

# Top Civil Service posts to attract higher salary following review

## MARTIN FRAWLEY

**The Independent Review Panel on pay and recruitment for senior public service posts has recommended that the Secretary General posts in the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage be upgraded.**

Speaking on the publication of the Panel's report this week, the Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP delivery & Reform, Paschal Donohoe, said he had informed the cabinet of his intention to implement the recommendations arising from the independent assessment.

The move will see the salary of the SG in DCEDIY increase from its current Level III salary of €227,369 (PPC rate or those recruited on or after April 1995) to the Level II salary of €240,000 (PPC rate). The salary of the SG in DHLGH will increase from its current Level II rate of €240,000 to the top Level I rate of €255,000.

Last year the Independent Review Panel (IRP), chaired by Dr Donal de Buitléir, recommended the establishment of an independent body to review the pay and recruitment process of senior civil and public service posts akin to the now defunct Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector.

This recommendation was accepted by Government and the new body – Senior Posts Remuneration Committee (SPRC) – has been asked to review all SG posts. However, the IRP was asked to remain in place for such time to conduct an interim review of the two SG posts in question ahead of the general review.

Currently, SGs are graded at three levels: Level I, €255,000; Level II, €240,000; and Level III, €227,369 (all PPC rates). Level I SGs include the Departments of Taoiseach, Finance and DPER. Level II includes nine departments including, Agriculture, Enterprise, Justice, Education and Transport and up to now Housing and Local Government. Level III includes Tourism, Defence, Rural and Community Development and up to now, Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

The report puts the Department of Health on an "other" category on its own and references that the salary was subject to a revised rate in 2021 specific to Health.

This refers to the SG in Health, Robert Watt, who moved from DPER to Health on a salary of around €300,000, which at the time was more than €80,000 above his Level I rate as SG in DPER. This rate was approved by Government at the time but caused political controversy

and, ultimately, led to the establishment of the independent SPRC as recommended by the Independent Review Panel.

The Independent Panel's current report noted that the grading structure for SG posts was last reviewed by the Review Body in 2007 and that "much has changed since then" particularly with regard to department structures.

The report noted the changing nature of the SG post was brought up during the consultation process. "Furthermore, challenges with regards to the increasingly public-facing aspect of the role were raised as well as other more general wellbeing concerns", said the report.

## **INCREASED RESPONSIBILITY**

With regard to DCEDIY, it notes that when it was established in 2012 it had a budget of €425m but now has a budget of €5.9 billion. It also notes the considerable extra responsibilities it has taken on including childcare, Tusla, housing Ukrainian and other refugees, mother and baby homes payment scheme and disability among other responsibilities.

As regards DGLGH, the report notes that its budget has risen from €1.3 billion in 2016, to €6.7 billion in 2023. It notes its considerable portfolio covers housing which "has considerable implications for society and the economy". Also within its remit are homelessness, water, planning, heritage, local government and Waterways Ireland.

The report concludes that the significant changes that have arisen since 2007 across all departments "have given rise to significant anomalies in the current grading structure of Secretaries General. It is clear that a fundamental review of the system by the proposed Senior Posts Remuneration Committee (SPRC) is warranted" says the report.

With regard to the two posts in this review – DCEDIY and DHLGH – the report says "it is clear that the responsibilities of the two posts in question are significantly increased than when the present grades were determined, and on the basis of this interim assessment, also relative to other posts".

"More generally, we recognise that a comprehensive review undertaken by the SPRC may lead to a different Secretary General grading structure and/or role allocations", said the report.