmers who commenced farming after 31 December, 2002 or who commenced farming in 2002 but who received no direct payments in respect of that scheme year. The person named was successful under the 2006 National Reserve and an allocation was made. His application under the 2007 National Reserve was deemed unsuccessful as he had already qualified as a new entrant under the 2006 National Reserve. The person named did not submit an application under the 2008 National Reserve.



### Departmental Expenditure.

512. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the amount of expenditure on outsourcing by his Department in each of the years 2003 to 2007; the numbers of outsourcing contracts initiated by his Department in those years; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on outsourcing and the reliance on outsourcing by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42590/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The information requested by the Deputy in his question is not readily available but I will arrange to forward it to him directly in the coming days.

513. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42617/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** In 2007, my Department paid out a total of €10,634,496 kilometre expenses in respect to official travel undertaken by staff. This figure includes €323,082 paid at a reduced kilometre rate to 1872 claimants in respect of attendances at training courses, conferences, seminars, and to staff on temporary transfer from their headquarters. No costs were incurred in respect of bicycle rate.

A breakdown of the cost of official travel expenses claimed in excess of 6,437 kilometres per claimant was not possible in the timeframe given for reply but this information will be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

The following table provides the details of the total costs of official travel according to the cc of the vehicle at the rates applicable in 2007:

Vehicles <1200cc	Claimants	Vehicles between 1200 and 1500cc	Claimants	Vehicles >1500cc	Claimants	Total Amount paid	Total No. of Claimants
€70,383	83	€850,336	473	€9,390,695	1994	€10,311,414	2550

### Grant Payments.

514. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if there will be any impact on the single farm payment if a farmer continues to cut turf on one of the 32 raised special areas of conservation bogs after 28 February 2009; and if he will outline what this impact will be. [42641/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** Under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS)/Disadvantaged Area Scheme (DAS)/ Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), farmers receiving direct aid are required to observe and respect the various Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) set down in EU legislation on the environment, food safety, animal health, and welfare, and plant health and to maintain the farm in good agricultural and environmental condition (GAEC).

SMR 5 concerns the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna. These are prime wildlife conservation areas that are important on a European as well as Irish level. Certain activities, including turf cutting, are prohibited within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and can only be carried out with the consent of the Department of Environment,

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Heritage and Local Government. These are called ‘notifiable actions’ and vary depending on the type of habitat that is present on the site. Farmers with an SAC designation on their lands will have been informed of the notifiable action by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Beneficiaries of SPS/DAS/REPS schemes put part or all of their payments at risk if they are found to be in breach of these notifiable actions. Furthermore, depending on the nature and severity of any such breach, they face the possibility of legal proceedings being instigated against them by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

### **Harbours and Piers.**

515. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will issue a lease to Donegal County Council to enable the breakwater project at Bunrana to proceed; when he will do this; and if he will ensure that the money which is in place for this project will be secured beyond 28 November 2008 until spring 2009 in view of the fact that the lease has not yet come through to enable Donegal County Council to proceed with the breakwater project. [42643/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The lease application in question relates to the proposed construction of a breakwater. The Council informed my Department that the breakwater is being constructed solely for the use of the use of the RNLI. In this regard, my Department, acting on legal advice, requested the Council to furnish the details of the arrangements which the Council proposed to make with the RNLI concerning the use of the structure. On 3rd November, the Council advised my Department that it was not its intention to sub-lease the breakwater to the RNLI nor to put any additional arrangements in place. However, the Council has since indicated that it is willing to put such arrangements in place and the details are awaited.

The Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme is announced on an annual basis. Under the 2008 Programme, €900,000 in grant aid was approved by my Department in order to facilitate the construction of a breakwater at Bunrana. However, there is no facility to carry over unspent allocation to the following year. Local authorities have recently been invited to submit their applications for funding for the 2009 programme. Any application by Donegal County Council in respect of Bunrana will be considered on the basis of Exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

### **Grant Payments.**

516. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason one element of a previous parliamentary question was not referred to in his reply (details supplied); and if he will respond to this specific query. [42672/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** Given the nature of the industrial action and the timescale involved, it is not possible to quantify the number of farmers affected by delays in payment as a result of the industrial action. Following a series of meetings at the Labour Relations Commission, this dispute has now been resolved, and work is ongoing to ensure the prompt delivery of all payments.

517. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if an application for single farm payment made by a person (details supplied) in County Cork is being expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42702/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The application under the Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 8th April 2008. The application was selected for a remote sensing satellite inspection. When the result of this inspection has been returned and any matters arising have been dealt with, the application will immediately be further processed with a view to payment issuing shortly thereafter.

### Food Industry.

518. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will report on the measures taken to assist the marketing and processing of agricultural products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42738/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** My Department sought EU state aid approval in 2000 for a capital investment scheme for to assist the marketing and processing of agricultural products. The scheme ran initially to 2006 and was subsequently extended to the end of 2008 under the EU state aid rules then in operation. Under the scheme to date, over €160m in grant aid has been allocated by my Department for projects to improve marketing and processing facilities at agri-food enterprises. Details are set out in the following table.

Further applications in the beef/sheepmeat sector, livestock marts, low throughput meat establishments and fruit and vegetable sectors are currently going through a competitive assessment and evaluation process in which the strengths of the various proposals are being assessed and ranked in line with the objectives of the Scheme. This evaluation process is nearing completion.

Funding allocated by DAFF for marketing and processing of agricultural products since 2000

Sector	Number of Projects Approved	Amount approved
		€m
Horticulture	34	10.56
Potatoes	24	8.18
Grain	44	20.59
Eggs	7	2.76
Livestock Marts	10	2.21
Meat	29	2.10
Dairy	19	114.38
Total	167	160.78

### Ministerial Staff.

519. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42896/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The following is the information requested by the Deputy.

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	Private Office	Constituency Office
	€	€
Civil Servants	9 <sup>2</sup>	5 <sup>3</sup>
Political Appointees	2	2
Salary Costs <sup>1</sup>	209,497.72	95,479.04
Overtime	7,449.52	10,209.34
Allowances	11,864.53	2,775.09

<sup>1</sup> Salary Costs, Overtime and Allowances are for the period 3 May to 24 September 2008

<sup>2</sup> This number includes 1 work-sharer

<sup>3</sup> This number includes 2 work-sharers.

### Departmental Expenditure.

520. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43230/08]

**Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith):** The cost involved for my Department in off site rental storage at Mid Freight Shipping in Tullamore is .078 cents per week per storage box.

### Youth Services.

521. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if sanction will be given for the recruitment of a youth officer in Fethard, County Tipperary (details supplied). [42165/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Barry Andrews):** The Department of Education and Science received an application on behalf of the Fethard and Kilenale Area Rural Youth Project to be considered for funding in 2008 under the Special Projects for Youth Scheme. This was one of 85 new applications received under this Scheme in 2008. The Department was not in a position to approve funding for the project in 2008 owing to budgetary constraints and the high level of existing commitments in the sector.

### Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme.

522. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties outlined in correspondence (details supplied) for persons who have been made redundant enrolling in VTOS courses; his plans to address the situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42202/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey):** The Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) provides full-time second-chance education and training opportunities for unemployed adults who are over the age of 21 and in receipt of specified social welfare payments for at least six months. VTOS is funded by my Department and operated through the 33 Vocational Education Committees (VECs). Its primary target group are the longer-term unemployed, the low-skilled and disadvantaged.

There are a wide variety of other further education opportunities available to unemployed and employed persons alike, both part-time and full-time, under the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) and through Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. The Back to Education Allow-

ance (BTEA), which is administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, is a second chance education opportunities scheme designed to encourage and facilitate people on certain social welfare payments to improve their skills and qualifications and, therefore, their prospects of returning to the work force. Eligibility for the Back to Education Allowance and associated payments is determined and administered by that Department. FÁS also provides training opportunities for unemployed persons under a wide variety of initiatives, such as the Community Employment Scheme and the Job Initiative Scheme.

### **School Transport.**

523. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science the measures he is examining to counteract the financial loss suffered by operators of school transport coach services as a result of the excise fuel rebate removal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42657/08]

578. **Deputy Rory O’Hanlon** asked the Minister for Education and Science if new arrangements have been put in place for persons providing school bus services as a result of section 99 of the Finance Act 1999 ceasing on 31 October 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42646/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 523 and 578 together.

As I announced in the budget, the allocation for school transport in 2009 allows for a compensatory allowance to be paid to private operators on contract to Bus Éireann, under the school transport scheme. Bus Éireann is currently writing to all contractors seeking documentation relating to previous fuel rebate claims submitted to the Revenue Commissioners, with a deadline date of 19th December. The process of determining the level of any compensatory allowance to be paid will be progressed on the basis of the documentation received from contractors.

### **Special Educational Needs.**

524. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason for the delay in filling 31 special needs assistants applications for a school (details supplied) in County Wicklow. [42121/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. I have arranged for the details supplied by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### **Schools Building Projects.**

525. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position in respect of funding of a school (details supplied) in County Roscommon; his plans for the completion of the project and the shortfall of €300,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42128/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** As part of the expansion of the Small Schools Scheme, a grant was allocated to Croghan NS, to enable the management authority to build a new three classroom school. Additional funding was provided for unavoidable extra costs relating to planning conditions and ground works. The scheme is not intended to leave schools with significant fundraising needs, rather the terms of the Scheme require the schools to tailor the scope of capital works commissioned to the available funding. The decision on whether to continue participating in the scheme or to drop out, if the scope of build is more than the funding envelope permits, is a matter for each school authority.

A central tenet of the devolved scheme is that the school, granted discretion and funding, must equally accept responsibility for prioritisation, adherence to statutory regulations, as well as control of costs and ensuring value for money. My Department has no record of having received an application for additional funding to cover a shortfall in funding of €300,000.

### **Higher Education Grants.**

526. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the problems that applicants seeking educational grants are having in seeking to provide the necessary financial evidence, that is, P21 forms, to the various local authorities due to the fact of the time delay in receiving such forms from the Revenue Commissioners; his plans to deal with the problem; if he will allow an extension of the closing date for such applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42132/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The assessment of means under my Department’s Third Level Student Maintenance Grant Schemes is based on gross income from all sources, with specified social welfare and health service executive payments being excluded from the calculation. A P21 is a statement of total income, tax credit and tax paid for a particular tax year. The Deputy will be aware that through the Revenue On-line Service (ROS) an individual can avail of the interactive facility offering business and individuals a quick, secure and cost effective method to manage their Tax Affairs, including the acquisition of a P21 on-line. The closing date for receipt of grant applications under the 2008 maintenance grant schemes was the 29th August 2008. The awarding bodies may, however, accept an application which is not received on time and may at its own discretion, treat such application as if it had been received on time.

### **School Staffing.**

527. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will ensure that a school (details supplied) will be allowed to proceed with the appointment of a new teacher in view of the fact that it is now required to have one extra pupil on the roll and that this means that a new prefab will lie unused. [42141/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect Education while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the Budget measures in place there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009.

My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes including



notification to schools will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

I have no difficulty in setting out for this House or for the public generally the overall changes on aggregate teacher numbers in schools for the 2009/10 school year. I will do this when the allocation processes have been completed. Furthermore the staffing schedule will be published and it is a transparent and clear way of ensuring that schools are treated consistently and fairly and know where they stand.

At this time the priority for my Department within the resources available to it is to carry out those processes in a timely manner. Diverting resources in order to create staffing profiles for the school referred to by the Deputy, information which at this time could only be speculative, could not be justified and would in fact impede the process.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio.**

528. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Science if, in terms of budget 2009 cutbacks on pupil numbers in schools this change will not be made retrospectively in respect of the pupil-teacher ratio in a school (details supplied) in County Mayo. [42144/08]

529. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Science if, in terms of budget 2009 cutbacks on pupil numbers in schools this change will not be made retrospectively in respect of the pupil-teacher ratio. [42145/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 528 and 529 together.

The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect Education while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the Budget measures in place there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009.

The mainstream staffing of a primary school is determined by reference to the enrolment of the school on 30th September of the previous school year. The actual number of mainstream posts sanctioned is determined by reference to a staffing schedule which is issued to all primary schools each year. My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes including notification to schools will commence early in the New Year.

The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

### **School Staffing.**

530. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the changes he anticipates to the staffing level of a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary following the recently announced changes for the 2009 educational budget; the grants that were paid to this school for the school term 2006-07 and to date in the school term 2007-08; the changes in grants and funding he anticipates for the school year 2009-10; the projections for this in the 2009-10 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42177/08]

531. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the changes he anticipates to the staffing level of a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary following the recently announced changes for the 2009 educational budget; the grants that were paid to this school for the school term 2006-07 and to date in the school term 2007-08; the changes in grants and funding he anticipates for the school year 2009-10; the projections for this in the 2009-10 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42178/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 530 and 531 together.

The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect Education while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the Budget measures in place there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009.

My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing and grant allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes including notification to schools will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

I have no difficulty in setting out for this House or for the public generally the overall changes on aggregate teacher numbers or on grant levels in schools for the 2009/10 school year. I will do this when the allocation processes have been completed. Furthermore the staffing schedule will be published and it is a transparent and clear way of ensuring that schools are treated consistently and fairly and know where they stand. At this time the priority for my Department within the resources available to it is to carry out those processes in a timely manner. Diverting resources in order to compile either historic information or to create staffing or funding profiles for all of the individual schools requested by the Deputy, information which at this time could only be speculative, could not be justified and would in fact impede the process.

### **Home-School Liaison.**

532. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Education and Science if there are legal requirements or departmental guidelines which help schools develop policies to liaise appropri-

ately with parents of children in cases in which the parents are separated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42181/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** My Department has not issued guidelines to schools on this matter and it is not an issue that has been raised as causing particular difficulty in schools. In general, it is my Department’s view that both parents should be encouraged to take an active interest in their children’s education and it is to the benefit of the children and the school when they do. It is appreciated that practical difficulties for schools can arise where parents are separated.

However, my Department’s approach to the issue of the rights of separated parents to involvement in their children’s education is that the rights of both parents should be respected and given meaningful, practical expression in matters such as school reports, attendance at parent/teacher meetings and other school functions and that generally both parents should receive the same information and level of co-operation from the school. The only qualification to that approach would arise where the best interest of the child required a different approach. Schools are best placed to exercise their own judgements as to what is appropriate in each individual case given their particular knowledge of the individual circumstances.

### **Departmental Bodies.**

533. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number and names of organisations or agencies under his auspices that have been amalgamated or eliminated due to budgetary measures; the estimated savings in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42218/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The following measures were taken by my Department as part of the Government’s programme for the rationalisation of agencies.

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) and the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) will be amalgamated into a single agency. It is difficult to quantify savings until more detailed work on administrative planning is undertaken. It should be noted that the primary reason for the amalgamation is not to achieve cost savings in themselves, but to ensure a more coherent approach by establishing a single integrated organisation. Savings would not arise from the abolition of functions but from efficiencies resulting from them being performed by a single body.

The Educational Disadvantage Committee was abolished. If provision was to be made for the Committee’s reconstitution it would have been of the order of €100,000 per annum.

The National Adult Learning Council (NALC) was disbanded. The expenditure incurred on the National Adult Learning Council was as follows:

- €21,012 in 2002;
- €59,491 in 2003.

The Council has not met since 2003 and no further expenditure has been incurred. It is estimated that to have proceeded with the Council as originally envisaged would have involved significant additional annual expenditure.

The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education was closed. Recurrent annual funding for the Centre was in the region of €1 million.

### **School Staffing.**

534. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support a matter in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [42230/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect Education while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the Budget measures in place there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009.

My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing and grant allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes including notification to schools will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

I have no difficulty in setting out for this House or for the public generally the overall changes on aggregate teacher numbers or on grant levels in schools for the 2009/10 school year. I will do this when the allocation processes have been completed. Furthermore the staffing schedule will be published and it is a transparent and clear way of ensuring that schools are treated consistently and fairly and know where they stand. At this time the priority for my Department within the resources available to it is to carry out those processes in a timely manner. Diverting resources in order to create staffing or funding profiles for the schools referred to by the Deputy, information which at this time could only be speculative, could not be justified and would in fact impede the process.

### **School Enrolments.**

535. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science his views on the recent increase in calls from families about their children not being allowed to access their local second level schools because of lack of places in 2009; and if he will act on this matter. [42231/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Forward Planning Section of my Department is in the process of identifying the areas where significant additional accommodation will be required at primary and post-primary level for 2009 and onwards. Factors under consideration include population growth, demographic trends, current and projected enrolments, recent and planned housing developments and capacity of existing schools to meet demand for places. Having considered these factors decisions will be taken on the means by which emerging needs will be met within an area. If schools feel that they do not have sufficient places to meet demand, they should contact the Department so that the situation can be examined as to how best to provide whatever additional capacity is required.

Where a Board of Management of a school or a person acting on behalf of the Board refuses enrolment to a student, Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, provides parents with an appeal process. Where a school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of

their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to either the relevant Vocational Educational Committee or to the Secretary General of my Department. In the case of the latter, only where an appeal under Section 29 is upheld can the Secretary General of my Department direct a school to enrol a pupil.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The NEWB can be contacted at National Educational Welfare Board, National Headquarters, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7 or by telephone at 01-8738700.

536. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [42232/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools and the Department does not seek to intervene in decisions made by schools in such matters. The Department’s main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act. In this regard a Board of Management may find it necessary to restrict enrolment to children from a particular area or a particular age group or, occasionally, on the basis of some other criterion. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

In 1993, the Department issued a circular (M 51/93) to post-primary schools, advising of a memorandum of agreement between the Department and the post-primary schools managerial association, that selection for the purposes of enrolment based on academic ability should be discontinued. Under section 15 (2) (d) of the Education Act 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy that principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents choice are respected.

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, provides parents with an appeal process where a Board of Management of a school or a person acting on behalf of the Board refuses enrolment to a student. Where a school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to either the relevant Vocational Educational Committee or to the Secretary General of my Department. In the case of the latter, only where an appeal under Section 29 is upheld can the Secretary General of my Department direct a school to enrol a pupil.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The NEWB advises parents to make applications to more than one school, to assist them in securing a school placement. The Board can be contacted at National Educational Welfare Board, National Headquarters, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7 or by telephone at 01-8738700.

### **Schools Refurbishment.**

537. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the situation regarding a refurbishment project at a school (details supplied) in north Tipperary; when the



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project will move to the next stage; the reasons for the delay in progressing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42236/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for an extension project. The project is at the early stages of architectural planning. The progression of all major building projects, including this project, from initial design through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department and with the level of activity in the School Building programme, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

538. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the situation regarding a refurbishment project at a school (details supplied) in north Tipperary; when the project will move to the next stage; the reasons for the delay in progressing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42237/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for an extension and refurbishment project. The project is at the early stages of architectural planning. The progression of all major building projects, including this project, from initial design through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department and with the level of activity in the School Building Programme, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

539. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the situation regarding a refurbishment project at a school (details supplied) in north Tipperary; when the project will move to the next stage; the reasons for the delay in progressing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42238/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for a refurbishment project. The project is at the early stages of architectural planning. The progression of all major building projects, including this project, from initial design through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department and with the level of activity in the School Building Programme, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

#### **Summer Works Scheme.**

540. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Science his plans to reinstate the summer works scheme for 2009; if schools that have applied previously will have to reapply; the amount of funding that will be provided for the scheme; when schools should apply for the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42239/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** Since the Summer Works Scheme was introduced, over 3,000 projects, costing in excess of €300 million, have been completed. With so many smaller projects having been completed over the past few years, the



particular emphasis in 2008 has been on providing sufficient school places in developing areas, while also delivering improvements in the quality of existing primary and post-primary school accommodation throughout the country. Accordingly my Department has focused on delivering as many large projects as possible in 2008 and funding was not made available for a Summer Works Scheme this year.

However, I recognise the benefits of the scheme in addressing the needs of schools and I have previously informed the house of my intention to have a Summer Works Scheme in 2009. The details of the operation of the scheme in 2009 and the level of funding to be made available under the scheme in 2009 are currently being considered. The Professional and Technical Reports provided by schools for 2008 can be used again for future projects so that schools will not be at the loss of expenditure on them.

### **Schools Refurbishment.**

541. **Deputy Noel J. Coonan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the situation regarding a refurbishment project at a school (details supplied) in north Tipperary; when the project will move to the next stage; the reasons for the delay in progressing the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42240/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for an extension and refurbishment project. The project is at the early stages of architectural planning. The progression of all major building projects, including this project, from initial design through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department and with the level of activity in the School Building Programme, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

### **Special Educational Needs.**

542. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the cost of the provision of special needs assistants within primary and post-primary education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42241/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The estimated cost for the provision of Special Needs Assistants in 2008 is €323.5 million. The breakdown is as follows: Primary — €267 million; Post Primary — €56.5 million.

### **School Staffing.**

543. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science, in respect of the redeployment panel scheme, the number of teachers on the redeployment panel awaiting an offer of a teaching post at another school who remain employed in their existing school and who must act as a replacement teacher for absences of other teachers in the school with a breakdown on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42242/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** There are four teachers on redeployment panels at present, 1 in each of the following areas Clare, Dublin, Longford and Monaghan.

**Departmental Programmes.**

544. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science when the Walk Tall programme was first compiled; when it first began to be taught in schools; when it was last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42248/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** In 1995, the Department of Education and Science initiated planning for a pilot project on Substance Misuse Prevention in primary schools. The title chosen for the entire primary school programme was The Walk Tall Programme. The materials were piloted in a number of primary schools in Dublin, Donegal and Cork during 1996/97. Following on from the pilot the Walk Tall Programme was disseminated to primary schools nationally between 1998-2001.

The Walk Tall Programme is currently in the process of being reviewed. Focus days on the programme materials have been held with teachers who are experienced in teaching the programme. A working group has been established to co-ordinate the review of the programme materials with the guidance of an advisory group representative of all the partners in education. In addition to focus groups of teachers the views of parents and pupils will also be included in the review.

To date there have been three evaluations of the Walk Tall programme all conducted by Dr. Mark Morgan Head of Education St. Patrick’s Training College Dublin, Director of the European Schools Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD). A formative evaluation was carried out in 1998 and concluded that the programme was in line with the most effective approaches that have been shown to work in existing evaluations of programmes from abroad. Teachers were pleased with the lesson plans throughout the programme. The programme was again evaluated in 2000. This evaluation found that a substantial number of schools were implementing the programme. School based in-service and support were seen as important factors in implementation.

An evaluation of the programme was conducted in Local Drugs Task Force Area schools in 2003. This evaluation found that teachers felt there was a greater need than ever for the programme, the programme integrated very well with SPHE and other areas of the curriculum and the support service was very helpful particularly in the area of support and training in the use of interactive learning strategies.

545. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science when the On My Own Two Feet programme was first compiled; when it first began to be taught in schools; when it was last updated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42249/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The SAPP (Substance Abuse Prevention Programme) “On My Own Two Feet” was first published in 1993 by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Health and Mater Dei Counselling Centre. A second edition was published in 1997 and both of these were in hard pack. An addendum to the On My Own Two Feet programme, “The Consequences” pack, was published in 1998.

The Own My Own Two Feet was a stand alone fifty hour teacher training programme and has been used in schools since 1993. Each teacher received a pack on completion. The programme was subsumed into Social Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE) as a Core Resource since the SPHE Support Service commenced in September 2000. Since 2000 the Pack has been given to schools in the context of schools engaging with the SPHE Support Service, that is teachers attending inservice training. While it was transferred, and available to schools, onto CD format in 2003, it continued to be made available in hard packs to those

schools who had not received them previously. Stocks of hard packs were depleted earlier this year, but CDs continue to be made available to schools through the Regional Teams in SPHE.

‘On My Own Two Feet’ is a class-room materials resource for substance-use education in the context of the SPHE programme. It is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum, drawing on three approaches: development of values and attitudes, decision-making and social competence. As such it is a comprehensive life-skills programme. The programme is being delivered in 750 secondary schools throughout the country with the aim of reaching all students in Junior Cycle.

At post-primary level, Substance Use is one of the 10 modules of the SPHE curriculum for junior cycle students. SPHE has been a requirement within the Junior Cycle Programme since September 2003. The SPHE Support Service, established in 2000, as a partnership between my Department, the Department of Health and Children and the HSE continues to support schools in the implementation of the SPHE programme. In addition to the support offered nationally by the SPHE regional teams, an initiative began in September 2008 in which targeted support for drug education within the context of SPHE is being offered to DEIS schools in Dublin city, Cork city and Limerick city.

I am confident that the SPHE programme is ensuring that the education system plays its role in combating drug abuse among young people. Clearly, however, this issue requires action on many fronts. To this end, the Government has put in place the National Drugs Strategy which aims to reduce drug abuse through investment in a mixture of different facilities and programmes and through actions by a range of Departments and Agencies. The evidence available to me from the national SPHE Support Service informs me that the substance misuse education prevention programmes being implemented as an integral part of the SPHE curricula is in line with best international practice.

### **Departmental Expenditure.**

546. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Science the discussions he has had with a person (details supplied) in the aftermath of budget 2009; if these discussions have led to proposed changes in the education cutbacks in budget 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42251/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I can confirm that I had a constructive meeting with the person referred to in the Deputy’s PQ. As the Deputy will be aware, I have outlined the position in relation to the 2009 Education Estimates, and the Government decisions that underpin them, to this House on a number of occasions.

### **Schools Building Projects.**

547. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will make a statement on a school (details supplied) in County Limerick; the amount of money he will be providing in 2009 to this school; and if he will be sanctioning the extra funding needed for the provision of two new classrooms and a physical education facility. [42273/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The school to which the Deputy refers applied for capital funding for additional accommodation under the Small Schools Scheme 2007. However, due to the volume of applications received, it was not possible to allocate funding to all applicants and the application from this school was unsuccessful. The school has, however, received almost €83,000 under the Summer Works Scheme to improve conditions at the school. It is open to the school authority to apply to my Department for funding for major capital works. The application form (Form FLE) is available on my Depart-

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ment’s website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). The progression of all applications for large scale capital funding will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme.

### **School Staffing.**

548. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Science when a full-time teacher for the visually impaired in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Mayo will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42284/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** My Department will shortly advertise a full-time post of Visiting Teacher for the Visually Impaired in order to support the education of visually impaired children at preschool stage and those attending first and second-level schools in Co. Mayo, including the school to which the Deputy refers.

### **Schools Refurbishment.**

549. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in County Offaly that have made applications for assistance under the grant scheme for minor works; the position regarding these applications; when funding will be allocated to each school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42289/08]

550. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Education and Science the schools in County Laois that have made applications for assistance under the grant scheme for minor works to his Department; the position regarding these applications; when funding will be allocated to each school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42290/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I propose to answer Questions Nos. 549 and 550 together.

A devolved Minor Works Grant is paid to all fully recognised primary schools annually. The Minor Works Grant provides school authorities with the funds to carry out ongoing repairs and maintenance work of a minor nature on school buildings. It allows the school to prioritise how the money is spent on their schools, again using their local knowledge. The funding for the minor works grant for the 2006/7 year was increased by 44% on the previous year. Over €27m was paid out to schools throughout the country in 2007 to enable thousands of small scale works to be completed without the need to interact with the Department. Individual primary schools received a grant in the sum of €5,500 plus €18.50 per pupil. It is intended that the Minor Works Grant for the 2008/2009 school year will be paid in 2009.

### **Teaching Qualifications.**

551. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the fact that many newly qualified teachers in primary schools have been told that they will not be able to partake in their diploma courses as normal in their first year of teaching owing to a shortage of school inspectors; the numbers involved; if his Department has plans to recruit external assessors to help alleviate their problem; if increments will be back-dated in the future to take account of a newly qualified teacher having to wait until their second year of teaching to obtain their diploma; if his Department will facilitate newly qualified teachers with scholarships pending to do masters who need to have their diploma completed before July 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42292/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The diploma courses referred to by the Deputy involve a post-qualification probationary period, normally a year, during which a newly qualified primary teacher is employed in a primary school where his/her work is evaluated by an inspector. The parameters surrounding the probationary process are outlined in Circular 0140/2006. Schools are advised in June each year to notify the Department of teachers who may be eligible for probation. A series of dates is nominated for submission of applications: round 1 by the end of June; round 2 by the middle of September; round 3 by the beginning of November; and round 4 by the middle of January.

With regard to the 2008/9 year, the current position is that 2445 of the 2537 teachers who registered for probation during rounds 1,2 and 3 have been deemed eligible. Of these 2445 teachers, 1953 have been assigned to inspectors at present. The unassigned cases are mainly in the greater Dublin/ East Coast area and this situation has arisen mainly because of the concentration of probationary teachers in that area. Arrangements are being made at present to assign the remaining 492 cases and it is expected that all the teachers concerned will be notified within the next few weeks. Increments are granted annually to teachers subject to service being satisfactory and are not conditional on the completion of probation in the first year. The granting of scholarships and the terms of such scholarships is a matter for the awarding body.

### **Schools Building Projects.**

552. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support a matter in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [42303/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The proposed building project for the school to which the Deputy refers is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The commencement and progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to construction phase, including this project, will be considered in the context of my Department’s Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of this project at this time.

### **Departmental Expenditure.**

553. **Deputy Brian O’Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science the proposals he has to address the concerns of staff at a school (details supplied) in County Waterford in regard to proposed cutbacks in primary education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42340/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** Notwithstanding the increase of €302 million in the Education budget for 2009, which is a real achievement in the current economic climate, a number of tough and difficult decisions had to be taken. When the country was able to afford it the Government reduced the basis on which primary teachers are allocated to schools from being based on an average number of pupils per teacher from 35 pupils down to the current level of 27 pupils. The change to a new average of 28 pupils per teacher has to be viewed in that context.

Significant additional support went into schools particularly in the area of special education. The Government also reduced class sizes for the most disadvantaged in our DEIS schools to an average of 1 teacher for every 20 pupils in Junior classes and an average of 1 teacher for every 24 pupils in Senior classes and these will not be changing in 2009. When you add up all the teachers in the system there is 1 teacher for every 16 pupils in our primary schools.



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It will be necessary in the more testing economic climate ahead for us to continue to target and prioritise our resources to maximum effect for everyone. While teacher numbers are important numerous influential reports have highlighted the fact that teacher quality is the single most important factor — far and above anything else — in improving educational outcomes for children. Ensuring high quality teaching and learning is a challenge and dealing with factors that inhibit it represent a challenge for the Government, the Department, school management and indeed the teacher unions.

I am confident that as the global economy improves it will be possible to build again on the significant achievements of recent years and do so in a manner consistent with overall prudent management of the Irish economy.

### **Departmental Funding.**

554. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science if he will support a matter (details supplied). [42347/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** There are currently 56 fee-charging second level schools in the country, of which 21 are Protestant, 2 Inter-denominational, one Jewish and the remainder Catholic. Fee-charging schools, with the exception of the Protestant and Jewish fee-charging schools for which special arrangements apply, do not receive capitation or related supports.

Protestant fee-charging schools receive, and will continue to receive, the Protestant Block grant, which amounts to €6.25 million in the current school year. This payment covers capitation, tuition and boarding grants. The grant is distributed by the Secondary Education Committee among needier Protestant children. Applications are made by parents to the Central Protestant Churches Authority, which, on the basis of a means test, distributes the funds to individual schools on the basis of pupil needs. A similar arrangement exists for the Jewish school and will continue also. The arrangements for minority schools reflect the importance the Government attaches to ensuring that students can attend schools that reflect their denominational ethos.

In retaining this grant the Government is being faithful to the separate arrangements that were agreed with the Protestant schools when the free scheme was introduced by Donagh O’Malley and, at the time, it was the payment of a block grant in particular for Protestant fee-charging schools that distinguished them from the Catholic schools that also chose to continue to charge fees.

Prior to Budget 2009, in addition to the block grant, Protestant fee-charging schools were paid a range of support services grants that the Catholic fee-charging schools did not receive. It is estimated that savings of €2.8 million will accrue as a result of the withdrawal of these grants from the Protestant fee-charging schools in 2009.

Teachers in all fee-charging schools are paid by the State, and this arrangement predated the introduction of free education arrangements. In the absence of fee-paying schools and the enrolment of all pupils in the non-fee paying sector, there would be subsequent additional costs and teachers would still have to be paid. In Budget 2009 the Government has, however, decided to make changes to how fee charging schools should be treated in relation to the number of publicly funded teaching posts they are allocated. Teachers in fee charging schools are now allocated at a pupil teacher ratio of 20 to one, which is a point higher than allocations in non fee charging post primary schools. Fee charging schools can continue to employ additional teachers that they fund from their fee income.



### Schools Building Projects.

555. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a school (details supplied) in Dublin 15 had agreed to increase its intake of pupils on the understanding that plans for an extension, including car parking facilities, would be approved by his Department; the status of these school improvements; if funding has been allocated for their introduction in 2009; if he will provide a time line for the completion of these improvements; if he will provide details of any recent correspondence with the school, or its parents' association with respect to these improvements; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that these improvements are necessary and urgent in order to ensure the health and safety of children attending the school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42354/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** The major capital project for the School to which the Deputy refers has been assigned the highest priority band rating of 1 and a design team has been appointed. The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to tender and construction, including this project, will be considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. In light of current competing demands on my Department's capital budget, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time. My Department has recently received correspondence from the Parents Association and will be responding as soon as possible.

556. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 15 with respect to the capital development programme; if he will confirm that this school was given a 1.1 priority status by his Department on the capital development list two years ago; if the capital development status of the school has been modified at any time during the past two years; if his Department has been in contact with the school with respect to the capital development programme at any point since 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42355/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** The major capital project for the School to which the Deputy refers has been assigned the highest priority band rating of 1. A design team has been appointed and the project is currently at Stage 1 — preliminary design and sketch scheme. The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to tender and construction, including this project, will be considered on an on-going basis in the context of my Department's Multi-Annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. In light of current competing demands on my Department's capital budget, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the further progression of the project at this time.

### School Books.

557. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Education and Science the rationale for abolishing the book grant in budget 2009; if this measure could have a significant and negative impact on those children from families on low incomes in particular; if he proposes measures to lessen this impact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42356/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** Notwithstanding the increase of €302 million in the Education budget for 2009, which is a real achievement in the current economic climate, a number of tough and difficult decisions had to be taken. These decisions included reductions on the aid for school books scheme. From 2009 this grant will be available

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only to schools within the DEIS scheme. By limiting the school book grant to schools within the DEIS scheme savings of approximately €7.5m will be achieved.

DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), is the action plan for educational inclusion and focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities. Approximately €7 million was made available in 2008 to DEIS schools for the school book grant scheme and this fund of €7 million will be made available for distribution to schools in the DEIS programme in 2009. Officials in my Department are currently considering the most appropriate manner in which to distribute this fund. The continuation of the school book grant to these schools is testament to the Government’s determination to prioritise social inclusion and protect the most vulnerable in our society.

My Department continues to urge schools to implement book rental schemes as a measure to minimise the cost of school books to all parents. This was the recommendation of a consultancy report, submitted to my Department in 1993, which dealt with the factors which contribute to the cost of school text books. The report, copies of which were sent to all schools, contains a number of useful suggestions, including a Code of Good Practice for successful operation of book rental schemes. My Department fully endorses the report’s recommendations.

#### **School Staffing.**

558. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science if section 30 of the Teaching Council Act 2001 has been commenced; if his Department has made provision for the engagement of untrained teaching staff to act as substitute teachers; if such provision completely contradicts the Teaching Council’s aim of eliminating the employment of untrained staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42370/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I have indicated my intention to commence Section 30 of the Teaching Council Act in the near future. I have also indicated that the commencement of the section will also provide for it to be regulated that a school may employ unregistered personnel on a time limited basis in extreme circumstances. While I and my Department and the Teaching Council agree on the desirability of having a fully qualified and registered teaching cohort, I believe that the above proposed legislative arrangement reflects the situation facing schools today where it is not always possible, for a variety of reasons, to engage a registered teacher for substitution duty.

#### **Local Authority Charges.**

559. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the arrangements that have been put in place to bill schools for local authority water charges; the way he expects schools to pay these bills in view of the cutbacks in budget 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42372/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Government agreed a transition period to full water charges in the case of non-fee charging recognised schools and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has advised local authorities of the detailed arrangements regarding the implementation of this decision. The transitional arrangements afford schools the opportunity to put in place water conservation arrangements and practices and to undertake works that can help reduce water usage significantly before full water charges are introduced. By virtue of good water conservation schools can be in a much stronger position to reduce the impact of water charges on their overall budgets.

Under the transition arrangements agreed by the Government, schools pay a flat rate per pupil fee as follows:- 2007- €3 per pupil, 2008 — €3.50 per pupil and 2009- €4 per pupil enrolled. For 2007, charges applied based on metering were recalculated on the transitional flat rate with a credit given for any excess payment.

Guidance was also issued to schools on the most appropriate measures to minimise excess consumption of water and to reduce wastage where it exists. In addition, water conservation issues will continue to be addressed by my Department as a matter of routine where new schools are being built or where major renovations are being carried out to existing schools under the schools modernisation programme. Furthermore those schools with very high water consumption will be identified and contacted with a view to introducing measures to help them reduce water usage.

In the context of reducing water costs for schools, it has been demonstrated that fitting simple water saving devices to toilets and sinks can reduce water consumption considerably at very little cost, as can other small works such as fixing easily identifiable leaks. Primary school authorities may use their annual minor works grant to fund such measures. The minor works grant has increased by nearly 50% over the past two years and some €27m is due to issue to all primary schools in early 2009 under this grant scheme. My Department remains in close liaison with the Department of Environment and Local Government regarding water conservation and is supportive of any initiatives by it and local authorities that will help reduce water costs for schools.

In relation to day to day funding for schools I prioritised funding for primary schools in the recent budget, increasing the standard rate of capitation grant at primary level to €200 per pupil. The increases in the enhanced rates for special needs pupils in special classes and special schools brings the top rate up to almost €1,000 per pupil. The capitation grant for post-primary schools has been increased by 4.3%, representing an increase of €14 per pupil, to bring it to €345 per pupil from January 2009. Voluntary secondary schools will also benefit also from an increase in the school services support grant by €8 per pupil from January 2009. This will mean, for example, that a secondary school with an enrolment of 500 pupils will receive an additional €11,000 in funding in 2009.

While I clearly will want to improve funding as soon as circumstances permit, I am anxious to make the capitation grant mechanism the single funding channel for schools.

### **Higher Education Grants.**

560. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7 was refused a grant for a postgraduate diploma; if it is accepted that they are progressing with their education by following a level nine diploma after completing a level eight diploma; if this case will be reviewed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42377/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The decision on eligibility for student maintenance grants is a matter for the relevant assessing authority, either the local authority or VEC, as appropriate. These bodies do not refer individual applications to my Department, except in exceptional circumstances. If an individual applicant considers that she/he has been unjustly refused a maintenance grant, or that the rate of maintenance grant awarded is not the correct one, she/he may appeal, in the first instance, to the relevant local authority or VEC.

Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by the relevant local authority or VEC, and remains of the view that the body has not interpreted the schemes

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correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to my Department. As the case cited by the Deputy does not involve progression at postgraduate level, the student in question would not be eligible for grant assistance, under the terms of the Grants Scheme.

### **State Examinations.**

561. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Science the amount of State money that has been spent on State examinations for special centres on an annual basis since 1997; and the amount of money that has been spent in this respect in County Donegal. [42382/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations, including charging and collecting fees for examinations and applying such monies to the carrying out of its functions, and designate places where examinations may be held. In view of this, I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

### **Disadvantaged Status.**

562. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Science the reason a school (details supplied) has lost its disadvantaged area status; if he will reverse this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42383/08]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Science (Deputy Seán Haughey):** The school to which the Deputy refers is among the schools that were judged by an independent identification process in 2005 not to have a sufficient level of disadvantage among their pupils to warrant their inclusion in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunities in Schools), the Action Plan for educational inclusion. The next identification process is scheduled to be held at the end of the current DEIS programme which runs from 2005-2010. There will not be an opportunity before this to be included in the current DEIS programme of supports.

This school together with 72 other post primary schools retained resources, both teaching posts and financial, under pre-existing schemes and programmes for addressing educational disadvantage. When DEIS was introduced, a commitment was given as a concessionary measure to these schools that they would retain a level of support for the duration of the DEIS Initiative. While it is appreciated that the discontinuation of these resources will impact on these schools, given the current volatile and challenging economic climate, difficult decisions had to be made in order to contain public sector spending. One of these decisions was to advance the withdrawal of such supports from non DEIS schools to the beginning of the next school year.

The main focus of Social Inclusion measures will be to retain resources in DEIS schools. There is a need to focus targeted resources on the schools in most need and this approach is in line with the broad thrust of the recommendations of the Comptroller and Auditor General which are set out in his report on Primary Disadvantage of 2006, which recommended that the Department should focus its educational disadvantage measures on those schools serving the most disadvantaged communities.

### **Grant Payments.**

563. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the amount of

money saved to the Exchequer for a full school year by the abolition of the leaving certificate applied grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42390/08]

564. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the amount of money saved to the Exchequer for a full school year by the abolition of the transition year grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42391/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 563 and 564 together.

In framing the budget, a range of very difficult policy choices had to be faced by the Government across all areas of public expenditure, including in the field of education. While education remains a priority for the Government, it has been necessary to curtail expenditure in some areas. While certain grants are to be abolished, I would like to emphasise that the capitation grant for post-primary schools has been increased by 4.3%, representing an increase of €14 per pupil, to bring it to €345 per pupil from January 2009.

Voluntary secondary schools will also benefit also from an increase in the school services support grant by €8 per pupil from January 2009. This will mean, for example, that a secondary school with an enrolment of 500 pupils will receive an additional €11,000 in funding in 2009. The abolition of the Transition Year grant is expected to save €2.55 million. It is estimated that savings in the order of €1.2 million will be made by the abolition of the Leaving Certificate Applied grant.

#### **School Staffing.**

565. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science the proposals he has in regard to concerns about the proposed cuts in education spending (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42392/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** The 2009 Budget required difficult choices to be made across all areas of public expenditure. These decisions were made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. In this respect, Education while protected to a much greater extent than most other areas of public expenditure, could not be totally spared. The various impacts at school level were included in the Budget day announcements. Even with the Budget measures in place, there will still be a significantly increased borrowing requirement in 2009.

My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing and grant allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes, including notification to schools, will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers, my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

#### **Departmental Programmes.**

566. **Deputy Áine Brady** asked the Minister for Education and Science the programmes and policies he has for schools, both primary and secondary, to highlight the importance of road safety; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42399/08]



**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I believe that schools have a role to play both in teaching students about road safety issues and in helping them to develop the attitudes necessary to promote safe behaviour on the roads. The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, which is mandatory in primary schools and at junior cycle level, provides a framework under which the generic values and skills which underpin responsible decision-making, and respect for the rights and safety of others, can be developed and promoted among students. SPHE has a specific personal safety strand within the programme, and this provides a mechanism through which road safety issues for all can be best dealt with in an age appropriate way.

In February of 2007, the Road Safety Authority launched the RSA MACE “Safe to School” campaign at primary level. The programme is aimed at helping primary school children learn effective road safety lessons. The 2007 campaign covered walking to school safely, in 2008 the campaign is focused around the topic of Cycling to School Safely. A dedicated website, [www.safetoschool.ie](http://www.safetoschool.ie), has also been launched as part of the campaign. The Streetwise programme for junior cycle pupils was launched in UN Road Safety Week on 24 April 2007. It covers road safety across 9 topics — walking, cycling, seatbelts, airbags, speed, driver fatigue, motor cycle safety, hazard recognition and the engineering aspects of road safety — to be delivered over nine class periods.

In addition, a Road Safety programme for Transition Year, developed by the Road Safety Authority in collaboration with my Department, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Second level Support Service was piloted in the 2007/08 school year and will be rolled out to schools in the next school year.

Applications issued to schools inviting them to participate in the programme from September 2008 and over 200 schools applied for the necessary in-service which took place in October 2008. My Department will continue to work with the Road Safety Authority to strengthen the role of schools in promoting road safety even further. A range of measures are also being taken to promote safety on school buses.

### **Special Educational Needs.**

567. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science the amount of funding to be allocated to the fund for students with disabilities in respect of the academic year 2008-09; if there is a capping on the amount of funding allocated to different disabilities on an averaging of spending in previous years, even though in June 2008 at the launch of the Higher Education Authority Plan for Access 2008 to 2013 he announced that the plan is to double the number of people with sensory, physical and multiple disabilities in higher education by 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42406/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Fund for Students with Disabilities is a component of the Third Level Access Fund and is administered on behalf of my Department by the Higher Education Authority’s National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education. The total allocation to the Third Level Access Fund for 2008 is €17.984m. In addition to the Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Third Level Access Fund supports other programmes, including the Student Assistance Fund, the Millennium Partnership Fund and pilot community-based access initiatives.

The decision on the allocation of resources for 2008-9 between the different strands of the Third Level Access Fund will be made by the National Access Office in consultation with my Department and following the completion of discussions with the sector, having regard to the goals of the National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education. Capping of supports has



always applied in relation to individual equipment and personal service supports under the fund for Students with Disabilities.

### **Schools Building Projects.**

568. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Education and Science if an application for a new school (details supplied) in County Donegal has been received in his Department; if so, when it was received; if a site has been identified; the price agreed for said site; if the site has already been purchased or is in the process of being purchased; when it is expected that work will be completed on the project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42409/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Office of Public Works (OPW) who acts on behalf of my Department in the acquisition of sites for schools was asked to source a suitable site for the school in question to provide a new building for school. A suitable site was identified and the acquisition of same is at an advanced stage. Due to the commercial sensitivities involved, I do not propose to comment any further in relation to the specific site.

The completion of the acquisition of the site will be considered in the context of the capital budget available to my Department for school buildings generally. In light of the many competing demands on the capital budget of my Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the acquisition of the school site or the delivery of the school building project at this time.

### **Special Educational Needs.**

569. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position in relation to the provision of resource hours for a child (details supplied) in County Cork. [42418/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** As the Deputy will be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers, for allocating resource teachers and special needs assistants to schools to support children with special needs. The NCSE operates within my Department’s criteria in allocating such support. I have arranged for the details supplied by the Deputy to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply. All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child’s special educational needs, using the contact details available on [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

### **Local Authority Charges.**

570. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Education and Science if a school (details supplied) in County Donegal will be exempt from the payment of water charges in view of the financial burden that such payment would impose on the school’s limited income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42570/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Government agreed a transition period to full water charges in the case of non-fee charging recognised schools and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has advised local authorities of the detailed arrangements regarding the implementation of this decision. The transitional arrangements afford schools the opportunity to put in place water conservation arrange-

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ments and practices and to undertake works that can help reduce water usage significantly before full water charges are introduced. By virtue of good water conservation schools can be in a much stronger position to reduce the impact of water charges on their overall budgets.

Under the transition arrangements agreed by the Government, schools pay a flat rate per pupil fee as follows: 2007 — €3 per pupil, 2008 — €3.50 per pupil and 2009 — €4 per pupil enrolled. For 2007, charges applied based on metering were recalculated on the transitional flat rate with a credit given for any excess payment.

Guidance was also issued to schools on the most appropriate measures to minimise excess consumption of water and to reduce wastage where it exists. In addition, water conservation issues will continue to be addressed by my Department as a matter of routine where new schools are being built or where major renovations are being carried out to existing schools under the schools modernisation programme. Furthermore those schools with very high water consumption will be identified and contacted with a view to introducing measures to help them reduce water usage.

In the context of reducing water costs for schools, it has been demonstrated that fitting simple water saving devices to toilets and sinks can reduce water consumption considerably at very little cost, as can other small works such as fixing easily identifiable leaks. Primary school authorities may use their annual minor works grant to fund such measures. The minor works grant has increased by nearly 50% over the past two years and some €27m is due to issue to all primary schools in early 2009 under this grant scheme. My Department remains in close liaison with the Department of Environment and Local Government regarding water conservation and is supportive of any initiatives by it and local authorities that will help reduce water costs for schools.

In relation to day to day funding for schools I prioritised funding for primary schools in the recent budget, increasing the standard rate of capitation grant at primary level to €200 per pupil. The increases in the enhanced rates for special needs pupils in special classes and special schools brings the top rate up to almost €1,000 per pupil. While I clearly will want to improve funding as soon as circumstances permit, I am anxious to make the capitation grant mechanism the single funding channel for schools.

### **Consultancy Contracts.**

571. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Education and Science the amount of expenditure on consultancy by his Department in 2006 and 2007; the numbers of consultants engaged by his Department in those years; the names of the consultancy companies awarded contracts; the steps which have been taken to reduce the expenditure on consultancy and the reliance on consultants by his Department in these years and for the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42586/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the attachment. My Department regularly reviews its consultancy requirements to ensure that expenditure is kept to a minimum. Arising from a recent Government decision all Government Departments are required to reduce expenditure on consultancies by 50% in 2009. My Department is currently taking steps to comply with this requirement.

## YEAR 2006\*

Total No. of Consultants/\*Contractors: 27

TOTAL COST: €966,094.50

Name of Consultant	Purpose
Ms Valarie Considine	Employment of an Accountant
QMP Publicis	Men as Teachers and Educators ad campaign
Indecon International Economic Consultants	Appraisal and Management of Capital Expenditure Proposals in the Public Sector
Mazars	Core Year End & Appropriations Accounts
Farrell Grant Sparks	Cork School of Music PPP project
Arthur Cox & Co	PPP Schools Programme First Bundle
Healy Kelly Turner & Townsend	PPP Schools Programme First Bundle
Columb Collins	Fees re: Adjudication Panel
Caroline Hussey	Fees re: Adjudication Panel
John Hayden	Fees re: Adjudication Panel
St. Patrick's College Drumcondra	Review of Special Schools and Special Classes
John McBratney Senior Counsel	Recoupment of expenses to carry out an enquiry
Insight Statistical Consulting Limited	Evaluation of ICT Uses in Schools
Brid Mc Grath	Development of a Library Service in NEPS
Clare Mangan	Psychological Assessments in the area of autism
Victor McElfratrick	Care Inspections at Children Detention Schools
Marie-Louise Hughes	report re: judicial review on Michael Arnold & Sean Murnane
Pat Ryan	Inquiry under the VEC Acts into performance of a teacher
McDowell Purcell Partnership Solicitors	Fees re: Legal Advice to Pat Ryan
Parthalan O Cealleachair	Fees, T & S re Appeals Committee work
Jim Lyons	Fees, T & S re Appeals Committee work
Elsbeth Henderson	Fees, T & S re Appeals Committee work
Dermot Morris	Fees, T & S re Appeals Committee work
Theta Eta Advisors Ltd	Fee re Tom Higgins (external member of Department's Audit Committee)
A & L Goodbody	Funding Review of the Youth Sector
McIver Consultancy	Youth Information Provision Review
PricewaterhouseCooper	Examination of the application of state funding to MIE for the purpose of Teacher Education and related services

\* The figure for 2006 includes some expenditure on contractors who were categorised as consultants at the time.

## YEAR 2007

Total No. of Consultants: 23

TOTAL COST: €517,043.86

Name of Consultant	Purpose
System Dynamics Solutions Ltd	Work on Department's File Registry System
Insight Statistical Consultancy	Analysis of Depart's Guidance Questionnaire for Senior Cycle Students in Post primary Schools 06/07
Mary Immaculate College	Evaluation of the Regional Curriculum Support Service of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

Name of Consultant	Purpose
Eustace Patterson Ltd	Evaluation of new pilot project re supporting educational needs of students in Youthreach Programme
Phoenix Safety	Risk Assessment & Safety Statement for Marlborough Street complex 20th to 27th Sept 2007 5 days
Horwath Consulting Ireland Ltd	Development of a National English Language Policy & Framework for Legally-Resident adult Immigrants
Indecon	Final Evaluation of the Leonardo and Socrates Programme I
Core International	Upgrading the teacher payroll system
Certification Europe Ltd	Assessment of IT Unit against ISO 27001 — Information Security Management Standard
Deloitte & Touche	Review of the Service Delivery Capacity of the IT Unit
McDowell Purcell Partnership	Legal advice given to consultant carrying out inquiry in accordance with S.105 Vocational Education Act
Eco-Unesco	Research into current Education for Sustainable Development Activities in Ireland and Internationally
OLM Consultancy	Set up Design Safety Management System for Building Unit and advise on new Health & Safety Regulations
Sonas Consulting Ltd	Evaluate traveller education worker employed under School Completion Programme
Road Plan Consulting Limited	Road Safety Audit on schools in Co’s Meath and Limerick
JM Consulting Ltd	Conduct preliminary assessment of submission by Waterford IT re university status
PricewaterhouseCoopers	The Middletown Centre for Autism (joint funded by DES & Dept. of Education NI)
Pat Ryan	Review of the Co-operation Hours Scheme with other institutions which the Dept currently operates
Conor Feeney	Work on Draft Statutory Instrument implementing Professional Qualifications Directive
Maire Uí Mhaicín	Academic review on the ESRU report An Ghaelige sa Bhunscoil
Dr. Nigel Quirke-Bolt	Reading/preparing written report on the ESRU report ICT in Schools; providing oral report to ESRU
Sean McCann	Review of thresholds re award of a higher level of qualification allowance in respect of certain teachers
Professor Iseult McCarthy	Review of thresholds re award of a higher level of qualification allowance in respect of certain teachers

### Residential Institutions Redress Scheme.

572. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the properties agreed to be transferred to the State as part of the agreement between the Catholic Church and the State to pay for residential institution abuse claims; the religious order which owns each property; the properties which have not yet been transferred to State ownership; the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42593/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** Under the terms of the Indemnity Agreement reached with the Religious Congregations on 5th June 2002, the Congregations agreed to make a contribution of €128 million towards the cost of the Redress Scheme. This sum was broken down as follows:

- Property Transfers €76.86m;
- Cash Contribution €41.14m;

- Provision of Counselling Services €10m.

In actual terms, whilst the overall figure of €128 million has not altered, the form in which it has or is to be transferred to the State has altered somewhat in terms of the property and cash contributions. This is because the Indemnity Agreement allows for cash to be substituted for property. The composition of the €128million has changed to the following:

- Property Transfers €66m
- Cash Contribution €52m
- Provision of Counselling Services €10m

I can confirm that the full cash contribution of €52m has been received, including that which was accepted in lieu of properties. My Department has also received confirmation that the contributing congregations have provided counselling services to the value of €10m. As a result of the Indemnity Agreement, my Department agreed in principle with CORI that a total of 64 properties would be accepted, subject to good and marketable title and agreed valuations. Valuations of the individual properties were fully agreed and fixed at 2002 values. A list of the properties and the contributing congregations is attached.

It is regrettable that the process for the final transfer of some of these properties is not yet completed. However, in the vast majority of the properties, good and marketable title has been fully established or the properties have been physically transferred to and are in possession of the State or 3rd Parties but there are some legal formalities to be finalised. In a small number of cases, consideration may have to be given to accepting an alternative property or cash where good and marketable title cannot be established. This has recently occurred in the case of one of the 64 properties where my Department accepted cash in lieu of a property where good and marketable title could not be established. Properties to the value of €26.79m have been fully transferred and a further €7.475m worth of properties have been handed over where legal arrangements are almost finalised. This leaves a balance of properties valued at €31.735 where the legal transfer remains to be completed. In the case of all of these latter properties, with the exception of two, the properties are in use or are available for use by the transferee.

Every effort will continue to be made by officials of my Department through the State's legal representatives along with the legal representatives of the congregations and by direct contact with the interested parties until all outstanding issues are finalised.

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Properties accepted under terms of the Redress Scheme

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Primary School, Waterpark, Newtown Rd, Waterford  
 Primary School, St. Johns Rd, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford  
 Lands at Mullaghmonaghan, Co. Monaghan  
 Site at Virginia Rd, Kells, Co. Meath  
 Secondary School, Mounthawke, Tralee, Co. Kerry.  
 Site, Doon, Co Limerick.  
 3 acre site at Merrion  
 The Vineyard Child Centre, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow  
 Vacant Buildings and land at Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow  
 Goldenbridge Group Homes  
 1, Garravogue Road, Raheen, Co. Limerick  
 6, Mount Vincent Terrace, O'Connell Ave, Limerick  
 23, Parnell Square (Colaiste Mhuire)  
 Coisceim, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford

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[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

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Properties accepted under terms of the Redress Scheme

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Emohruo, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford  
 Avondale, Smithland North, Kilkenny  
 Deenagh House, Killarney, Co. Kerry  
 Airne Villa, Rock Rd, Killarney, Co. Kerry.  
 23, Woodlee, Tralee, Co.Kerry  
 24, Westcourt, Tralee, Co.Kerry  
 15, The Willows, Mallow, Co.Cork  
 St. Colemans, Rushbrooke, Cork  
 Mount St Joseph, Passage West, Cork  
 Land and buildings at Lota, Glanmire Co. Cork  
 St. Patricks Upton, Cork  
 Respite Centre, Garretstown. Cork  
 Former Old Schoolhouse, Garretstown, Co.Cork  
 5, Avondale Drive, Bandon. Co.Cork.  
 Kildron, Roundhill, Old Chapel, Bandon, Co.Cork  
 Gentili, Farahoe, Innishannon, Co.Cork.  
 Benvon, 5, Bishopstown Road, Bishopstown, Co.Cork.  
 Roseboro, 2, Firgrove Gardens, Bishopstown, Co. Cork.  
 10, The Priory, Old Chapel, Bandon, Co. Cork  
 4, the Hawthorns, Macroom Road, Bandon, Co.Cork.  
 St Teresa Temple Hill, Blackrock  
 Creche/childcare at Ballymote, Sligo  
 Two properties at Tuam  
 Holy Cross Gardens, Killarney  
 Playing field at Carna. Co. Galway  
 Presentation Sec. School Building, Hospital, Limerick  
 Moate National School, Co. Westmeath  
 Sec School & site at Ennistymon, Co. Clare  
 Site at Mohill, Co. Leitrim  
 Sen & Jnr Schools Portlaoise  
 Terenure Secondary School Building  
 Site & School at Glenamaddy  
 Building & Site at Edgeworthstown  
 Convent at Barrack Hill, Newport, Co. Mayo  
 Site at Dolphin Pk, Crumlin, Dublin 6  
 Gate Lodge at Goldenbridge, Inchicore, Dublin 8  
 Site at Dunardagh, Blackrock  
 28, The Woodlands, Celbridge, Co. Kildare  
 2, Moyle Crescent, Clondalkin, Dublin 22  
 Nursery Building, Goldenbridge  
 Presentation Convent, Hospital, Limerick  
 Convent land at Barrack St, Limerick  
 Housing & Services at Belmullet, Co. Mayo  
 59, Hollybank Rd, Drumcondra, Dublin 9  
 Cork Street, Dublin 8 (SOPHIA Housing)  
 Sacred Heart Centre, Waterford  
 St. Annes Sec School, Milltown, Dublin 6

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 Properties accepted under terms of the Redress Scheme
 

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Site at Long Mile Rd, Walkinstown, Dublin

School at Ballina, Co. Mayo

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 List of Contributing Congregations under the Indemnity Agreement signed on 5th June 2002
 

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Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (South Central Province)  
 Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (Northern Province)  
 Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (Western Province)  
 Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy (Southern Province)  
 Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul  
 Congregation of Christian Brothers  
 Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd  
 Congregation of Presentation Brothers  
 Institute of Charity (Rosminians)  
 Congregation of Oblates of Mary Immaculate  
 Hospitaller Order of St John of God  
 Religious Sisters of Charity  
 Congregation of the sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge  
 Congregation of the Sisters of St Clare  
 Institute of St Louis  
 Union of the Presentation Sisters  
 Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (De La Salle)  
 Dominican Friars' Order of Preachers  
 Daughters of the Heart of Mary  
 Congregation of the Brothers of Charity  
 Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth

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### State Property.

573. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of primary schools owned by the State; the number of primary schools owned by religious orders who are members of the Conference of Religious of Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42594/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** The total number of National Schools in operation for the school year 2006/07 was 3,284 as set out in my Department's Education Statistics leaflet published earlier this year. As the Deputy will be aware the vast majority of primary schools are privately owned and publicly-funded institutions. The information requested by the Deputy in relation to schools owned by the Conference of Religious of Ireland is not readily available from my Department.

In preparing the Annual Appropriation Accounts, my Department's Statement of Capital Assets includes details of sites acquired and developed sites where control has been transferred to the Boards of Management during that accounting year. As part of the restructuring of the Planning and Building Unit early this year, the newly formed Site Acquisition and Property Management Section is compiling an aggregate list of national schools owned by the Minister. I have instructed my officials to forward same to the Deputy as soon as this exercise has been completed.

### School Staffing.

574. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science the proposals he has to address the concerns of a person (details supplied) in County Waterford in regard to the cuts in education spending announced in budget 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42598/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** In framing the budget, a range of very difficult policy choices had to be faced by the Government across all areas of public expenditure, including in the field of education. Though education remains a priority for the Government, it has been necessary to curtail expenditure in some areas. While certain grants are to be abolished, I would like to emphasise that the capitation grant for post-primary schools has been increased by 4.3%, representing an increase of €14 per pupil, to bring it to €345 per pupil from January 2009.

Voluntary secondary schools will benefit also from an increase in the school services support grant by €8 per pupil from January 2009. This will mean, for example, that a secondary school with an enrolment of 500 pupils will receive an additional €11,000 in funding in 2009. I am confident, therefore, that the quality of education that students receive in Irish schools will be maintained.

My Department will be advising individual schools in the normal way in relation to their staffing and grant allocations. The preparatory work for this has commenced with the processing of enrolment data that has been received from schools. The staffing allocation processes, including notification to schools, will commence early in the New Year. The allocation process includes appellate mechanisms under which schools can appeal against the allocation due to them under the staffing schedules. In addition to the mainstream classroom teachers, my Department also allocates teaching resources to schools for special needs and language support. The final allocation to a school is also a function of the operation of the redeployment panels which provide for the retention of a teacher in an existing school if a new post is not available within the agreed terms of the scheme.

### Schools Building Projects.

575. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Minister for Education and Science the position regarding the provision of a new school for a school (details supplied) in County Sligo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42607/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O'Keeffe):** The project to which the Deputy refers is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The progression of all large scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department's multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

### Site Acquisitions.

576. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of the purchase of a site for a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary from the Health Service Executive; the timeframe in which the site will be acquired; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42613/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The Office of Public Works (OPW), which acts on behalf of the Department of Education and Science in relation to site acquisitions generally, has advised my Department that the Health Service Executive has formally conveyed its approval to dispose of a site for the Gaelscoil. A report provided by the OPW to my Department is currently being evaluated. The acquisition of the site will be considered in the context of the capital budget available to my Department for school buildings generally. In light of the many competing demands on the capital budget of my Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the acquisition of the site at this time.

#### **Departmental Expenditure.**

577. **Deputy Ciarán Cuffe** asked the Minister for Education and Science the estimated spend on mileage allowances for his Department in 2007; the number of claimants in respect of categories (details supplied) under which mileage is paid; the total number of claimants; and the total spend on same. [42622/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The information sought is not readily available in the format sought by the Deputy and would require excessive resources to compile at this stage. However I hope the information contained in the attachment will be of interest to the Deputy.

*Question No. 578 answered with Question No. 523.*

#### **Schools Refurbishment.**

579. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a school (details supplied) in Dublin 9 has not received its minor works grant for the provision of storage heaters under emergency works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42685/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** As the Deputy may be aware, the school to which he refers does not have permanent recognition. Therefore, it does not qualify for capital funding from my Department. This includes the minor works grant and emergency works funding. A recent application to upgrade the heating system in use in the school was received in my Department, but was not successful on this occasion.

#### **Schools Building Projects.**

580. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Education and Science the status of a new school building (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42697/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** My Department is examining the feasibility of grouping a number of schools including the school referred to by the Deputy in the 3rd Bundle of school projects to be procured via Public Private Partnership. This examination is nearing completion and I will be making an announcement about the matter as quickly as possible.

#### **Higher Education Grants.**

581. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Education and Science if his Department will make an announcement some time in 2009 regarding the need to increase the income thresholds that apply for third level maintenance grants; if in view of the decision in budget 2009 not to increase maintenance grants for 2009, the decision to extend the existing income

[Deputy Brian Hayes.]

limit for such grants will be taken in 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42733/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The process of reviewing the income limits and other aspects of the general criteria for the 2009 maintenance grant schemes is on going in my Department at present. The income thresholds for the current academic year 2008/2009 for the student maintenance grant were increased from September this year in line with movements in the average industrial wage for students in receipt of the standard rate of grant. In addition, the income threshold for the Special Rate of maintenance grant was substantially increased with effect from September 2008 by 11.6% from €18,055 to €20,147. I am committed to ongoing improvements in the student support schemes as resources permit.

#### **School Staffing.**

582. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of mainstream teachers in each primary school in County Roscommon and in County Leitrim in the 2007-08 school year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42734/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The information requested by the Deputy is not readily available on a school basis and would take an inordinate amount of administrative time to compile. However, the total number of teaching teachers in Counties Roscommon and Leitrim in the 2007/2008 school year was 317 and 152 respectively.

#### **Schools Building Projects.**

583. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Science, further to Parliamentary Question No. 32 of 3 July 2008, if the contract documents requested from the local developer by his departmental officials regarding an offer of a new site and the possibility of his Department building a new school on the site have been received by his Department; the action his Department is planning to take on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42735/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the documentation requested by my officials on foot of the offer of a site is still outstanding as is the Form of Consent to allow my Department apply for planning permission.

#### **Departmental Programmes.**

584. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the steps his Department is taking to tackle alcohol and drug abuse among young people; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42741/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** Drug prevention education is implemented as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in all primary and post-primary schools. The SPHE curriculum is mandatory in all primary schools and post-primary schools up to Junior Certificate Level, and is supported by full-time support services offering professional development to teachers and advice to schools. SPHE is designed to help develop students’ confidence and self-esteem, and promote the skills for living, for responsible decision-making, and for mental, physical and emotional health and well-being. SPHE includes substance misuse prevention education as an integral part which must be implemented by all schools.

At primary level, the Substance Misuse Prevention Programme (SMPP or ‘The Walk Tall’ Programme) is a national programme, established in 1996, to provide inservice to teachers in primary schools in the area of legal and illegal substances. The programme teaching and resource materials focus on both alcohol and drugs in an age-appropriate manner. The programme has an integrated approach to drug education and is a key strategy in drug abuse prevention education. Teaching and resource materials developed by the ‘Walk Tall’ Programme are made available to all primary schools.

At post-primary level, the substance misuse prevention programme ‘On My Own Two Feet’, which is an integral part of the SPHE curriculum, draws on three approaches: knowledge-attitude, decision-making and social competence. As such, it is a comprehensive life-skills programme. All post-primary schools are invited to inservice training in SPHE each spring and autumn on a regional basis. A selection of SPHE topics is offered to teachers, including substance use education. Health Promotion Officers and Regional Development Officers, along with experts in specific areas such as substance use education, are involved in the delivery of this inservice.

A senior cycle SPHE programme is being developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). A curriculum framework has been finalised and substance use is one of the five areas of study planned for the programme. The NCCA is engaging in development work with a group of schools to see how the framework can best be implemented, preparatory to forwarding its advice to my Department.

Under Action 43 of the National Drugs Strategy, guidelines for developing a substance abuse policy were drawn up by my Department in consultation with the Department of Health and Children and the former Health Boards. These guidelines were issued to all schools in October 2002 to assist them in the development of appropriate substance abuse policies. The policy is intended to address both education concerning alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other dangerous or potentially substances and the procedures for managing incidents relating to them. The implementation of the guidelines is the responsibility of school authorities.

I am confident that, together, these initiatives are ensuring that the education system plays its role in tackling alcohol and drug abuse among young people.

#### **Ministerial Staff.**

585. **Deputy John O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Science the number of persons employed in his private office and his constituency offices; the annual amount paid in respect of salaries and expenses in regard to each such office in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42901/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** There are currently 8 officers in my Private Office as follows:

- 2 Special Advisors, one of whom has responsibility for press and communications;
- 1 Higher Executive Officer;
- 2 Executive Officers;
- 3 Clerical Officers.

The total anticipated annual salary and expenses in 2008 for these staff is €452,441.

There are currently 5.5 officers in my Constituency Office as follows:

[Deputy Batt O’Keeffe.]

- 1 Personal Assistant;
- 1 Personal Secretary;
- 1 Higher Executive — 0.50 Staff Officer;
- 2 Clerical Officers.

The total anticipated annual salary and expenses in 2008 for these staff is €254,135.

### **Third Level Funding.**

586. **Deputy Brian O’Shea** asked the Minister for Education and Science the amount of capital funding allocated to each of the universities and each of the institutes of technology in 2008 and in each of the previous five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [42915/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled from records within my Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Departmental Expenditure.**

587. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Science the costs involved in off-site rental storage of his departmental documents in designated document storage centres (details supplied). [43235/08]

**Minister for Education and Science (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):** The costs involved in renting of off site rental storage for my Departments documents is a matter for the Property Management Section of the Office of Public Works, who act on behalf of my Department in relation to the rental of off-site storage. The following figures are per sq. m., it is not possible to supply figures for “banker box”. The cost of this rental per annum is detailed below:

1. Tullamore Gov Warehouse 2, Cappincur, Tullamore, Co Offaly — 557.42 sq m @ total cost of €26,664.50.
2. Tullamore Gov Warehouse 5, Cappincur, Tullamore, Co Offaly — 250.84 sq m @ total cost of €11,988.
3. Mullingar Gov Warehouse 2, Unit 23, Clonmore Industrial Estate, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath — 339.84 sq m @ total cost of €16,278.12.
4. Athlone Education Warehouse, Garrycastle, Athlone, Co Westmeath — 566.69 sq m @ total cost of €27,870.75.