

Fast-track team hands out €217m to injury claimants

By **Ferghal Blaney**
Consumer Affairs Correspondent

MORE than €200million in compensation was recovered by the Injuries Board last year for injured parties who chose to use the State's fast-track legal settlements body.

And the number of large awards - more than €100,000 - secured by the board rocketed by 87 per cent as it handles increasing numbers of serious and complex cases.

The board's chief executive, Patricia Byron, also claimed that it had saved the taxpayer up to a quarter of a billion euro in excess legal fees since it was established in 2004.

Since then, 23,500 cases have been settled through the board and €530million in compensation has been paid out.

InjuriesBoard.ie is an independent statutory body that assesses

the amount of compensation due in personal injuries cases. Awards are made at the same level as the courts, but delivery time is four times faster than the courts and costs are 70 per cent less.

The board's 2008 report released yesterday showed that €217million was awarded to 8,845 claimants last year, up €36million - 20 per cent - on 2007's total.

The average claim last year jumped 11 per cent from €22,054 to €24,552. The number of awards of more than €38,000, which is the upper limit for the Circuit Court, increased by 47 per cent.

With the board handling an ever-increasing number of cases each year, it is also lightening the case load for the Irish Courts Service.