



## Pre-Budget/Election Submission 2016

Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, 90 Fairview Strand Dublin 3

# Programme of Recovery for Older People 2016-2018

### **ECONOMY IN RECOVERY**

All the indicators are that we are in RECOVERY. In their Spring Economic Statement government said that their expected spend for BUDGET 2016 will be €1.2-€1.5 billion. January 2016 will start a phased three year process of restoration to public sector workers and pensioners of cuts imposed under the FEMPI legislation. Many in the Private Sector have also been awarded increases of between 2% & 5%.

### **RECOVERY PROGRAMME FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

Aware that it will take a number of Budgets to restore the position of Older People we seek a three year Programme of Recovery 2016-2018 to start with Budget 2016. We seek from government in their framing of Budget 2016 to show evidence of their support and commitment to this process.

Aware that there will be a General Election sooner rather than later, we are also asking opposition parties and independent deputies to indicate their support for our three year programme proposal. We seek from all parties a commitment to include in their Programmes for Government after the election a Recovery Programme for Older People 2016-2018.

### **"ASKS" for Budget 2016 & Beyond**

#### **HOUSEHOLD BENEFITS PACKAGE (HBP)**

- ❖ Restoration of the Telephone Allowance.
- ❖ An agreed time frame for the Restoration of the Household Benefits Package by 2018

#### **ADDITIONAL PAYMENT AT CHRISTMAS**

Budget 2015 restored 25% of the Bonus.

- ❖ We seek a doubling of the increase in Budget 2016 to restore the payment to 75%

#### **STATE PENSIONS CONTRIBUTORY AND NON CONTRIBUTORY & RELATED**

- ❖ We seek a **FLAT** across the board increase of €5 for all pensioners.

#### **LIVING ALONE ALLOWANCE**

- ❖ We seek an increase of €5 per week

#### **AGED OVER 80 ALLOWANCE**

Age related frailties bring increased costs to those aged over 80.

- ❖ We seek an increase of €5 per week
- ❖ To have the allowance paid to ALL older people when they reach age 80

#### **JOBSEEKERS PAYMENTS FOR OLDER PEOPLE AGED 60-66**

Two categories of older people on Job Seekers payments need assistance.

**Category 1**-those aged 65 who because of the abolition of the Transition Pension are on Job Seekers payment of €188.

**Category 2**- those aged 60-65 despite the welcome drop in unemployment figure are still unable to get a job and are on a Job Seeker payments €188.

- ❖ We are seeking an additional €10 per week for both categories.

#### **FUEL ALLOWANCE**

We seek to have this means tested payment restored to 32 week over the three years 2016, 2017 & 2018 by

- ❖ An additional payment of 2 weeks for each year.
- ❖ An agreed process to trigger additional payments where the temperature drops below an agreed level.

#### **TRAVEL PASS SCHEME**

- ❖ We seek the continuation of the Scheme in its present format.

#### **UNIVERSAL SOCIAL CHARGE**

- ❖ We seek an increase in the exemption level to €18,000. Where income exceeds this limit that a rate of .5% applies to the first €18,000 with a 1% decrease across the remaining bands.
- ❖ That a solution be agreed to resolve the position of pensioners above the exemption level, who do not have any element of state payment and as a result must pay the levy on their total pension.

### **REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS**

- ❖ We seek payment of a cash refund to those whose income is too low to allow them to avail of tax credits.

### **STAMP DUTY ON PENSION FUNDS**

This levy on (stamp duty) pensions was abolished in Budget 2015. From 2011-2015 the total payment is estimated to be €2.4billion. We request, in the interest of openness and transparency, that a full report be placed before the Dáil outlining all the projects on which the levy was spent and details of how the objectives were delivered. There is a very high level of anger among pensioners whose pensions have been reduced for life because of this levy.

### **RIGHT OF AUDIENCE OF PENSIONERS**

- ❖ Pensioners continue to seek an equal *right of audience* in all and every setting where decisions on their pensions are being decided. This must include access to the State's Industrial Relations Machinery. The process whereby matters can be appealed to the High Court is unsatisfactory. It is too expensive and there are lengthy delays.

### **APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES**

We seek

- ❖ A transparent method of Trustee Appointment Schemes so that pensioners have an equal voice in all matters relating to their pensions.

### **LEGISLATION ON RETIREMENT AGE**

With the abolition of the Transition Pension many older workers are forced to retire at 65 and sign on.

- ❖ We again ask the Minister for Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation to bring forward the necessary legislation to allow workers to continue in employment until age 66

### **HEALTH**

Despite the increased allocation of monies health continues to be a source of concern.

- ❖ Additional services in the community are required to keep older people out of A&E.
- ❖ GP services should be provided on a 7 day basis.
- ❖ The upper age limits for screening must be raised. We have received good reports about the Bowel Screening programme
- ❖ The Implementation Plan for the National Positive Ageing Strategy must include targeted goals for the HSE.
- ❖ The rollout of more Primary Care and Community Centres is essential.

### **OVER 70S MEDICAL Cards**

We welcome the introduction of Over 70s GP Visit Only Card in August but we will continue to seek the restoration of the full over 70s medical card over the period 2016-2018.

- ❖ In 2016 we seek to extend to over 70s access to Public Health Nurses and Community Care Services.
- ❖ Dialogue to agree the introduction of the Full card in the period 2017-2018.

### **PRESCRIPTION CHARGES**

The €25 cap per household is unfair to people who live alone and we will continue to seek the abolition of the charge.

- ❖ In Budget 2016 we seek a 50% reduction so that the charge for a single person would be reduced to €12.50.
- ❖ In Budget 2016 we seek the abolition of the charge for those residents of Nursing Homes whose sole income is the State pension or an equivalent amount.

### **HSE DRUGS REFUND SCHEME**

- ❖ We seek a reduction of 50% to the HSE Drug Refund Scheme Cap for single households.

### **PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE RELIEF**

- ❖ We seek the restoration of the relief to total premium paid.

### **LOCAL PROPERTY TAX**

- ❖ The Parliament is seeking to have those whose sole income is a State pension and those with equivalent levels of occupational pensions to be exempt from the charge.

### **INCOME TAX**

- ❖ We seek the restoration of the Age Exemption to €20,000 and the Age Credit to €325.
- ❖ That medical expenses be allowed at the marginal rate.

### **RENT A ROOM RELIEF**

To encourage those with spare rooms to participate

- ❖ We seek an increase to €18,000 in this relief until such time as the crisis subsides.

A fuller version of this document is available on request.

*Every Effort is made to ensure that all information in this Pre Budget Submission is correct at time of going to press. The ISCP cannot accept responsibility for errors.*