

Submission to Minister Seamus Brennan regarding the care of children, protection of the family and the 2005 December Budget

- 1. Bunreacht na hÉireann** gives special status to the family, to marriage and to the full-time mother in Article 41. Successive governments have ignored the constitutional provisions and have introduced policies which have forced mothers to work outside the home and have penalised single-income families.
- 2. Tax individualisation penalises the single-income family and forces them to pay an additional tax of up to €5,460 every year.** This is unconstitutional and illegal and should be scrapped immediately. Families with one wage are becoming increasingly aware of the extent of the discrimination, financial and otherwise, that they endure. They will no longer suffer in silence.
- 3. Any proposals to fund childcare outside the home, while excluding an equivalent benefit to families who care for their children at home, should be rejected.** We urge the Minister to ensure that the children and the families, of the nation are treated equally. Any childcare payments must be universal.
- 4. Throughout Europe, the fertility rate is well below 2.1 births per woman which is the minimum needed to maintain a stable population.** The EU Commission report: *Confronting Demographic Change: A New Solidarity between the Generations*, confirms that the EU is facing a demographic crisis and that immigration will not mitigate the impact of falling birth rates.
- 5. Ireland faces a crippling pensions burden, which cannot be supported by a shrinking population. The Minister has himself warned of mandatory payments to pensions schemes and the OECD has asserted that Irish people should consider working until they are 85.**
- 6. Other European countries are facing up to this crisis by providing incentives for child-bearing, including generous child allowances, and ensuring that families with more children pay less tax.** Mothers who take time off from work to have families receive monthly payments from the State. In Ireland, the State has ignored the looming demographic crisis that we face.

7. **All the major longitudinal studies have found that children who are looked after by their mothers do significantly better in social and emotional development than those looked after by others.** Are our politicians more concerned with gender equality and market forces than the welfare of children?

 8. **In fact, *Central Statistics Office* figures show that only 37% of women with children under 15 years are in paid employment, and we can assume that a substantial portion of those mothers are only working part-time.** Many parents wish to rear their own children and make considerable sacrifices to do so. In other families, despite the constitutional provision obligating the State to do otherwise, mothers are forced to endure the separation from their children due to economic necessity.

 9. Providing state-funded childcare will not ease the strain of separation or the hours spent travelling from home to creche to place of employment. **Assisting families, on the other hand, would markedly improve this situation by offering real choices, as well as providing the nation with a demographic future.**

 10. **A universal payment to all of the nation's children is the only equitable option currently before the government.** The Minister should also ensure that: tax individualisation is scrapped, the child tax credit is re-introduced, affordable housing is a government priority and funding is allocated to family groups and organisations representing full-time mothers to undertake research and provide representation.
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Please complete and send to :

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