

Positive PRSA uptake

51,782 employers signed up for PRSAs

6,707 PRSA pensions sold as at end September 2003

Friday 7th November 2003: The Pensions Board is pleased to report positive figures on the uptake of PRSAs at end September 2003. 51,782 employers had signed up with a PRSA provider and a total of 6,707 PRSAs were sold at that date. This figure is made up of 4,764 Standard PRSAs and 1,943 non-Standard PRSAs with a total value of assets of €5.2m at end September 2003.

There are now 10 providers of PRSAs with a total of 55 approved products. 22 of the approved products are Standard and 33 are non-Standard. PRSA products first became available in Spring 2003 and a key date was the 15th September employers' deadline, when employers became legally required to provide access to a Standard PRSA for their employees in certain circumstances.

The Board, however, commented that these figures represent the start of the process in the long-term goal to increase pension coverage in Ireland from 50% to 70% of the workforce. According to Anne Maher, CEO, the Pensions Board, "the figures today represent a good start to a steady PRSA uptake and increased pension provision in Ireland. These figures only take us up to end September. The Board understands that PRSA providers initially concentrated on signing up employers and that actual sale of PRSAs to employees will become clearer in the returns at end December 2003. October also typically sees a surge of increased pension provision as self-employed people avail of tax benefit deadlines."

The Pensions Board is responsible for monitoring that all employees have some form of pension provision through the employer mandatory access requirements. Since 15th September the Board has received 25 "whistleblow" reports and all of these are being followed up. As well as correspondence arising from the whistleblows, the Board has also conducted 52 audits on employers to find out if they are compliant. The Board is putting in place a comprehensive monitoring programme for 2004 which it plans to do in conjunction with other Government agencies. However, the Board believes that employees are the best monitors of PRSA access and encourages all employees in the workforce who do not currently have a pension to ask their employer about access to one. The Board operates a LoCall phone line at 1890 656565 and employees can call this for assistance.

The National Pensions Awareness Campaign aimed at increasing public awareness of pensions is also continuing. In this context a range of information booklets is available free of charge from the Pensions Board.

PRSA figures as at end September 2003 are attached.

About PRSAs

A PRSA is a contract between an individual and an authorised PRSA provider in the form of an investment account that can be used to save for retirement. It is a personal pension plan where the contributions paid in are tax deductible and the investment return is tax exempted. There are two types of PRSA - a Standard PRSA and a non- Standard PRSA.

About Mandatory Access – 15th September

All employers were required on 15th September 2003 to enter into a contract with a PRSA provider so that access to at least one Standard PRSA will be available for all “excluded employees” on and from that date.

About The Pensions Board

The Pensions Board is the statutory body set up to regulate occupational pension schemes and PRSAs and to advise the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, and through her, the Government, on overall pension policy development.

Public Information

The Information unit at The Pensions Board can be reached at the LoCall number 1890 656565 and on the Board’s website at www.pensionsboard.ie.

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PRSA Figures up to 30 September 2003

Cumulative Value of Assets	€5,246,230.75
Total Number of PRSA Contracts Sold	6,707
- Standard	4,764
- non-Standard	1,943
Total Number of Employers who have designated a PRSA Provider	51,782
- number of these employer designations where some or all employees have made contributions	845
- number of PRSA contracts under the 845 employer designations where employees have made contributions	2,454*

**This figure is included under the total number of PRSA contracts sold*