RCPSA
RETIRED CIVIL AND PUBLIC SERVANTS ASSOCIATION
Comhlachas Iar-Sheirbhiseach Poiblí Agus Scáic Established 1945

c/o 90 Westbourne Lodge
Templeogue
Dublin D16 Y585

22 June 2026

Pre Budget Submission on behalf of the RCPSA for Budget 2027

Dear Minister

The Retired Civil and Public Servants Association (RCPSA) has been making Pre-Budget submissions annually for very many years. We have never had any feedback and it is difficult to know if any of our issues have been considered. Last year we asked for an opportunity to meet officials to explain our particular concerns. That request was not addressed.

The RCPSA is a voluntary organisation which represents approximately 7,000 retired civil and public servants, across twenty-six counties. The Main Objects of the Association are:

(a) To promote and to safeguard the pensions of members, and

(b) To support and to represent the interests of members in relation to financial, health, welfare, security and cultural matters impacting on them.

You can learn more about us on our website www.rcpsa.ie.

As pensioners, our members have much in common with other pensioners but, as public service pensioners, there are also specific issues which affect us in particular. It is important that the concerns of our members are listened to, understood and addressed in a timely manner before it is too late for them. It is essential that our members and all older people are respected, valued, enabled to live with dignity and have a decent quality of life during their retirement.

As people who gave their working life to public service, in general our members are (or have been) very active within their communities, serving on local voluntary bodies (for example, school boards, Parish councils, local sports clubs). We also have members of advanced age who are living alone at home or being cared for at home or in residential institutions. No one should be forgotten.

As Honorary Secretary, I receive very many calls and emails from members. The common themes for the past few months are a sense of exclusion, isolation and marginalisation as they age, increasing financial difficulty and increasing difficulty in interacting with the very institutions in which many of them worked. Members are frustrated by the lack of representation available to them, particularly most recently in relation to the local bargaining element of the current pay agreement. The focus of the Trade Unions is (understandably) on current serving staff.

While working, our members helped to formulate and implement Government policy. They are used to providing solutions and can suggest how our recommendations can be implemented without incurring undue cost. As you will see, our submission covers matters not only within the remit of your Department, but also within the remit of several other Departments.

The RCPSA again requests an opportunity to meet officials from the appropriate Departments (the Departments of Finance, Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, Social Protection, Health and the Office of the Minister of State with special responsibility for Older People) to discuss the matters which are of concern to our members.

Yours sincerely

Cloda Ryan
Secretary, RCPSA, on behalf of its members
info@rcpsa.ie

RCPSA
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PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THE RETIRED CIVIL AND PUBLIC SERVANTS ASSOCIATION (RCPSA)

The RCPSA is a voluntary organisation which represents approximately 7,000 retired civil and public servants. You can learn more about us on our website www.rcpsa.ie. As pensioners, our members have much in common with other pensioners but, as public service pensioners, there are also specific issues which affect us in particular.

We appreciate that some of the issues might be considered somewhat niche to the general population, but they have a real impact on many of our members.

A: SOCIAL WELFARE MATTERS

Impact of not qualifying for the State Pension (Contributory)

A large body of public service pensioners do not qualify for a State Pension (Contributory) because of the social insurance class to which they were allocated (mainly recruited prior to 6 April 1995). The number of people affected is finite (and, sadly, decreasing) because the practice changed in 1995.

Over the years, an increasing number of benefits have been linked to receipt of a State Pension. This excludes the public service pensioners who, through no fault of their own, cannot qualify. One of the qualifying conditions for all of the following is to be in receipt of a social welfare pension.

- **Living Alone Increase**
- **Over 80 Allowance**
- **Cost-of-living bonus**
- **Cost-of-living lump sum for those getting a Living Alone Increase**
- **Christmas bonus**

Qualified Adult allowance - public service pension schemes do not provide an equivalent additional payment, which means that one public service pension may be supporting two people.

Dental and Optical Benefits – require "full rate" contributions

Household Benefits Package – there is an anomaly whereby public service pensioners, who are not in receipt of a social welfare pension, cannot qualify for the Household Benefits Package before the age of 70 without being means tested, and neither can their spouse. The standard age for qualifying without means test is 66.

Treatment for USC: The State Pension is exempt from USC, but all of the public service pension is subject to USC.

Many other State grants and benefits are linked to, or enhanced by, being in receipt of a social welfare payment (eg some home improvement grants).

These issues could be resolved at relatively little cost, but no Government to date has shown any interest in doing so.

Bereaved Partners Pension

There are concerns that the changes introduced in July 2025 with regard to the criteria which will determine pension eligibility for divorced or married but separated people could disproportionately negatively impact public service pensioners who do not have a State Pension in their own right. Access to the Widows/Widower's Contributory Pension was one of the few benefits which was covered under the "modified rate" of social insurance. The potential eligibility for a social welfare pension in the event of the death of a separated or former spouse was taken into the reckoning when people were making provision under divorce or separation agreements (the latter including informal arrangements). A full impact assessment is urgently required.

Ongoing impact of the Marriage Bar

Female public servants, who were required by legislation to resign on marriage, have now reached pension age, but cannot qualify for either an occupational pension or a State pension in their own right, unless they resumed employment at some point following marriage, or can qualify on a means-tested basis (on a joint basis with their spouse). If they are married to a fellow public servant (who paid modified rate PRSI), they do not qualify for a Qualified Adult allowance. These women feel that they are invisible to the State. A review of their position is requested.

Means testing

We ask that the threshold for all means tested benefits be revised upwards so that public service pensioners on low incomes, who do not qualify for a range of social welfare benefits on a contribution basis, might qualify on a means tested basis. They are a group who are often overlooked.

Death Benefit

We ask for the reintroduction of a flat rate death benefit payment to assist bereaved families with the high cost of funerals.

B: MATTERS PERTAINING TO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONERS

The Pension Increase Process for Public Service Pensioners

Public service pension increases, and the process by which they are determined, vary from body to body. In the Civil Service, pension increases are dependent on national Public Service pay negotiations to determine the level and timing of any pension increases. The application of pay parity (ie pensions increase in line with pay) is welcome and we want reassurance that it will continue. The pension increase process for former civil servants who were transferred to newly formed State bodies, such as An Post and Eircom and many more, is complex and lengthy and inconsistent in its application. Many find themselves in a poverty trap, where their occupational pension is marginally over the means test for the non-contributory state pension.

Legacy issues

It is over 40 years since the setting up of An Post and Telecom Éireann by legislation. There are still unresolved legacy issues about pension increases for staff who transferred from the Department of Posts and Telegraphs to either organisation. Most centre around the assurances given to staff prior to transfer.

There are also legacy issues about pension increases for staff who transferred from the Civil Service to other public service/sector bodies, such as the Irish Aviation Authority (over 30 years ago). Within the Civil Service, there are legacy issues about pension increases for staff who retired from a grade which was abolished or merged into another grade after their retirement. The latter is of particular relevance in respect of increases arising from local bargaining.

Some pensioners are trying to use the various appeal mechanisms to resolve their issues. As outlined below, the process is cumbersome and lengthy and those appealing are generally of advance years. The RCPSA calls on the Minister to set up a group to look at the various legacy issues and to give the RCPSA an opportunity to contribute to that group.

Delays in dealing with Pension Queries

When public service pensioners have queries or concerns about their pensions, it is often very difficult to know whom to approach about it and pensioners are often caught between the pension provider, the parent Department and, when issues of policy are involved, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Regrettably the Internal Dispute Resolution (IDR) mechanism is not fit for purpose, especially where aging pensioners are concerned. For example, paragraph 6 of Appendix 1 to Circular 16/20 (which specifies the IDR procedure for pensions appeals in Government Departments, Offices and Public Service Bodies) provides that a notice of determination will be given in writing to the appellant "*within 3 months from the date all particulars required to make the determination have been furnished*". Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for the process to take 1 to 2 years. While the IDR is underway, a person cannot refer their case to the Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman (FSPO).

If a pensioner is not satisfied with the outcome of the IDR, they have the option of going to the FSPO. The process usually involves trying mediation first (3-4 months). If mediation is not successful, (which it is unlikely to be if the issue is one of policy), the case then moves to Investigation and Adjudication. According to recent information from the FSPO, due to the volume of complaints being formally investigated it can take 12-14 months before a case is assigned to an investigation officer. And then, the case has to be investigated and adjudicated on.

The length of time taken on the entire process (upwards of 3 years) is utterly unacceptable, especially where people of advanced years (many of whom would be considered to be vulnerable adults due to age) are the appellants. At the more extreme end, we have a member who is a 78 years old, who initially complained in 2020, began the formal process at the start of 2021, obtained a decision under the IDR over eighteen months later, lodged a claim with the FSPO and is still awaiting the outcome of the process. This is not intended as a criticism of the Departments or Offices involved or of the FSPO – it is a criticism of the lack of resources directed by Government to these important functions.

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service

Access to this service was removed from retired civil servants, without consultation or notification, when the Service was restructured in 2014. The Service had been of particular benefit to bereaved spouses/partners and family members by providing information and support at the time of a death.

C: TAXATION MATTERS

The **Age Tax Credit** has remained unchanged for many years. The credit should be increased to at least €500 per person of qualifying age.

As mentioned above, the State Pension is exempt from **USC**, but all of the public service pension is subject to USC. This adds an additional taxation burden on public service pensioners whose pension comes solely from occupational sources.

D: HEALTH CARE MATTERS

The RCPSA seeks the following:

a. The restoration of the automatic entitlement to a medical card on reaching the age of 70.

b. The inclusion in the Long -Term Illness Scheme of illnesses which are deemed to be long-term illnesses by the Medical Profession. Examples are osteoporosis, peripheral neuropathy, cancer, rheumatoid arthritis.

c. The inclusion in the Drugs Payment Scheme of all medications which are prescribed by a person's medical practitioner.

d. The provision of the shingles vaccine and other recommended vaccines, such as RSV, to older people free of charge. It is known that shingles can have particularly debilitating and long term effects on older people.

e. A change to calculate the 80% contribution from State Pension for the Nursing Home Support Scheme (Fair Deal) on a net rather than gross basis.

E: ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT and ESSENTIAL SERVICES

All Government Offices should be required to offer alternative means of access to services and/or for people who do not have access to, or are unable to use, online services. They should provide options for telephone and in-person contact. Similar obligations should be required of financial and other institutions.

F: UTILITY COSTS FOR OLDER and VULNERABLE CONSUMERS

Very many services, such as provision of electricity, gas, telephone, broadband, TV, raise prices unless the consumer contacts them at the end of a contract period to renegotiate a new deal. This places an additional burden on all consumers, but can have a greater negative impact on those who are older and/or vulnerable. As a consequence, many pensioners are paying more than they need to for such services. This is of particular importance at present in respect of energy and heating costs. The RCPSA proposes that all service providers (in particular those supplying heating and lighting) should be obliged to ensure that any customer who is listed as vulnerable is placed on the rate which is most favourable to them, without the requirement for them to initiate the process. Most energy companies already maintain a list of vulnerable customers.

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