

## **Proposed cuts will turn off the lights for carers**

[16<sup>th</sup> July 2009] Today's proposals in An Bord Snip Nua's report could leave up to 16,000 family carers in the dark facing a 30 per cent income decrease, if proposed cuts to the half-rate Carers Allowance are implemented. The half-rate allowance, introduced in 2007 after over 10 years lobbying by The Carers Association, is used by carers to cover the day to day cost of living including the hidden costs of caring, such as increased electricity, food, heat, transport and medical supplies bills.

"If implemented, the proposed cuts to the half-rate carers allowance will effectively cut the income of family carers in receipt of this payment by 30 per cent. When we consider that the ESRI have forecast that a six percent wage decrease may be required in public sector pay, it is grossly unfair that our family carers could be targeted for a 30 per cent cut", says Enda Egan, CEO of The Carers Association.

Family carers already in receipt of other social welfare payments are eligible for the half rate Carers Allowance of €110 per week. Taking the widow's pension at €209 per week, the disability allowance at €204 per week and non-contributory pension payments of €219 per week, the proposed cuts to the half-rate Carers Allowance will result in an income drop of approximately 30 per cent.

Introducing the half-rate Carers Allowance two years ago, Martin Cullen TD, then Minister for Social and Family Affairs, stated that "Government is committed to supporting carers and to facilitating older people and people with disabilities to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. Carers play a very valuable, and much valued role in our society."

The Carers Association finds it inconceivable that two years later, Government would consider reversing this decision.

"The proposed cutting of essential allowances for family carers is an absolute disgrace. Removing the half-rate carers allowance and means testing home care packages will seriously endanger the continuation of care in the home, which is Government policy. In a so called fair and just modern society, a vulnerable group such as carers and the people they care for should never be victims of a Government's efforts to cut spending. Allowance cuts will result in many carers being forced to pass the care of family and loved ones to the state, thus significantly increasing the costs of care on the state", continues Egan.

"If Government is sincere about saving costs, they will not implement today's proposals which will seriously affect essential supports for family carers, who already save the state over 2.5 billion euro and provide over 3.7 million hours of care in the home every year", concludes Egan.

**The Carers Association is the National voluntary organisation of family carers in the home, providing support services, respite, training and information to carers throughout Ireland. The Carers Association can be contacted on the National Careline Freefone 1800 24 07 24 or see [www.carersireland.com](http://www.carersireland.com)**

**ENDS**

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**Family carers in a variety of caring situations are also available.**