



Opening Speech by Chairperson, Ms. Justice Mary Laffoy,

at the Seventh Meeting of the Citizens' Assembly

The Challenges and Opportunities of an Ageing Population

The Grand Hotel, Malahide, 8th July 2017

Good morning everyone and welcome back to the Grand Hotel in Malahide for what is the Seventh meeting of the Citizens' Assembly. I would like to welcome all of you joining us online, the observers present with us today and of course the members themselves.

Today we meet again to continue our consideration of the second topic on our work programme – the Challenges and Opportunities of an Ageing Population.

When we last met in June, we heard from a number of experts about long term care and facilitating independent living in Ireland. We also heard from a number of individuals firsthand about their personal experience of care and being a carer.

Following the last weekend's deliberations, I was struck, as I sure my fellow Members were too, by the fact that responding to the support and care needs of our older population is a complex and challenging topic.

Recommendations of the Assembly

Tomorrow the Assembly will vote to make its full suite of recommendations in relation to term care and also on the topics before us today; pensions, income and retirement.

This weekend's meeting is timely. Just this week the CSO published its third thematic report of the Census 2016 results; An Age Profile of Ireland, which gives further evidence that the population is ageing. It is a cause for great celebration that the age cohort of 65 year and over saw the largest increase in population since the 2011 Census, rising by 102,174 to 637,567, a rise of 19.1%. The Department of Health has also launched its public consultation on home care services, which runs until the end of August.

The implications of the shifting demographics highlighted in the CSO data are multifaceted. Over the course of the Assembly's meeting in June, and again during today's proceedings, we will address some of these opportunities and challenges.

Taken together I believe we will be in a strong position to provide the Houses of the Oireachtas with some meaningful recommendations while contributing to discourse in Ireland.

This weekend

Today we will focus our attentions on pensions, income and creating opportunities in retirement. We have a very full programme for the day; with eight speakers in total, which I will now briefly outline. The work

programme has been devised based on Member feedback at the June meeting of the Assembly.

At the outset I want to express my sincere gratitude to all of our speakers for accepting the invitations to speak at short notice, particularly in consideration of the fact that we are coming up to the holiday period.

We will first hear from Andrew Nugent, Head of Policy, at the Pensions Authority of Ireland. Andrew will provide us with an overview of Pension Provision in Ireland, will include an outline of the State pension system and the private pension system.

We will then hear from Dr. Micheál Collins, Assistant Professor of Social Policy in University College Dublin who will address the Assembly on Income for older people in Ireland. His presentation will examine the income of older people in Ireland and within this will look at the issues of poverty, deprivation and wealth. Dr. Collins will also look at the state pension, assessing its importance to pensioner income and its adequacy. The presentation will also look at current and future challenges for public policy and policy formation in this area.

We will then hear from Alan Barrett, Director, at the Economic and Social Research Institute about the implications of pensions and retirement policy on the wider economy and society. He will look at the sustainability of pensions and the impact of extended working lives on the economy and society.

Our final speaker before lunch is Prof. Liam Delaney, who is AIB Chair Of Behavioural Economics, in University College Dublin. He will examine

ways to encourage pension participation and how other countries have taken steps to implement policies which change individual behaviour here.

After lunch we will hear from Justin Moran, who is Head of Advocacy, at Age Action Ireland. He will provide us with some perspectives from Civil Society on this topic, focusing on two main areas: an adequate income for older people; and mandatory retirement.

We will then be joined by Emily Logan, Chief Commissioner, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission who will address the Assembly on human rights and equality considerations with respect to pensions, income and retirement.

Our final two speakers for the day are Christine McGarrigle, Research Director, The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and Ita Mangan, Chairperson, Age and Opportunity.

Ms. McGarrigle will provide evidence from the most recently published wave of TILDA data on the contribution of older adults to their families and communities.

Ita Mangan will once again give us a perspective from Civil Society, outlining the contribution that older people make, based on her experience as Chair of Age and Opportunity and the Citizens Information Board.

Tomorrow, our work programme will be dedicated to discussions on the Ballot Paper and will comprise of several steps namely; agreeing on the issues to be included in a ballot; agreeing on the precise wording of the questions on the ballot; and voting.

Each question on the draft ballot paper will be subject to discussion, including private roundtable discussions and question and answer sessions to examine the draft and facilitate any changes suggested and agreed by the members and Chair.

Members were provided with a draft Ballot Paper earlier this week to ensure that everyone is as familiar as possible with its contents. I am looking forward to a robust discussion on the draft ballot paper.

To begin proceedings for this weekend, I will now call on Andrew Nugent from the Pensions Authority of Ireland.

ENDS