

## ACTION, NOT RHETORIC, FOR PEOPLE ON LOWER INCOMES

The 29% increase the means test in her first year in Health was a major statement of Mary Harney's commitment to ensuring people on lower incomes could get access to free primary care.

In addition, taking account of income after childcare and mortgage expenses was a recognition of the real cost of childcare and housing.

The means test was changed by just £1 or £2 a year under the Fine Gael / Labour.

In the five years of Labour in government in the 1990s, the total increases amounted to £8.50 a week.

# Medical card means test 29% higher

One of the first things Mary Harney did in health was to make the means test for medical cards much easier.

She increased the income guideline for the traditional medical card by 29 per cent. This is the largest percentage increase since 1974.

In the last ten years, the medical card income test has been increased by €72, from €112 to €184, up 64 per cent.

Mary Harney also changed the rules so that the income a person is assessed as having is income *after* tax, PRSI and all reasonable childcare, mortgage, rent and travel to work expenses.

These changes have made it much easier for people to get medical cards.

The number of people with medical cards is now growing again, after years of falls throughout the 1990s. More people now have medical cards than in 1997.



“I was very pleased to be able to simplify and increase the means test for medical cards.

“I believe it should be easy for people to get the benefits they are entitled to.

“With incomes rising fast in Ireland, it's important that means tests reflect real life situations.”  
Mary Harney

**For the Future:** “We will work to ensure that entitlements to health benefits such as medical cards, GP visit cards, and community drugs schemes will be simplified, easier to obtain, and better co-ordinated with other income support payments provided by the State.” Our manifesto

# Let's finish the job