



An Agreed Programme  
for  
Government  
between  
Fianna Fáil  
and the  
Progressive Democrats



**AN AGREED PROGRAMME**

for

**GOVERNMENT**

between

**FIANNA FÁIL**

and the

**PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRATS**



June 2002

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## **FOREWORD**

The mandate of the sovereign people is a great honour and a great opportunity. It brings with it great responsibility for public service. In the General Election for the 29th Dáil the people have renewed and strengthened the mandate of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. The policy platforms of the two parties have been endorsed as a blueprint for our future.

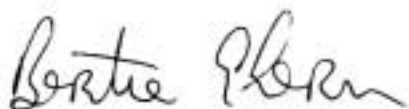
In presenting this our Programme for Government, Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats pledge to keep faith with the people and to honour the mandate given by them. Unprecedented opportunity has been given, uniquely to us in this generation. It is the opportunity to build a fair society of equal opportunity and of sustained prosperity on an island at peace with itself. This is our ambition for our country, this is our mandate from the people and this is our pledge.

This Programme for Government is both clear in intent and specific in detail. It is the agreed agenda for this partnership Government over five full years. It is based on the manifestos of Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. In Government it is open to either party to seek to persuade colleagues to pursue any individual policy included in those manifestos.

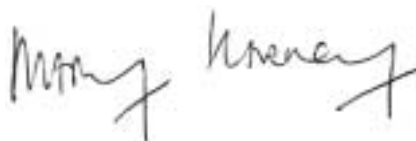
The Irish people can be justly proud of the achievements of peace and prosperity of the past five years. But now for the future much more remains to do. We aim to be an inclusive society but there are those who still remain left out. We aim to create sustained prosperity but the standard of our public services and the quality of our infrastructure lags behind our phenomenal growth. We aim to ensure that Ireland plays a full role in an enlarged European Union.

We aim to achieve a lasting peace in Northern Ireland but there are still those in both communities who remain to be assured of their place in an inclusive settlement as well as those who have yet to fully fulfil their commitment to that settlement. This is a moment in our history of unprecedented opportunity and unprecedented responsibility.

By the will of the people that responsibility now falls to Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats in Government. It is a responsibility we will work with all our ability and all our energy to discharge with integrity. When our duty is done and our mandate is complete, we pledge that five years from now we will have a country transformed from the country we found ten years before. That is our mandate and that is our pledge.



Bertie Ahern T.D.  
Leader of Fianna Fáil



Mary Harney T.D.  
Leader of the Progressive Democrats

## **WORKING FOR PEACE**

### **BUILDING PEACE AND JUSTICE**

Over the next five years, our overriding priority will be to secure lasting peace in Ireland through the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, the consolidation of its institutions, and the development of a spirit of friendship and cooperation between North and South. This we will do without prejudice to the ultimate goal of achieving a united Ireland in peace and agreement.

- We will work to consolidate the success of the North-South Ministerial Council, and of the Implementation Bodies. We will also cooperate with the British Government in the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and bilaterally, on non-devolved matters.
- Within the framework of the British-Irish Council, we will seek to develop strong bilateral relations with Scotland and Wales, as well as with the UK as a whole
- We will pursue an active policy of reconciliation between differing traditions.
- We will work for the formation of the North-South Parliamentary Body envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement.
- We will put in place an All-Ireland Free Travel scheme for pensioners resident in all parts of this island.
- We will support the principle of full public enquiries into the murders of Pat Finucane, Robert Hamill and Rosemary Nelson, and use our good offices to advance the establishment of the truth.
- We will also fully support the work of Judge Peter Cory who has been appointed by the Irish and British Governments to investigate these and other cases.
- We will act upon the recommendations of the Barron Enquiry into the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and continue to work to ensure that all persons and agencies, both here and abroad, cooperate fully with the enquiry.
- We will work to ensure that that 'the right to freedom from sectarian harassment' set out in the Agreement become a reality.
- In so far as it lies within our power, we will strive to create and maintain a secure environment for political progress and bring about, both through the application of law and by persuasion, a complete and lasting cessation of all paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland and throughout these islands, including punishment beatings and shootings, and the transformation of movements linked to paramilitary organisations into exclusively democratic organisations and completion of the process of putting arms beyond use.
- We will encourage maximum cooperation between police forces North and South.
- We will improve North-South infrastructural links and facilitate cross-border planning.

## IRELAND AND EUROPE

Membership of the European Union has been and remains of enormous importance and benefit to Ireland. The advantages of membership have been wide-ranging, extending beyond the critical economic and financial areas to environmental, social and other issues, including support for the Northern Ireland peace process.

Membership of the EU greatly enhances our ability to protect and promote our interests within the Union and in the wider world, including such areas as trade regulation, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection of human rights.

Even as our economy and society have developed the Union (in particular through the Single Market and the Euro) remains vital to our prosperity.

Particularly, but not only, at times of international crisis or economic difficulty, the Union plays a key role in the maintenance of a secure and stable external environment.

Any perception, either within the Union or outside, that Ireland was other than a fully committed member would be deeply damaging both to our ability to promote our interests in the Union and to our economic development. We have no doubt that there is no alternative to being a fully engaged member of the EU.

This is an historic opportunity to help end the political division of the continent, which stretches back over half-a-century. We in Ireland, having ourselves benefited so much from membership, have a moral duty to offer others the chance we ourselves were given a generation ago. Enlargement, by promoting political stability and economic development, is also very much in Ireland's medium-to-long term interests: trade with and investment in the candidate countries is already developing encouragingly.

The purpose of the Treaty of Nice, as agreed by the Member States, was explicitly to "complete the process started by the Treaty of Amsterdam of preparing the institutions of the European Union to function in an enlarged Union".

It remains our view that the institutional changes contained in the Treaty will enable the Union to function effectively after enlargement, while broadly maintaining the existing balances within it. Ireland's position within the institutions is fully protected.

It is the shared view of the Member States that ratification of the Treaty is necessary for enlargement to proceed. The candidate countries share this view and strongly wish to see the Treaty ratified. Therefore, it remains the objective that the Treaty be ratified by the end of 2002.

- Based on the mandate conferred on both parties in the General Election, we will submit the Nice Treaty on enlargement to the people in a referendum to be held later this year in a way which seeks to address the concerns of the people as expressed during previous referendums and in the National Forum on Europe.
- An intergovernmental conference to agree any future changes to the Treaties will only take place in a few years time, probably in 2004, well after the expected conclusion of at least the first wave of enlargement negotiations.
- We will play a full part in the European Convention and the Europe-wide debate on the future shape of the European Union.
- We believe that the broad institutional balance, as it currently exists, serves the Union well. We will oppose efforts to have existing integration supplanted by purely intergovernmental cooperation, or important common policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy or regional and social policy, extensively renationalized.

- We believe that commitment to the EU and its development in no way implies support for a European superstate or for an ambitious federalist project which is detached from public opinion.
- In addition, we believe that fiscal policy should remain the preserve of national administrations.
- We believe that Ireland's best interests lie in assisting and working with the applicant countries. Within the next 12 months we will publish a specific programme to ensure the expansion of social, cultural and economic cooperation with all countries that are joining the European Union.
- We will take part in peace-support and humanitarian operations (Petersberg tasks) in missions that are endorsed by the UN. We will work directly with the UN as well as with our EU partners under a UN mandate, to protect human rights and to prevent ethnic conflict and humanitarian disasters. We will work to ensure that the European Security and Defence Policy continues to develop in the service of peace.
- We will implement Dáil reforms to ensure improved scrutiny of EU legislation and developments.
- We will run a proactive and efficient EU Presidency in 2004.

## IRELAND AND THE WORLD

- We believe that Ireland must continue to play an active role in promoting development, human rights and democracy in the world.
- In the pursuance of our foreign policy objectives we remain committed to the primacy of the UN's role in promoting constructive international relations.
- We will promote our strategic political and economic interests and contribute to other nations by expanding our resident diplomatic missions, in particular with EU applicant countries and in Asia and Latin America.
- We will complete our major expansion of our overseas development aid programme, achieving the UN target of 0.7% of GNP by 2007.
- The aid programme will be developed along the lines of the Ireland Aid Review Report with the principal aim being to contribute to the reduction of global poverty, inequality and exclusion.
- Particular initiatives will be taken both in the aid programme and at the highest political level to fight the HIV/Aids crisis which is ravaging many poorer countries, especially in Africa.

## DEFENCE

We believe that maintaining a defence capacity related to security needs is an important expression of national sovereignty.

- We will follow through the implementation of the 2000 Defence White Paper, designed to equip our Defence Forces to meet peace-time challenges at home and abroad and to develop our Reserve Defence Forces.
- We will maintain a full complement of 10,500 in the Permanent Defence Force, with the option of an extra 250 recruits at any one time.
- A new career development plan, involving the continuation of a policy of regular recruitment will be implemented.
- The new Integrated Personnel Management System will be introduced
- 100% of revenue from property sales will be invested in infrastructure and equipment.
- Civil Defence will be managed by a Civil Defence Board underpinned by a modern legislative framework.
- Irish troops will continue to be available to serve abroad on international peacekeeping missions.
- The Office of Emergency Planning will take the lead role in planning to meet threats from international terrorism and will work with all Government Departments and agencies who have emergency planning responsibilities.



## **SUSTAINING A STRONG ECONOMY**

### **BUDGETARY & ECONOMIC POLICY**

Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats are committed to sustaining economic growth and maintaining full employment in the Irish economy. We see low inflation, responsible fiscal policies and effective investment policies as central to this.

- We will keep the public finances in a healthy condition and we will keep down personal and business taxes in order to strengthen and maintain the competitive position of the Irish economy.
- Within these constraints we will concentrate the resources available to us on improving the quality of public services and delivering further real improvements to pensioners and people on low incomes.

#### *Public Expenditure*

- The EU Stability and Growth Pact provides the overriding framework for our budgetary policy.
- Under the pact Ireland has given a sovereign commitment to keep the finances of general government close to balance or in surplus and to take corrective action when there is an actual or expected divergence from this objective. Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats will respect this commitment.

#### *Taxation*

- Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats have delivered dramatic reductions in taxation over the last five years.
- This policy has helped to generate unprecedented growth in the Irish economy, a spectacular increase in the number of people at work and the effective elimination of long-term unemployment.
- The parties remain committed to the achievement of the taxation objectives set out in Action Programme for the Millennium. Over the next five years our priorities with regard to personal taxation will be:
  - to achieve a position where all those on the national minimum wage are removed from the tax net, and
  - to ensure that 80% of all earners pay tax only at the standard rate.
  - to use the potential of the tax credit system to effectively target changes and to pursue further improvements in the income tax regime if economic resources permit.
- We will complete the reduction of the standard rate of corporation tax to 12.5% in 2003.
- We will increase Capital Gains Tax exemption limits.
- We will examine the tax treatment of share options.
- We will keep down taxes on work in order to ensure the competitiveness of the Irish economy and to maintain full employment.
- We will vigorously pursue actions to ensure that that everyone is tax compliant.

### *Delivering Major Capital Programmes*

- Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats will address Ireland's infrastructural deficit in a coherent and determined way over the next five years.
- We believe that new methods of financing major capital programmes are required. These must take account of the need to maximise efficiency, delivery, value for money and appropriate risk transfer across complex multi-annual programmes.
- We will establish under the auspices of the NTMA a National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) to finance major public projects and to evaluate financing options for PPP projects. This vehicle may finance both commercial and non-commercial type projects.
- The NDFA will enable the government to apply commercial standards in evaluating financial risks, costs and options associated with projects thereby ensuring that the best financing package is availed of in each instance. The NDFA may compete with, but will not substitute for, private financing of PPP projects but will be an additional mechanism to be used in the context of achieving value for money and risk transfer in PPP projects.
- Where significant once-off revenues accrue to the state through, for example, the sale of assets or the restructuring of the Central Bank, we will use these revenues to create a National Transformation Fund. This fund, which will be managed by the NTMA, will be used to finance multi-annual infrastructural development programmes.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE**

The huge increase in employment and fall in unemployment which has been achieved in recent years cannot be taken for granted. Work is still required to protect employment levels and to expand both the distribution and quality of opportunity throughout the country.

- We will encourage and support multinational and indigenous firms to develop higher productivity and knowledge-based activities which are likely to be retained during periods of global rationalisation.
- We will encourage a better spread of jobs throughout the country.
- We will carry out a fundamental review of training and employment supports to ensure that they focus on the needs of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups to help them to progress to the open labour market.
- We support the positive role of the Community Employment Scheme to meet the needs of both the long-term unemployed and communities.
- We will seek to ensure that new social economy projects are effectively targeted at areas which have traditionally had a high dependence on Community Employment Scheme.
- We will introduce new supports for those experiencing or likely to experience severe employability barriers. This will involve a training fund of up to €2,500 per person.
- We will extend the Employment Action Plan preventative strategy to all persons on the Live Register for longer than 6 months.
- FÁS will engage with redundant workers and people facing the prospect of long-term unemployment to ensure that the period out of work for a substantial number of people is kept to a minimum.
- We will give a fresh impetus to the important role of small business in Ireland and ensure that the interests of small business are taken into account in formulating and implementing policies that impact on the enterprise sector.
- We will seek to resolve potential issues, difficulties and conflicts in the spirit of social partnership.

- Through the Expert Group on Future Skills we will identify the priority skills needs of the economy and work to adjust education and training provision accordingly.
- We will develop the value of the social economy through the further creation of social economic enterprises.
- We will vigorously pursue a programme of regulatory reform with particular emphasis on removing unwarranted constraints on competition in all sectors of the economy and placing the consumer at the top of the policy agenda.

### *Improving the conditions of employment*

- The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act of 1989 will be updated.
- The recommendations of the review of the Statutory Redundancy Scheme will be examined with a view to implementation.
- A fundamental review will be undertaken of the functions of the Employment Rights Bodies.
- We will strengthen the parental leave scheme in line with the recommendations of the social partners.
- We will review ways in which older people can be encouraged, where they so wish, to extend their working lives without financial penalty and in conditions which suit their personal lifestyle wishes.
- We will request the National Centre for Partnership and Performance to establish a forum on the workplace of the future to help establish a comprehensive agenda on this issue.

## **RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION**

We believe that ongoing action is required to ensure that Ireland continues to be a world leader in knowledge-based industries.

- We will ensure the putting in place of open-access broadband on a national basis.
- We will create real competition for local phone services by ensuring the unbundling of the local loop.
- We will ensure that that the full range of options, including wireless technologies, are utilised to expand broadband access in rural areas.
- We will drive forward the Schools IT programme based on the principle of school-based planning and devolved funding. We will ensure that progressive training courses are available to teachers.
- We will work to ensure that Ireland develops a world-class research capacity. We also recognise the importance of encouraging a dynamic research culture and will continue to support research on the basis of recognising the distinct, but also inter-connected roles of different programmes, from individual grants up to more targeted support for areas of national strategic interest.
- We will build the capability of firms to carry out and manage R&D in Ireland.
- We will ensure that the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions administered by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Government is maintained with funding rounds being placed on a multi-annual basis.
- We will place Science Foundation Ireland on a statutory basis as a dynamic vehicle to provide funding for areas of strategic national importance including ICTs and biotechnology.
- We will bring together the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering & Technology and the Irish Council for Humanities and Social Sciences Research as parts of a new council.
- We will ensure that all major research funding is based on external assessments.

- In order to ensure that structures and mechanisms for overseeing national policy on research are improved, we will implement change on an agreed basis.
- We will work to ensure that Ireland maximises its draw-down under the EU 6th Framework Programme for Research and Development.
- We will actively support research collaboration between firms and third-level institutions.
- We will seek to improve structures and practices to enhance the commercialisation of publicly funded research.
- We will review available fiscal instruments for the support of advanced connectivity.
- We will implement an ambitious eGovernment agenda aimed at ensuring that the public will be able to access most key Government services electronically.
- We will support the establishment, following competitive funding procedures, of interactive science centres and awareness programmes aimed at enhancing knowledge and interest in science.
- We will actively promote the study of physics, chemistry and maths.

## **INSURANCE & ROAD SAFETY**

We will take a comprehensive set of actions to address the rate of injuries and deaths on our roads and we will tackle high costs of insurance, particularly motor and employer liability cover.

- We will take actions to improve road safety and driver behaviour, to reduce the legal cost of accident claims and to make the insurance market more consumer-friendly.
- We will implement urgently the recommendations of the Motor Insurance Advisory Board.
- We will enact the legislation required to provide for the new Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority which will regulate insurance in the consumer interest.
- We will support the achievement of a single EU market in Insurance.
- The cost of insurance claims will be reduced by a series of actions we will take to reform civil law procedures, as set out in the section of this Programme for Government on Crime and Law Reform.
- We will establish the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.
- We will ensure improved standards of driving by establishing a training scheme for new drivers. Initially the scheme will be voluntary and will aim to attract lower insurance premiums for those who participate. If this voluntary scheme is successful we will consider making it compulsory.
- We will bring forward road safety and safe driving education in the secondary school curriculum. We will seek partnership arrangements with the insurance industry to help implement new schemes.
- Work on the penalty points system will be completed to ensure its implementation at an early date.
- A renewed three-year Road Safety strategy will be introduced to target speeding, drink driving, seatbelt wearing and pedestrian safety in order to significantly reduce road deaths and injuries.
- We will establish a dedicated Traffic Corps.
- The high cost of business insurance is undermining enterprise and job creation. We will take actions to limit the cost of public liability insurance on businesses. The civil law reform measures we will take will be central. In particular,
- We will establish a set of guidelines on damages for particular injuries.

- We will initiate urgent consultations on the issue of making employer liability insurance compulsory, in order to benefit from bonding / compensation arrangements.
- We will require certain forms of action to be supported by sworn affidavits so as to create a liability if perjury for fraudulent claims.
- We will ban 'no-foal no-fee' advertising by solicitors.

# **ENSURING BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

## **DEVELOPING THE REGIONS & THE ISLANDS**

The core objective of our National Development Plan is the achievement of balanced regional development.

- We will complete and implement the National Spatial Strategy, which is aimed at ensuring that all the regions develop to their potential.
- While seeking to consolidate and enhance the international competitiveness of Dublin and our other main cities, we will further encourage a greater proportion of new inward investment to focus on areas outside the Greater Dublin Area, in line with the National Spatial Strategy.
- We will move forward the progressive decentralisation of Government Offices and Agencies taking into account the National Spatial Strategy.
- We will ensure that the particular development needs of the Border, Midlands and West region continue to be addressed.
- The NDP capital development support for regional airports will be pushed through to a successful conclusion. A new three year Public Service Obligation air service programme to regional airports will be launched this year.
- We will significantly improve transport services in the regions.
- We will extend the gas grid and ensure that significant investment is made in developing the electricity grid in the regions.

### *Islands*

- We will identify proposals to provide a subsidised cargo service to islands in consultation with island communities and ferry operators.
- We will provide a new fixed wing air service to Tory Island, Co. Donegal and Inisbofin, Co. Galway and upgrade the existing infrastructure at Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr, Co. Galway.
- We will provide Broadband technology to offshore islands.
- We will introduce a home improvement grants, in line with the home improvement grants available to Gaeltacht Communities, to non-Gaeltacht islands, and will increase the level of new house grants on non-Gaeltacht islands to the same level as that available on Gaeltacht Islands.
- We will include transport costs for schoolchildren as a constituent part of the Remote Area Grant.
- We will ensure that healthcare provision on the offshore islands is developed in line with the principles of the Health Strategy, particularly in relation to the expansion of primary care services.
- We will establish Comhairle na nOileán.

## **AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT POLICY**

We will implement an integrated transport policy, designed as far as possible to overcome existing delays, bottlenecks and congestion and to provide alternative choice by alternative modes of transport. We also recognise the importance of competitive access transport and of maintaining a national airline.

### *Integrated Transport*

- We will establish an integrated Department of Transport with responsibility for the national roads programme, aviation and public transport
- We will promote integrated ticketing and smart card technologies which will allow a differential pricing system to be introduced.
- We will introduce legislation to establish a new Greater Dublin Land Use and Transport Authority with a strong mandate to bring greater focus and better co-ordination to the implementation of this strategy and to land-use and transport issues generally.
- We will replace the Road Transport Act 1932 with modernised legislation to allow inter alia for new services in the bus market.
- Further progress will be made on upgrading the bus fleet, providing bus priorities both in Dublin and other cities, and in increasing the level and frequency of service and the interchangeability of commuter tickets on bus and rail.
- New services will be introduced both to some new housing developments and to existing poorly served communities
- We will ensure that access to public transport is one of the criteria taken into consideration by the planning process

### *Railways*

- We will complete the first rail safety programme and initiate a new five year programme beginning in 2004.
- An independent Railway Safety Authority will be established.
- We will establish Iarnrod Eireann as an independent state company in its own right with full management autonomy.
- A strategic rail review will provide a blueprint for the future development of the railways in Ireland and we will introduce new regional and commuter routes.
- The DART and outer suburban lines will be upgraded.
- Improvements to mainline rail services and rolling stock will continue.
- Dublin Light Rail (LUAS) will be introduced between Tallaght and Connolly station and between Sandyford and St. Stephen's Green.
- We will develop the metro for Dublin on a PPP basis making the maximum use of private finance and achieving a link to Dublin Airport by 2007.
- We will fully support the independent Railway Procurement Agency.

### *Roads*

- We will fully implement the National Roads Programme provided for in the National Development Plan.
- We will continue with the programme of investment in non-national roads up to 2005 and we will follow this with a further significant improvement programme.
- We will put in place a new 5-year plan to ensure that non-national roads are properly signposted.

### *Cycleways and Footpaths*

- We will invest in expanding the national network of cycleways in order to encourage more people to cycle and to promote cycling as a safe and healthy mode of travel
- We will allocate a portion of the budget on road improvement projects to the provision of new footpaths to allow pedestrians to walk in greater safety and comfort.

### *Rural Transport*

- We will continue to support the Rural Transport Initiative which will run until end 2003.
- On completion of the current RTI programme, we will develop in conjunction with the Rural Transport Sub-Committee of the Public Transport Forum a new programme to further promote and support the development of innovative, community based public transport projects.
- We will ensure that every county has a comprehensive rural transport initiative in place.
- We will embark on a new initiative to further develop localised bus services, particularly in rural areas.

### *Traffic Corps*

- A dedicated Traffic Corps with its own staff and ring-fenced budget will be established following a six-month consultation process.

### *Taxis*

- We will work in a fair and equitable way to ensure taxi supply matches demand.
- We will continue the process of making taxis wheelchair accessible.
- We will implement the recommendations of the Taxi Hardship Panel.
- We will appoint a national regulator for the future regulation of licensing, standards and the quality of service.

### *Aviation*

- We will support the agreed Aer Lingus survival plan.
- Low cost travel is the fastest growing sector in the aviation industry. We will ensure that all our State airports will cater for the requirements of this sector.
- We will ensure that a low cost facility is built at Pier D in Dublin Airport without delay.
- We will examine proposals for a new independent terminal at Dublin Airport and progress them if the evidence suggests that such a terminal will deliver significant benefits.
- We will support the development of new air passenger services at all airports.
- We will continue to transform Aer Rianta and as part of this process we will ensure that Shannon and Cork Airports have greater autonomy and independence
- The NDP capital development support for regional airports will be fully implemented. A new three year Public Service Obligation air service programme to regional airports will be launched this year.
- We will address the key issues required to make Ireland an international hub for airfreight.



## THE ENVIRONMENT

We are committed to implementing an ambitious environmental programme.

### *Air Quality*

- We will implement an upgraded air quality monitoring system, including “real-time” reporting.
- We will extend the ban on smoky coal to additional centres.
- We will prepare and implement a comprehensive strategy to deal with emissions of critical air pollutants.

### *Water Quality*

- We will ensure that discharges of untreated sewage from our big cities and towns into the sea cease by end 2003.
- We will ensure that we meet the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Directive in relation to treatment of sewage. In addition, we will provide, or be at an advanced stage of planning, waste water treatment facilities for all population centres over 1,000 by 2005.
- We will ensure that the water quality threats posed by phosphates and nitrates are tackled.
- We will fully implement the Water Framework Directive.
- We will significantly increase the number of blue flags and bring designated bathing places up to required EU standards.
- We will ensure that group water schemes meet the quality requirements of the EU Drinking Water Directive.
- We will introduce a new Water Services Bill to modernise the outdated legislation in this area.

### *Waste*

- We will ensure that local authority waste management plans, guided by the waste hierarchy of prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycle, recovery and safe disposal, are fully and speedily implemented.
- We will intensify our waste prevention efforts through an ambitious and well-resourced National Waste Prevention Programme.
- We believe that mass burn incineration of unsegregated waste, with no energy recovery, is not an acceptable practice today.
- Thermal treatment, using best available technology, must be based on prior extraction from the waste stream of recyclables and problematic materials (eg. metals, batteries) to the maximum extent possible, and on ensuring the highest regulatory standards through the EPA licensing system.
- In terms of recycling, we will progressively extend door to door collections of recyclables to most remaining urban centres. The recycling effort will be assisted by the in-built incentive of weight-based charging and the banning of certain types of waste from landfill. We will also make recycling easier by doubling the number of Civic Amenity Sites and by significantly improving the availability of “bring banks”, coupled with new standards to ensure that all bring banks are managed properly and operated clearly. We will support community recycling activities.
- At industry level, we will extend the producer responsibility initiative in the area of packaging waste to the areas of construction and demolition waste, end-of-life vehicles, types, newsprint, electronic equipment and batteries. We will strive to ensure that these initiatives can be implemented on an agreed voluntary basis. However, failing agreement, we will regulate to achieve the desired recovery and recycling objectives.

- In terms of dealing with residual waste, we will ensure that we dramatically cut the volumes of waste going into landfill.
- We will develop further the concept of community gain in association with the delivery of major infrastructure proposals under the local authority waste management plans.
- We will establish a National Waste Management Advisory Board to co-ordinate, monitor, review and advise on all aspects of waste management policy. We will also establish a Recycling Forum as well as a Market Development Group to examine the issues around developing markets for recycled materials.

### *Litter*

- We will fully implement the new National Litter Pollution Monitoring System and the wide range of measures in our Litter Action Plan.
- We will use resources from the newly-established Environment Fund to make further progress on raising litter awareness and increasing enforcement.
- We will ensure that all government and other state agencies fulfill their obligations under the Litter Pollution Act.

### *Climate Change*

- We will fully implement the National Climate Change Strategy and we will report on progress on an annual basis.
- We will implement our greenhouse gas taxation policies on a phased incremental basis and in a manner which takes account of national economic, social and environmental objectives.
- We will implement a major communications programme to heighten awareness of the challenges we face in climate change, the measures we must implement and the benefits that will flow from them.

### *Funding/Eco-Taxes*

- In providing funding to local authorities, we will earmark specific funds which will be available to local authorities for the achievement of defined environmental targets.
- We will consider the extension of the levy on plastic bags to other areas such as non-reusable packaging.
- We will rebalance the VRT and motor tax regimes to favour vehicles with lower carbon dioxide emissions.
- We will improve the tax incentives for investment in renewable energy in order to reduce our dependence on CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting fossil fuels.

### *Enforcement*

- We will establish a new Office of Environmental Enforcement to audit the performance of local authorities in discharging their environmental enforcement function, taking action against those lagging behind. The Office will also monitor compliance by public authorities with their environmental obligations. Where significant breaches of environmental legislation occur, the Office will be able to prosecute cases or assist local authorities in doing so.
- We will ensure that penalties for breaches of environmental legislation should reflect the damage to the environment which has been caused. We will also explore the possibility of introducing the Supplemental Environment Project under which fines could be reduced in exchange of a binding commitment to carry out an environmentally beneficial project.

### *Partnership*

- We will continue to successfully operate Comhar – National Sustainable Development Partnership as a forum of excellence in terms of discussion and debate on key environmental issues. We will also develop the approach to direct funding for environmental NGOs.

### *Nuclear Safety*

- We regard the continued existence of Sellafield as an unacceptable threat to Ireland and that it should be closed.
- We will use every diplomatic and legal route available to us to work towards the achievement of this objective.
- We will continue to be a leading opponent in all international bodies of attempts to foist nuclear energy on developing countries
- We will keep up-to-date nuclear emergency plans, including sufficient stocks of medical supplies, so as to minimise harm to public health from the effects of any possible exposure to radiation in Ireland

## HOUSING

We will implement a multi-stranded approach to addressing housing needs right across the spectrum.

- We will extend the Serviced Land Initiative, make more efficient use of housing land and make further Special Development Zone designations as required.
- We will commit to a further expansion of the various social housing programmes.
- We will assist the voluntary housing sector so that the target of 4,000 accommodation units per annum envisaged under the National Development Plan can be reached.
- We will, in line with the National Poverty Strategy, set new housing targets in light of the completion of this year's detailed survey of housing needs.
- We will implement a full package of reforms in rented accommodation sector, arising from the report of the Commission on the Private Rented Sector.
- We will consider the introduction of legislation to regulate the establishment and operation of apartment complex management companies.
- We will ensure that the comprehensive Homelessness Strategies now in place are implemented.
- We will ensure the implementation of local authority Traveller Accommodation Plans.
- We will take further steps to streamline the approval procedures for local authority house building projects.
- Through the local authority system, Housing Advice Services will be provided information on all the housing options and supports will be available to the public.
- We will finalise the compilation of a National Public Property Register to identify properties in state control suitable for housing projects.
- We will review procedures for dealing with insubstantial planning appeals.
- We will review the operation of the Planning and Development Act to ensure that it is meeting the objectives for which it was enacted with particular reference to social and affordable housing.
- In order to minimise the disruption to supply we will ensure that where planning applications become necessary because of the 2 year withering requirement, set maximum application and appeals timings will apply.
- We will implement a new approach to urban renewal based on the combined use of Compulsory Purchase Orders and Public Private Partnerships.

## AGRICULTURE, FOOD and RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We believe that a strong agriculture is a vital part of a strong Irish economy and the cornerstone of a vibrant rural community. Our aim is the continued enhancement of agriculture and our vision is for rural communities where young people have a choice between attractive options. We are also firmly committed to radically developing the social and physical infrastructure of rural Ireland.

- We will maintain the Government and diplomatic offensive to improve world access and the opening of markets.
- We will broaden the scope of agricultural education, anticipating that in some cases, farming may be combined with other occupations.
- We will provide through Teagasc, a dedicated service which will help part-time and transitional farmers use their capabilities and time to best advantage and efficiency and, where necessary to diversify their income through appropriate training through an Opportunities Programme.
- We will ensure that courses are delivered in a flexible manner suited to potential participants involving increased use of approaches such as night courses and distance learning.
- We will implement the recommendations of the Advisory Group on the role of Women in Agriculture.
- We will work to protect the fundamental principles of the CAP in the EU enlargement negotiations. As necessary, we will also support measures such as adequate EU finances, in order to ensure the smooth integration of the agriculture of the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe joining the European Union, while preparing to take advantage of new market opportunities.
- We will continue to promote the highest standards of food safety and foster a culture of innovation, quality and excellence in the food industry.
- We will continue to pursue actions through the EU to ensure that the same high standards apply to imported food as to domestic products.
- We will seek to improve the level of information available to consumers about the origins of the food on sale in this country through initiatives such as the introduction of a distinct green label for Irish food.
- We will encourage the food industry to build long-term relationships in premium export markets with a strong emphasis on growth in value-added products.
- We will encourage the Irish beef industry, in particular, to make the development of sustainable EU markets its over-riding priority with the twin objectives of gaining greater stability and closing the gap between Irish and European prices. The key to making this happen is the building of an integrated supply chain through partnership arrangements between producers, processors and retailers, underpinned by the National Beef Assurance Scheme and industry quality schemes in product promotions.
- We will promote the preservation of the environment through good farming practice supported by grants and special tax incentives to assist on-farm investment and careful waste management. We will seek to ensure that supports are available to all farmers.
- We will foster a clean and attractive countryside with a high quality of life that can be enjoyed and appreciated by all. As part of this policy we will seek to make the REPS scheme more attractive.
- We will enhance co-operation with the Northern Ireland authorities on keeping the island of Ireland disease-free.
- We will enhance the contribution of horticulture, by supporting the production of product in an environmentally friendly manner and marketed to uniformly high standards.

- We will further develop the organic sector through an increase at production level and the development of a single national label to take advantage both of “clean green” image of Irish agriculture and the added appeal of organic food.
- We will set the quality of service, including, the efficient and timely delivery of payments as an integral part of all operational priorities.
- We will give urgent consideration to the potential for tax incentives for long-term leasing of land as a means of increasing the supply of land available to young farmers.
- We will agree a series of proposals with farming organisations designed to tackle red-tape and argue strongly for their adoption at EU level.
- We will examine, in conjunction with the Commission, the possibility of extending the disadvantaged areas classification to the whole BMW region.

### *Rural Development*

- We will give a clear priority to the protection and development of rural communities.
- We will continue the CLAR programme, ensuring annual funding and publishing annual reports on progress. When the relevant results of the Census are available we will review the data and consider additional areas for inclusion.
- We will establish a Rural Social Economy Programme which will provide secure, community-related, employment opportunities for persons in families eligible for the Farm Assist scheme.
- We will ensure the implementation of the County Development Strategies in a coordinated way by all agencies, especially in respect to the encouragement of small rural enterprises.
- We will examine the planning guidelines for small rural enterprises and complete the review within twelve months.
- We will seek to develop the agriculture colleges as wider rural development resources.
- We will support rural post offices and seek to develop commercial services in rural areas with specific investment being made in developing the Government Services Agency approach to provide additional services.

## **PROMOTING TOURISM**

We believe that the Tourism industry will continue to be a vital industry and that it requires sustained support and investment in the coming years.

- We will broaden our source markets so that we are not over-reliant on any one market and, in particular, seek to increase our share of the Continental European market .
- We will foster expansion and competition on air and sea routes.
- We will support and promote Tourism Ireland Limited in its work of promoting the whole island of Ireland as a tourist destination.
- We will complete the task of creating a new National Tourism Development Authority which will complement the work of Tourism Ireland.
- We will ensure the construction of a state of the art National Conference Centre and promote Ireland as a venue for international conference business.
- We will put the maintenance of standards and services at the top of the tourism agenda.
- We will continue to support the B&B and small accommodation sector through specific marketing initiatives.
- We will encourage year-round activity-based and special interest tourism.
- We will ensure that local authorities takes account of the needs of the tourist industry in its provision of infrastructure.
- We will promote sensitive development of tourist areas and encourage environmental best practice among tourism providers.

## MARINE & NATURAL RESOURCES

We believe strongly in the need to support, protect and develop our marine and natural resources.

- We will press for fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, with the aim of sustainable development, better governance, stakeholder involvement, conservation, stock building and maximising Ireland's access to fisheries.
- We will introduce a new fleet licensing policy to ensure equity, transparency and an independent appeals process.
- We will set out a long-term strategy for the sustainable development of our fishing industry.
- We will establish efficient management structures and develop our fishery harbours, including electronic auctioning , new distribution networks and completion of investment programmes for harbours.
- We will develop new devolved service structures to support the sustainable management, development and protection of the marine coastal zone and seafood resources.
- We will ensure that our ports are equipped for the demands of our growing economy, through investment and the development of seamless transport systems between road, rail and ports and best utilisation of property assets.
- We will work to develop Ireland as a centre of excellence for marine research.
- We will work to increase forest planting levels to 20,000 hectares per annum.
- We will consolidate the Minerals Development Acts.
- We will encourage further exploration for hydrocarbons and minerals while maximising the value added to the Irish economy.
- We will increase the opportunities for offshore wind and wave energy generation.

# **BUILDING A CARING SOCIETY**

## **BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY**

We are committed to the objective of achieving real and sustained social progress.

- We will reduce consistent poverty to below 2%.
- In particular, we recognise the tackling of child poverty as a core element of our work.
- We will implement a full range of policies aimed at supporting older people including delivering decent pensions and greatly improved care services.
- We will implement the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy with its ambitious targets across a broad range of areas.
- We will bring the targeting of health inequalities to the fore in health policy.
- We will ensure that homelessness, and rough sleeping in particular, is tackled in a coordinated manner in all parts of the country.
- We recognise the need to work hard to include all communities in the benefits of recent progress and will, in particular, ensure that all state agencies prioritise integrated work in areas of significant disadvantage. This will be a priority under the next phase of public sector reform.
- We will work to generate the resources to achieve our new benchmark level of €150 for social welfare payments.
- We will publish an annual report of progress towards the achievement of anti-poverty targets.
- We will fund an ambitious programme of data gathering on social indicators, including consistent poverty and social capital, to ensure that policies are developed on the basis of sound information.
- We will work to promote social capital in all parts of Irish life through a combination of research and ensuring that public activity supports the development of social capital, particularly on a local community level.
- We will continue to support initiatives to expand corporate social responsibility.

## **HEALTH**

The development of a world-class public health service is a core objective for us. Based on the blueprint set out in the National Health Strategy, a combination of greater investment and a reform of the system will provide a high-quality and accessible health service for all. It will ensure a major expansion in the level and quality of services throughout the country. And it will encourage the end of the two-tier health system by ensuring that public patients will have access to timely and quality services in all parts of the system.

- We will implement the National Health Strategy, through a coordinated multi-annual programme of service development.
- We believe that it is necessary to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the administration and funding of acute services as distinct from the other full range of areas funded by health boards. As part of a full examination of health bodies and structures, we will examine the separation of acute services from the core work of health boards and, at a minimum, ensure that the budget and service planning process are separated.
- We will seek the completion of the report on Health Agencies and Management Structures by the end of 2002 and will move forward on the principle of removing unnecessary overlap of functions and minimizing delays in implementing service improvements.



- We will treat people within new national guidelines for maximum waiting times set out in the National Health Strategy.
- We will ensure that, in line with timings set out in the Strategy, all persons will be given an appointment for treatment within three months of referral with this being achieved through a combination of bed capacity, primary care, secondary care and targeted reform initiatives.
- We will expand public hospital beds in line with a programme to increase total capacity by 3,000 during the period of the Strategy.
- We will seek to gain the maximum benefit for public patients from private hospital capacity through initiatives such as the Treatment Purchase Fund.
- We will explore the potential for long-term contractual arrangements between public health bodies and private, especially non-profit, providers.
- We will reform the system of planning and funding our hospitals to ensure that the needs of people in all parts of the country are addressed, and that public funding is producing the highest possible level and quality of care.
- We will improve the staffing of our hospitals by expanding the number of nurses working in key professional positions, hiring additional consultants and more health professionals, especially in priority areas, including general practice and emergency facilities.
- We will develop acute hospital services on a balanced regional basis, with the particular objective of seeking to achieve the highest level of regional self-sufficiency consistent with maximising patient outcomes.
- We recognise the particular need to ensure that people in all parts of the country have reasonable access to cancer services and will ensure that this objective is achieved.
- We believe that taxation can play an important role in the work to limit tobacco consumption and in raising revenue for the health services. In order to make this possible, we will urgently seek the agreement of the social partners to the disregarding of the tobacco-related element of the Consumer Prices Index when using the Index as a basis for negotiations.
- We will seek to expand the use of information and communication technologies in all aspects of the health service especially as a support to broadening access to expert care.
- We will implement a full range of measures to improve Accident and Emergency Services by significantly reducing waiting times and having senior doctors available at all times.
- We will give hospitals extra resources where they can specifically show how, as a result, they can treat more patients in a more efficient way.
- We will implement a series of measures to significantly improve the level of orthodontic care available to public patients.
- We will ensure that independent and up to date data on activity within the health sector is provided by agencies and is regularly published.
- A set of national quality protocols will also be which will require that all patients, irrespective of where they live, receive a high quality of care.
- We will complete the programme of expansion of appropriate care places for people with disabilities, with, in particular, the ending of the inappropriate use of psychiatric hospitals for persons with intellectual disabilities.
- We will implement a major reform and development of primary care services. As a starting point, 24-hour GP cover will be extended throughout the country by implementing a new co-operative and out-of-hours service.
- We will develop a network of primary care centres where general practitioners, community health nurses, physiotherapists and other professionals will work together to improve care available to all groups.



- We will extend medical card eligibility in line with the recommendations of the National Health Strategy and, further, review cases for the extension of both the medical card and long-term illness schemes.
- We will encourage the entry of additional insurers into the private health insurance market.
- We will develop community facilities for the elderly, including community nursing units, in such a way as to actively promote independence.

## EDUCATION

We are committed to helping to improve the level and quality of participation and achievement at every level of education.

- To ensure that early-education services deliver the maximum benefit for all children, we will introduce a national early-education, training, support and certification system and expand state-funded early-education places. Priority will be given to a new national system of funded early-education for children with intellectual disabilities and children in areas of concentrated disadvantage.
- We will continue to reduce the pupil:teacher ratio in our schools. Over the next five years we will progressively introduce maximum class guidelines which will ensure that the average size of classes for children under 9 will be below the international best-practice guideline of 20:1.
- We will continue the expansion in teacher training, introduce reforms to teacher training courses as recommended by an expert review and ensure improved teacher supply.
- We will implement changes to retention and support policies which will assist schools in areas of significant disadvantage to recruit and retain teachers.
- Every school will receive support for the purchase of appropriate and age-related literacy tests to assist teachers in their work.
- We will further expand adult literacy services.
- We will continue our policy of implementing significant increases in direct school funding.
- We will ensure that every pupil participates in a programme designed to increase understanding of the value and role of enterprise.
- We will ensure that reducing absenteeism and early-school leaving is a core priority over the next five years. The National Educational Welfare Board will begin its work this year and will, in the first instance, prioritise areas with high levels of disadvantage, especially areas contained within the RAPID programme.
- We will establish a new targeted scheme of school meals for disadvantaged pupils which will combine existing schemes and integrate them within other initiatives. Only schools in areas with high levels of disadvantage will be included.
- We will ensure that every school building attains set modern standards.
  - This will be achieved through a multi-annual programme, to be called the Schools Modernisation Fund which will be financed through the National Development Finance Agency.
  - The NDFA will ensure that the maximum appropriate use of PPPs in school projects is achieved.
  - To assist this programme, a national assessment and inventory of the condition of school buildings will be completed and regularly updated.
  - Changes will be introduced to the method of delivering building projects in such a way as maximises the level of devolved activity at local level.
- There will also continue to be a separate education capital programme as part of the annual Public Capital Programme.

- We will establish a national expert advice, oversight and provision service for special needs education by end-2002.
- We will develop on a North-South basis a Centre of Excellence for study, research and training on special needs and the development and dissemination of best practice models.
- Over the next five years we will progressively develop adult education services to a stage where we will offer a "Second-Chance Guarantee". Under the guarantee every person who left school without completing the junior-cycle at second level will be offered the chance to participate on an adult education course.
- We will continue to support advanced research in third-level institutions and the physical renewal of our third-level campuses.
- We support efforts to protect and improve the quality of academic teaching and learning at undergraduate level. We will establish a small expert review group to examine the role of funding in supporting excellence in undergraduate programmes and to consider procedures whereby outstanding performance by departments, faculties and institutions can be rewarded.
- We will seek to address the distortion of the points system which comes about through certain high points courses and, in particular, support the move towards a common science degree as the principal means of entry onto medical, veterinary and other related degree courses.
- We will increase the eligibility thresholds for maintenance grants for families with a number of students attending qualifying courses at the same time.
- We will introduce the payment of maintenance grants through a unified and flexible grant payment scheme.
- We will ensure that the number of mature students and students from disadvantaged backgrounds in third-level expands significantly.
- We will create Donogh O'Malley Scholarships for students from areas of significant disadvantage and, in doing so, bring together a number of diverse funding initiatives.
- We will implement a series of coordinated initiatives to tackle alcohol abuse by young people.

## CRIME

We stand for a society where all people can feel safe in their communities, business and homes.

- We will complete the current expansion of the Garda Síochána and increase recruitment so that the numbers will increase by a further 2,000.
- These additional Gardai will be targeted at those areas of greatest need, especially areas experiencing a significant drugs problem and a large number of public order offences.
- We will examine the potential of the Community Warden service to enforce existing and new functions so ensuring that more trained police officers are released to operational duties tackling crime and defending our citizens.
- We will extend the use of CCTV cameras and also grant aid local communities to provide them.
- We will review the management structure of the Garda Síochána and we will establish an independent Garda Inspectorate, which will have the power to investigate complaints, and will have the powers of an ombudsman.
- We will deploy the full weight of the State, including the post-Omagh legislation, against any organisation that seeks to continue the violence of the last 30 years.
- We will target the assets of all persons involved in drug dealing and, in particular, middle-ranking criminals.
- We will continue to target drug dealers at local level by making additional resources available to existing drugs units and for the establishment of similar units in areas of need.

- We will establish a co-ordinating framework for drugs policy in each Garda District, to liaise with the community on drug-related matters and act as a source of information for parents and members of the public.
- We will ensure that each Garda District and Sub-District be required to produce a Drug Policing Plan to include multi-agency participation in targeting drug dealers
- We will introduce a Proceeds of Corruption Act modeled on the Proceeds of Crime legislation, to further target white collar crime and corruption in public and private sectors.
- We will complete our programme of modernising prisons and providing extra places, so as to avoid overcrowding and the reopening of the revolving door.
- We will make full use of the probation service where appropriate as an alternative to custody.
- We will tackle the high level of illiteracy and lack of educational accomplishment prevalent in many prisoners by supporting enhanced educational programmes within prisons
- We will provide skills training courses to enhance employment prospects for prisoners on release.
- We will provide for compulsory drugs testing of prisoners where appropriate.
- We will provide for Drug Testing and Treatment Orders.
- We will require convicted drug dealers to register with the Gardaí after leaving prison.
- We will fully enforce the measures in the licensing laws that ensure mandatory temporary closures of licensed premises - pubs, clubs and off-licences - where there have been convictions for allowing underage drinking.
- We will enact the Criminal Justice (Public Order Enforcement) Bill, 2002 as a priority.
- We will guarantee funding of Victim Support as a cornerstone of Government policy in victim care and review existing funding levels in the light of proposed reviews
- We will ensure that any changes to Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme will involve consultation with Victim Support and we will examine the feasibility of recompensing crime victims for injuries and non-insured loss. An agency will be designated to recover fines for this purpose.
- As part of a general reform of the courts system, the existing criminal jurisdiction of the Circuit Criminal Court and the Central Criminal Court will be merged in one nation-wide indictable crimes court of which all Circuit Court judges and High Court judges will be members.
- We will extend the power to the DPP to appeal against lenient sentences in serious cases before the District Court.
- We will ensure all substantive criminal law will be codified into a single Crimes Act, dealing with homicide, violence, property offences, dishonesty, corruption, public order, arrest, criminal procedure and court jurisdiction, uniform sentencing procedure and policies, defences such as insanity and incapacity.
- We will publish this criminal code and ensure it is kept up to date by means of the Statute Law Restatement legislation now before the Oireachtas.
- We will introduce night courts and weekend courts in areas of greatest need.
- We will ensure annual funding for awareness programmes to tackle domestic violence and ensure that housing and shelter programmes fully address the needs of those who have experienced domestic violence.

## **OLDER PEOPLE**

One of our core objectives will be to help all older people to live in the dignity which their immense contribution to the development of our country deserves. Building on our record of unprecedented increases in pension payments and support services, we will implement a coordinated programme of measures so that the full range of issues of concern to older people are addressed. In order to reflect the breadth of this commitment, specific measures can be found as core elements of the different sections of this programme and, in particular, in the sections dealing with pensions and health.

## **PENSIONS**

- We will increase the basic state pension to at least €200 by 2007.
- We will introduce a personal pension entitlement for pensioner spouses currently in receipt of the Qualified Adult Allowance, set at the level of a full non-contributory pension.
- We will implement improvements in the Widow's/Widower's Pension.
- We will remove the requirement whereby a person reaching 65 must first retire for a period before being able to work and retain a portion of their pension. We will, at the same time, examine and seek to remove other financial disincentives for people of pension age who may want to continue some form of employment.
- We will establish a group to report on options for lower income groups to ensure that they can have an earnings-related pension when they retire.
- We will maintain the National Pension Reserve Fund and the payment of 1% of GNP per annum into the Fund.

## **CHILDREN and CHILDCARE**

We believe that there is much still to be done in order to help all children to develop to their full potential.

- We are committed to moving forward on the basis of implementing our highly ambitious Children's Strategy.
- We will work to ensure that the number of children living in consistent poverty is reduced in line with the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- We will complete our announced programme of multi-annual increases in Child Benefit and ensure that the combined value of child support is increased in line with our commitment under the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.
- We will develop a National Play and Recreation policy which will aim to ensure that all children have access to at least a minimum standard of play and recreation facilities.
- We will establish the Office of the Children's Ombudsman and have the office fully operational during 2002.
- We will publish independent evaluations of all child welfare services.
- We will fully implement the Children First guidelines for the prevention, identification, reporting, assessment, treatment and management of child abuse in all its forms.
- We will ensure that the National Study of Children is fully established and that the information generated will be widely disseminated.
- We will strengthen the parental leave scheme in line with the recommendations of the social partners.
- We will ensure that every county implements a Childcare Strategy by the end of 2002, providing the planning and funding basis to significantly increase childcare provision.

- We will seek to significantly expand the number of new childcare places supported by state funding.
- We will significantly increase capital grants for community and private childcare facilities.
- We will seek to streamline the application process for childcare capital grants and increase the grant limits for all providers, subject to overall compliance with EU State Aids rules.
- We will ensure that there is a network of supports in place for child minders.
- We will introduce a special working visa scheme for child minders.
- We will keep under review and seek to streamline regulations concerning the establishment and running of creches and childcare facilities, including planning requirements, consistent with health and safety requirements.
- We will expand support for the provision of out-of-hours childcare programmes based in schools.

## **DISABILITY AND CARING**

We are committed to building service provision and legislative frameworks which enable people with disabilities to fulfil their potential and make full contribution to the economic and social life of our country.

- We will complete the programme of expansion of appropriate care places for people with disabilities, with, in particular, the ending of the inappropriate use of psychiatric hospitals for persons with intellectual disabilities.
- We will complete consultations on the Disabilities Bill and will bring the amended Bill through the Oireachtas and include provisions for rights of assessment, appeals, provision and enforcement.
- We will, following further consultations, enact the Education (People with Disabilities) Bill and establish as a matter of priority a new dedicated Special Needs Education Council with independent assessment, appeals and redress mechanisms.
- We will ensure the regular publication of national data on employment for people with disabilities.
- We will increase funding for the full range of open and supported training and employment schemes for people with disabilities.
- We will establish a National Centre for Universal Design to serve as a leader in promoting universal access.
- We will complete the development of the National Centre for Excellence for the Visually Impaired.
- We will complete the work of the group examining the introduction of a costs of disability payment.
- We will introduce a new Home Subvention scheme to maximise support to those needing full time care in the community.
- We will expand the income limits for the Carer's Allowance so that all those on average industrial incomes can qualify.
- We will implement significant increases in the value of the respite grant for carers.
- We will consult on other options for assisting families who may wish to make long-term provision for a person with a disability.
- We will legislate for the achievement of the employment quota for people with disabilities in the civil and public service.

## **SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE**

We will work to promote greater respect for the person and for the diversity, equality and cultural difference in Ireland

- We will uphold the entitlement of all people to equal treatment before the law
- We will undertake an annual review of the Anti-Racism campaign in order to identify new avenues to combat racism
- We will complete a review of the laws on incitement to hatred and ensure that people who incite racial hatred have no place in Irish society
- We will enhance the excellent work which is currently underway in our schools, to educate for diversity and promote tolerance
- We will appoint an expert group on managing cultural change to advise Government on strategic issues and integrated approach to this complex issue
- We will review campaigns designed to promote tolerance and understanding between the settled and travelling communities and maintain multi-annual funding for targeted programmes.

## **ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION**

We recognise that asylum is a complex, long-term issue that requires action at national, European and international levels. Within these contexts, we will work in a balanced way.

- We will seek to increase the rate of repatriation of failed asylum applicants, whose applications have been processed to finality, in order to maintain the integrity of asylum policy
- We will ensure that the Reception & Integration Agency works effectively to fulfil its mandate.
- We will ensure that new asylum applications are dealt with within six months and that other applications, which are currently outstanding, can be dealt with quickly.
- We will keep under review the number of applications from non-nationals to remain in the State on the basis of parentage of an Irish-born child and initiate all-party discussions on the issue of such constitutional or other measures which might be required.
- We will work with the International Office of Migration to devise a voluntary repatriation programme for illegal immigrants
- We will prepare a new Immigration and Residence Bill which will consolidate legislation in the area and provide for future developments
- We will review processing arrangements for work visas, including greater integration of consular and commercial reviews to ensure both speedy processing and reasonable safeguards
- We will ensure the effective monitoring of the working conditions of all persons with work visas.
- Through our Overseas Development Aid programme we will work to support the development of countries experiencing large-scale economic migration.



## **EQUALITY & LAW REFORM**

- We will publish regular reviews of the operation of equality legislation and ensure that the enforcement authorities are in a position to effectively carry out their duties.
- We will ensure that each public sector entity implements a structured programme to address imbalances in gender representation in management positions.
- We will ensure that life-long learning policies are responsive to the needs of women and, in particular, ensure that qualifications authorities fulfil their mandates to develop appropriate mechanisms for recognising alternative modes of progression.
- We will ensure that a minimum of 40% of state board nominations are from each gender.
- We will seek to introduce a scheme of mandatory mediation for the purpose of improving the early settlement of claims and controlling legal and other costs. We include within this sanctions for unreasonable conduct by either side.
- We will introduce measures to punish the presentation and making of false and exaggerated claims in personal injury cases. As part of this, we will create a power for the courts to deduct from damages costs relating to exaggerated claims.
- We will, in the context of a statutory Press Council and improved privacy laws, move to implement reforms of libel laws designed to bring them into line with those of other states.
- New laws will be introduced to speed up civil litigation.
- We will change the in camera rule in family law cases to allow for general reporting of a overall trends while continuing to respect the privacy of all those involved.
- We will reorganise the High Court into specialist divisions.
- We will legislate to provide effective remedies for complaints about judicial misbehaviour, including lay participation in the investigation of complaints.
- A comprehensive reform of the law relating to charities will be enacted to ensure accountability and to protect against abuse of charitable status and fraud.

## **TACKLING DRUG ABUSE**

The fight against drugs is one of the great challenges of the modern world and it one where we believe major progress can be achieved.

- We will continue to prioritise heroin and cocaine for intervention, and will publish separate national targets for supply reduction for each major type of drug.
- We will ensure that regional drugs task forces operate efficiently to ensure that prevention programmes are active in all areas of the country.
- We will ensure that an early-warning system, involving all key agencies, is in place to track the potential spread of heroin into new areas.
- We will publish annual reports of activity and progress towards the achievement of specific prevention, supply reduction and treatment targets.
- Additional Gardai will be concentrated in the areas experiencing the greatest drugs problems and the activities of middle-ranking dealers will be targeted
- Treatment and rehabilitation, including residential, programmes will be expanded so that there is a place available for every person seeking the service.
- By end-2002 we will publish a plan to completely end all heroin use in Irish prisons. This will include the availability of treatment and rehabilitation for all who need them and the introduction of compulsory drug testing for prisoners where necessary.
- Where a person has been found to be involved in the supply of drugs to a prisoner we will introduce a new stiffer penalty.
- As part of the new regional education management structures, local supports will be provided and new guidelines will be issued to all schools on the implementation of a drugs policy.

## REGENERATING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

- We will develop the RAPID initiative in our most disadvantaged communities as a priority programme. When the small areas data is made available from the latest census we will review the areas covered and consider additional areas for inclusion.
- We will continue the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund and complete a comprehensive survey of the availability of recreation facilities in disadvantaged areas.
- We will ensure that the remedial works scheme is focused on bringing older elements of the local authority housing stock up to modern standards.
- We will ensure local authority housing developments of over 75 units have a dedicated childcare facility.
- The Education Welfare Board will publish an action plan on school attendance and early school-leaving for each area covered by the RAPID programme.
- Each relevant Government Department will allocate specific staff whose principal duty will be to ensure that the Department is effectively engaged with the RAPID communities along the lines of the final report of the Integrated Services Process.
- We will ensure that the strategic plans of the City and County Development Boards are, where appropriate, effectively targeting the areas of greatest need.
- Each Department will publish, as part of its annual report, a statement of the work undertaken to support Integrated Services work in these areas.
- We will ensure democratic legitimacy on local boards appointed to implement development programmes.



## **SUPPORTING CIVIC LIFE**

### **GOOD GOVERNMENT**

We believe that it is a core part of the work of all elements of the public sector to ensure that it works in the public interest efficiently, effectively and informed by the highest personal standards.

#### *Integrity in Public Life*

- We will vigorously implement and improve where necessary the full range of ethics legislation.
- We will introduce a Proceeds of Corruption Act modelled on the Proceeds of Crime legislation, to further target white collar crime and corruption in both public and private sectors.

#### *Delivering Value for Money*

- We will build a greater culture of review of public spending by publishing regular evaluations of key spending programmes. As part of this, each Department will publish key indicators for each major programme against which progress will be assessed.
- The National Development Finance Agency will ensure that public projects are developed to maximise value for money.

#### *eGovernment*

- We will put in place a programme to implement a major expansion in the range and quality of online Government services.
- We will ensure that all public services capable of electronic delivery are available through a single point of contact.

#### *Proven Partnership*

- We will seek to negotiate a new partnership agreement to follow the PPF and ensure that it recognises that partnership must embrace organisational change, agree ways of improving the delivery of public services and provide for the modernisation of our workplaces.
- We will review models of participation in the social partnership process and in particular examine ways of maximising both the efficiency of the process and the potential contribution of the diverse and vibrant community and voluntary sectors. This will include greater participation of pensioners through groups such as the Senior Citizens Parliament.

#### *Semi-State Sector*

- We are committed to ensuring that the commercial semi-State sector provides services of world-class quality at a competitive price to the consumer.
- We will seek to secure a viable long-term future for State companies without ideological preconceptions.
- We will approach the issue of the most appropriate form of ownership or structure for State companies on a case-by-case basis.
- We will ensure that public enterprise is managed in the spirit of social partnership, with a view to achieving optimum service delivery and value for the public.

- We will support the maximum commercial freedom of semi-State companies, subject to the fulfilment of national strategic and balanced regional policy objectives.

#### *Dáil & Local Government Reform*

- We will implement our proposals for Dáil reform.
- We will continue the process of local government reform.

#### *Electoral Participation*

- We will examine ways of engaging the electorate in the democratic process with a view towards increasing participation and turnout.

## **BETTER FACILITIES FOR SPORT & RECREATION**

We believe that sport and leisure can play a major role in personal, community and general development and are committed to seeking to develop it at all levels.

- We will continue to invest in sports facilities around the country through the National Lottery and Exchequer funding, particularly at local level where clubs of all codes, run by volunteers, remain the backbone of Irish sport.
- We will complete a national audit of local sports facilities and put in place a long-term strategic plan to ensure the development of such necessary facilities throughout the country.
- We will start work on the construction of a world-class national stadium.
  - We will build facilities, both locally and nationally which will serve the needs of the sporting bodies both nationally and locally.
  - The Minister for Sport, in conjunction with CSID, the national sporting bodies and the Office of Public Works will bring forward the plans and implementation proposals of these policies in the most cost effective way as soon as possible.
- We will work with local authorities to provide at municipal level a range of public facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasia and synthetic, floodlit playing pitches.
- We will continue to support the implementation of the High Performance Strategy and in particular, its short-term aim of improving Ireland's team performance at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.
- Following a review of the operation of the existing Local Sports Partnerships, we will support their establishment throughout the country as quickly as possible.
- We will continue to encourage voluntarism in Irish Sport and we will recognize, on a national platform the contribution of individual local volunteers by setting up National Volunteer Awards on the lines of the Gaisce Awards.
- We will create, under the Local Government Fund, a new Community Facilities Fund which will support the development of community facilities not covered by existing schemes.

## **CULTURE AND HERITAGE**

Our aim is to ensure that cultural activity is available and accessible to all.

- We will develop and sustain the increased level of activity in the arts round the country, through the Arts Council, and otherwise in accordance with statutory provisions.
- We will support the implementation of the Third Arts Plan. As part of this we will work to ensure that the Council has the appropriate professional staffing structures.
- We will enact a new Arts Act, the first in over fifty years, to provide a more inclusive definition of the Arts and map out, on a statutory basis, a new relationship between artists, the Council and the Minister.
- We will implement the National Heritage Plan.
- We will develop measures, in partnership with local authorities, to protect and strengthen areas of Georgian built heritage that surround the core Georgian areas of Dublin and other centers.
- We will develop maximum North-South cooperation directly and through the relevant agencies, in recognition of common interests and a largely shared culture.
- We will help develop the music industry in Ireland through the Music Board.
- We will ensure the early establishment of the Irish Academy for the Performing Arts under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science.
- We will rebuild the Abbey, our National Theatre.
- We will consider with urgency the recommendations that will be made by the recently established Forum on Broadcasting.
- We will continue to support the development of Irish language broadcasting. In line with legislation which we have already enacted, we will establish TG4 as a separate statutory body.
- We will finalise the long-term strategic development of the National Concert Hall.
- We will support the Irish film industry and the central role of the restructured Irish Film Board.

## **THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE GAELTACHT**

- We will use the report of the Gaeltacht Commission – An Comisiún faoin nGaeilge sa Ghaeltacht as the basis for future policy.
- A West Coast Digital Corridor will be developed to provide high-quality broadband telecommunications facilities for both Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht communities from Donegal to Cork. Údarás na Gaeltachta will be charged with facilitating the provision of similar facilities in any Gaeltacht areas not covered by the Corridor, where demand exists, including offshore islands.
- We will enact the Official Languages Equality Bill.
- Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge will be fully reviewed in the context of modern day needs, and ways to how to promote the Irish language among young people will be examined.
- Youth and sports funding schemes will be reviewed in the context of their impact in the Gaeltacht and Islands.

- An Foras will be requested to develop materials specifically for families who wish to raise their children through the medium of Irish.
- The major works programme for Gaeltacht infrastructure under the National Development Plan will be completed.
- A comprehensive study of the current status of the language in the Irish media will be undertaken.
- The Language Assistant scheme in Gaeltacht schools will be strengthened and expanded to include cooperation with parents in the home.
- A comprehensive review of the needs of all Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools will be undertaken. As part of the work of the Department of Education & Science, the physical condition of all buildings used by these schools will be reviewed and a programme put in place to ensure that they meet required standards.
- The development of the Gaeltacht infrastructure will continue through the schemes operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- The improvements carried out under the strategic roads scheme will continue, to ensure that the road infrastructure in remoter areas of the Gaeltacht will be improved and that there is at least one good road into every Gaeltacht area.
- The relevant national schemes will be reviewed to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for the Irish language childcare sector throughout the country.
- A strategic review will be completed in relation to the employment support work of Údarás na Gaeltachta with a view to identifying new strands of employment creation in Gaeltacht areas.
- We will support the development of Irish medium 3rd level education and research activities on campus and, where appropriate and sustainable, in Gaeltacht education centres.