News release issued by Treoir
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Call to Enact Bereaved Partners Pension Bill

A year after Court ruling Bereaved Partners Bill has still not passed

A call has been made to urgently enact the Bereaved Partners Pension Bill – which has yet to come into law a year after the Supreme Court ruled in its favour.

Today (Wednesday, January 22nd) is the one-year anniversary of the landmark Supreme Court ruling in favour of John O'Meara and his children, which recognised the rights of cohabiting partners to access the Widow's / Widower's Pension, and resulted in commitment to the Bereaved Partners Pension Bill.

To mark the event, Treoir has called for urgent enactment of the legislation in the interest of greater equality for families.

CEO Damien Peelo said: "Grief doesn't discriminate — so neither should the pension. This victory was a significant step forward for equality. However, one year on cohabiting partners and their families are still not receiving financial support that was hard-won in the Supreme Court. Still, they are denied access to the Widow's / Widowers pension and the Bereavement Grant because they are not married.

"Today we celebrate this important milestone, we stand in solidarity with all families and urge the new government to bring this Bill into law as committed to in the Programme for Government. Treoir is calling on all newly elected TD's to publicly commit to commencing the bill within the first six months of the new Dáil.

"Families who have already endured the heartbreak of losing a loved one should not have to bear the additional burden of financial insecurity and exclusion.

"Treoir supported John O'Meara in his case, and we continue to advocate for legislation that reflects the needs of grieving families. The then Taoiseach (Leo Varadkar) publicly promised to make the payments, provide refunds to others and change the practice going forward."

Details which Treoir recommends in the Bereaved Partners Pension Bill:

1. Inclusion of All Cohabiting Partners: Ensure the pension is available to all cohabiting partners, regardless of whether they have dependent or adult children.
2. Backdated Payments: Include cohabiting couples who lost their partners since 2020 (like John O'Meara) in backdated payments.
3. Ongoing and Backdated Eligibility: Grant eligibility for cohabiting partners who lost their loved ones before John O'Meara's case, ensuring support going forward or through backdated payments.
4. Reasonable Cohabitation Period: Set the required cohabitation period to qualify at five years for cohabiting couples and two years for couples with children.
5. Fair and Flexible Proof of Cohabitation: Accept proof such as shared address, joint finances, or other criteria used for joint social welfare assessments.
6. Equity in Cases of Prior Marriage: Ensure that cohabiting partners are not excluded if their deceased partner had been previously married, especially if there was financial reliance.

Why This Matters

There are over 150,000 cohabiting couples in Ireland, and 75,000 of these families have children and the current Widow's / Widower's pension continues to discriminate against them.

Families like that of John Riley, a father of two from Cork who lost tragically lost his partner and mother of their children in 2021, continue to face financial hardship after the loss of a loved one. John

Riley and many others were disappointed, after Budget 2025 once again ignored this issue. The delay in legislation is prolonging the suffering of families who have already endured profound loss.

In conclusion Damien Peelo said: "Enacting and commencing this Bill will provide peace of mind and security for thousands of families during the most difficult times in their lives. Let us not wait another year to do what is right."

Further Information
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Treoir
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