

The Public Service Benchmarking Body Report was published today 10 January 2008. A copy of the Benchmarking Report is available on the Department of Finance website [www.finance.gov.ie](http://www.finance.gov.ie).

The Report recommends **1.1% increase for Principal Officer grade and 0% for all other grades in the civil service including the Assistant Principal grade and the Governor grades in the Prison Service.**

I attach Chapter 10 of the Report for information.

The Report put a value on Public Service Pensions at 12% of salary and reduced the awards by that amount.

The AHCPS, like the other public service unions, is understandably very disappointed with the outcome of the current benchmarking exercise. While we appreciate that comparative public and private sector pension issues were addressed by the Benchmarking Body, it is still difficult to understand the minimal and zero pay increases.

The Association engaged two sets of respected consultants in preparing its submission to the Benchmarking Body and both, on the basis of their independent job and remuneration evaluation exercise, confidently concluded that real pay increases were required. The questions which must now be asked are:

1. Why were pay comparison rules used by the last Benchmarking Body and this Benchmarking Body different? The Report (Par. 8.24) states that it did use a different basis but does not explain why it did.
2. Why, in a situation where the thrust of public service modernisation since 1994 has been in introducing business planning processes and delegating authority, accountability and responsibility downwards, especially to our senior management grades, have the top grades continued to run miles ahead of the other two senior management grades when the Review Body on Higher Remuneration questions the desirability of this?

The Review Body on Higher Remuneration Report stated that (Para. 2.22)

*"However, we do not consider that there is necessarily a conflict in adopting different approaches for senior posts and for posts at lower levels. It is a feature of the private sector that the differences in salary between senior management posts and the posts below them are much greater than in the public service. Use of the same basis of comparison for all public service groups would import similar differences into the public service and it is questionable whether this would be a desirable development."*

The Association has always supported independent arbitration or benchmarking as the sensible way of determining public service pay. It is certainly preferable to having public service pay determined on the streets. Like other public service unions, we will now have to take time to consider the benchmarking outcome and whether the future interests of

members can best be protected and advanced within the current framework. There must be confidence in any independent pay determination system and, while we would undoubtedly wish to see an independent system in operation, we need to examine whether the current system can be recommended or whether changes need to be made. It is very difficult to have two separate pay review processes for public servants with one recommending substantial increases and the other recommending zero increases. One common review process may be a reasonable option.

We would, finally, wish to emphasise that, given the substantial deductions from salary made by the Benchmarking Body in respect of public service pensions, there is no justification for any further interference with public service pension arrangements.

**Dave Thomas**

**General Secretary**

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