



News In Brief

December 2015

Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, 90 Fairview Strand Dublin D03 WK37 01 8561243

Budget 2016 Outcomes TOWARDS A Programme of Recovery for Older People 2016 - 2018

Looking forward to 2016

In this, our last **News in Brief** of 2015, we look forward with eager anticipation to 2016. All the indicators are that we are in **RECOVERY** and we have waved goodbye to **Austerity**. Older People expect to see these changed circumstances reflected in their incomes and in better services.

Anniversary Celebrations 2016

In 2016 we will commemorate the sacrifices, bravery and vision of our forefathers. There will be joy tinged with sadness on all sides for those who made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives in 1916 and afterwards. We look forward to tangible evidence of the manner in which **all the children of the nation are cherished equally**. The best and most effective way to do this is to implement the **National Positive Ageing Strategy** and to appoint a **Minister for Older People**.

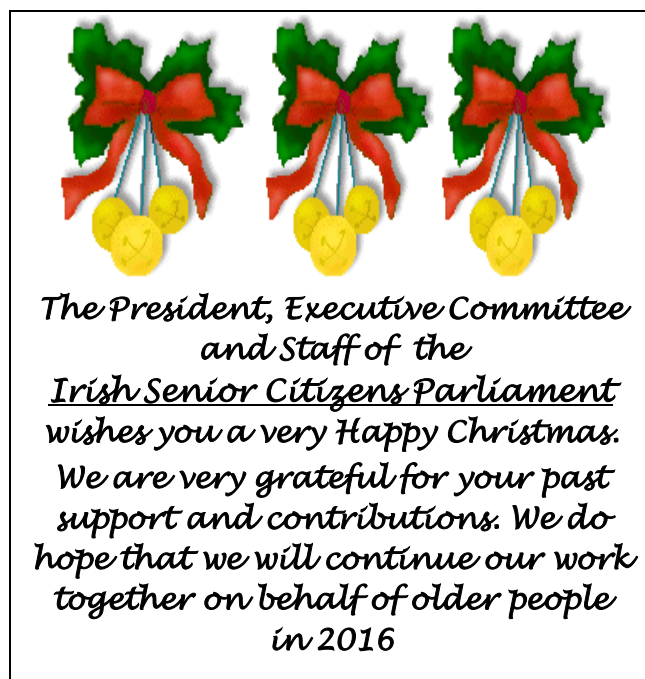
Election 2016

Early in 2016 we will have a General Election and press reports indicate it will be held in February.

We anticipate that there will be intensive canvassing over the holiday period. It is important we are ready to meet them in a polite and dignified manner to seek commitments from them in respect of the matters which are of concern to you and all older people.

Take a little time to prepare and be ready with the items which are of most concern to you and your family. All our consultations and questionnaires show that Older People want incremental improvements in what is now a recovering economy.

On pages 2 & 3 we show **BUDGET 2016 OUTCOMES**. It details the areas which still need to be addressed and the issues that are important to ensure that Older People and the issues affecting



*The President, Executive Committee
and Staff of the
Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
wishes you a very Happy Christmas.
We are very grateful for your past
support and contributions. We do
hope that we will continue our work
together on behalf of older people
in 2016*

them and their lives are to the forefront in the minds of all candidates. In particular we ask you to make sure that they are aware of the **National Positive Ageing Strategy** and the plans of their parties and groupings to implement **NPAS** and to appoint a **Minister for Older People**.

Pages 2 & 3 also contains details of the **Irish Seniors Citizens Parliaments "ASKs"** for Budget 2016 and what was achieved in that Budget.

In our view, they are a good starting point for all older people as they seek to ensure that their issues are to the forefront in the forthcoming election.

Older people and their issues must be included as of right in all Manifestos and Programmes for Government.

What happened in Budget 2016?

We welcome the increases in the State Pension, the Fuel Allowance and especially the Christmas Bonus. Taking these measures together, pensioners in receipt of **all three payments** are better off by **€7.52 per week**, while the weekly equivalent increase is **€6.31 per week** without the Fuel Allowance.

PROGRAMME FOR RECOVERY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

OUR ASK was to get a commitment to the programme from government and opposition alike.

THE OUTCOME was we did get promises for the future and we will, in the course of the election campaign, be following up on them.

Additional Payment at Christmas (Bonus)

OUR ASK was to restore the payment to 75%

THE OUTCOME was exactly what we sought - 75% restoration.

PENSIONS CONTRIBUTORY, NON CONTRIBUTORY & RELATED

OUR ASK was for a FLAT increase of **€5** per week for all pensioners.

THE OUTCOME was Budget 2016 granted the following:

- **€3** per week for Pensioners and Carers aged over 66.
- **€2.70** for Qualified Adults aged over 66 & **€2.00** for Qualified Adults aged under 66.

FUEL ALLOWANCE

OUR ASK was for the restoration over the three year period 2016-2018 of the allowance to 32 weeks.

THE OUTCOME was that Budget 2016 granted an increase of **€2.50** per week for 26 weeks resulting in a full year increase of **€65** which equates to a restoration of an extra **3.5 weeks** over the payment term and thus **exceeded our ASK**.

TRAVEL PASS SCHEME

OUR ASK was for the continuation of the Scheme in its present format.

THE OUTCOME was Budget 2016 maintained the Scheme in its present format. An additional budget allocation of €3 million was granted to bring the total Scheme Budget to €80 million for 2016.

LOCAL PROPERTY TAX

OUR ASK was that people whose sole income is either the State Pension or equivalent level of an Occupational Pension be given an exemption from the charge.

THE OUTCOME was no change to the existing scheme. However, the valuation rates in place from the start of the Scheme will be maintained until 1st November 2019.

CARERS

The respite grant is restored to full value of **€1,700**. An increase of **€325**. All Home Carers, irrespective of the age of the cared for person or child, have been granted a **€1,000 tax credit** and the Carer income threshold has been **increased to €7,200**.

The Carers Allowance is increased by **€3 to €242** for those **aged 66 and over**. It will now be paid for **12 weeks** following the death of cared for person. This is a 100% increase up from 6 weeks.

STAMP DUTY ON PENSION FUNDS

Levy abolished. Total paid is estimated at €2.4 billion.

EXCISE DUTIES

Duty on a packet of 20 cigarettes was increased by 50cents.

UNIVERSAL SOCIAL CHARGE

OUR ASK was

- that the exemption level is increased to **€18,000** and where income exceeds that amount that a rate of **.5%** is applied to the first €18,000 and for amounts over and above that level, a reduction of 1% be applied across the board to the remaining bands.
- that a solution be agreed to resolve the position of pensioners above the exemption level, who do not receive any state pension payment and as a result must pay the levy on their total pension.
- **THE OUTCOME** was Budget 2016 increased the exemption level from €12,012 to €13,000. There was a reduction of **.5%** for the 1.5% & 3.5% rate. The biggest reduction was the 7% rate which was reduced by 1.5%.

(See table on page 3)

Year 2015	Rate	Year 2016	Rate
Income up to €12,012	Exempt	Income up to €13,000	Exempt
If income over then rate for first €12,012	1.5%	If income over then rate for first €12,012	1%
Next €5,564	3.5% **Note 1	Next €6,655 up to €18,668	3% **Note 1
Next €52,468	7%	Balance up to €70,044	5.5%
Balance over €70,044	8%	Balance over €70,044	8%
Income over €100,000	11%	Income over €100,000	11%

****Note 1 – reduced rates of USC for older people**

Individuals

-aged 70 years or over whose aggregate income for the year is **€60,000 or less.**

- (aged under 70) who hold a **full medical card** whose aggregate income for the year is €60,000 or less.

2015	Rate	2016	Rate
Income up to €12,012.	1.5%	Income up to €12,012.00	1%
Income over €12,013-€60,000	3.5%	Income over €12,012-€60,000	3%

ITEMS WHICH STAYED THE SAME

HOUSEHOLD BENEFITS PACKAGE (HBP)

Apart from the Christmas Bonus the remaining items of the package stay the same:

- LIVING ALONE ALLOWANCE
- AGED OVER 80 ALLOWANCE

PRESCRIPTION CHARGES HSE DRUGS REFUND SCHEME

Our Ask was for both schemes for people to be considered as individuals so that for prescription charges the limit would be €12.50 per month and for Drugs Refund Scheme it would be €72 per person

PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE RELIEF

Our ASK was the restoration of the relief at the marginal rate of tax rather than the lower rate and on the full amount of the policy.

INCOME TAX AGE EXEMPTION

No increase granted.

REFUNDABLE TAX CREDITS

Our ASK was for the payment of a Cash Refund to those whose earnings are too low to avail of tax credits.

RIGHT OF AUDIENCE OF PENSIONERS

No progress on allowing pensioners to vindicate their rights through the state industrial relations machinery rather than through the expensive law courts.

PAYMENTS TO OLDER JOB SEEKERS AND THOSE AGED 65

There was no change in the Budget. However, the Justice Defence and Equality Joint Oireachtas Sub Committee have published a Report and a Bill recommending that changes be made to the Mandatory Retirement Age to provide choice for people and to allow them, if they wish, to work past age 65.

HEALTH

The HSE are due to publish their **National Service Plan for 2016** based on an increased Budget Allocation and in consultation with the Minister for Health. It is the deciding factor in assessing how health services will be delivered in 2016. This is a critical area for all older people to enable them to continue to live independently at home.

OVER 70S GP VISIT ONLY CARD

In August the Over 70's GP VISIT ONLY CARD was awarded to all those older people aged OVER 70 who applied for it. The method and manner in which the cards were allocated was efficient and speedy.

FAIR DEAL & COMMUNITY CARE

We welcomed the reduction in the waiting times for access to nursing home care by older people. For older people who need assistance to live independently one of the critical factors is access to good Home Care Packages. The provision is not uniform across the country and this is what is needed.

SECURITY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

By the end of 2016 it is intended that 600 additional Gardai will have been recruited to the force.

Every effort is made to ensure that all information in this '*Budget 2016 Special*' is correct at time of going to press. The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament cannot accept any responsibility for errors or omissions.