

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme

General Council Report 1470

(Meeting/s of 27 April 2005, 29 June 2005, 29 March 2006, 26 April 2006)

Seeking the restoration of staffing levels in the Department of Social and Family Affairs to the established quota plus add-ons as of December 2002 on the basis that the Department is in breach of the Customer Service commitments in Sustaining Progress (external and internal).

1. The claim was presented at General Council on 27 April 2005. This matter arose from the Budget 2003 announcement to control public service staff numbers. It was the Staff Side's view that this had a negative impact on customer service in the Department of Social and Family Affairs. It was the Staff Side's belief that there was a breach of Sustaining Progress because of the failure to meet commitments to "improving the level of customer service" (20.12). There were also commitments to "maintaining a well managed industrial relations environment to minimise disputes affecting the level of service to the public" (19.3) which the Staff Side considered have not been met. The Staff Side believed that the restoration of staff levels to pre 2002 was warranted.

2. The Official Side noted the Staff Side's position and said that the public service numbers reduction is a matter of Government policy. This policy was known when Sustaining Progress was agreed. An undertaking was made to respond in due course.

3. On 29 June 2005 the Official Side reiterated their view as stated above. The Department of Social and Family Affairs, through the process of prioritisation of work and the ongoing implementation of efficiency measures and process improvement, remains committed to meeting customer service improvements as set out in its Modernisation Action Plan within the context of available resources and the Government policy on public service numbers. The Official Side, furthermore, did not accept the Staff Side's view that a disproportionate burden has been placed on the Department. Approximately 10% of the staff of the service are in the Department and the proportion of the reduction is similar. It was noted that the Staff Side had stated that the Official Side estimate of cost was accepted. This claim would cost approximately €4m per annum in the Department of Social and Family Affairs alone.

4. Following further discussion, it was decided to record disagreement on

the claim and this report, accordingly, records disagreement.

5. This report was adopted on 26 April 2006.

Agreed report, recording disagreement.

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