

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING
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ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 4th JULY 2006

Question

Would the Minister –

- (a) explain to members, with regard to the recent statement by Population Office regarding ‘j’ category residents, how the new ‘j’ category policy compares with the previous one with regard to safeguarding work opportunities for local people and controlling ‘j’ category staff acquiring residential qualifications over a period of time? and,
- (b) provide members with a financial comparison of the policies, including such matters as education and healthcare ramifications, together with any forecast implications on the housing market?

Answer

- (a) While there were many reasons to change the ‘j’ category contract policy, such as consistency with the Employment Law and Economic Growth Plan, greater equity and social inclusion, this change is also, and importantly, about safeguarding work opportunities for local people. In keeping with the approved migration policy, this is about more emphasis on the quality and scope of training and recruitment programmes for local residents across the business, and then linking this to the granting of consents, rather than compelling business to train a single replacement for a specific post when the consent expires.

To put it very simply and bluntly, an employer who does not recruit and train local residents across their business to a good standard will not receive ‘j’ consents.

On the question of controlling ‘j’ category staff and preventing them acquiring residential qualifications, the new policy takes the view that so long as the staff member remains essentially employed, contributing significantly to the Island, and they perform this for as long as it takes to obtain residential qualifications, then that is reasonable and equitable and promotes the kind of social inclusion and stability in the Island’s population which is desirable.

Clearly, as commented in the report ‘(j)’ Category Housing Consents: ‘Contract Policy – Report (R.54/2006 re-issue), “...there is a continuous movement of employees in and out of the Island in response to the economic environment generally, so the granting of unlimited ‘j’ consent at the outset does not mean that all will stay and achieve local housing status.” One could go further and state that ‘j’ employees are highly mobile, career orientated individuals, who having been prepared to come to the Island for work, are equally prepared to leave. In light of the above, this change is not expected to have any noticeable impact on the size of the residentially qualified population.

- (b) Given that the number of ‘j’ employees will not increase as a result of this change and no noticeable impact on the residential population is envisaged, the financial implications will be positive, especially on the business community, which has reacted favourably. For these reasons also, the impact on the housing market is expected to be very minimal. The extent of the positive financial impact cannot readily be calculated, nor is it assessed as proportionate to invest time and money in doing so, as such a calculation would be highly subjective given the many variables involved.

Regarding the contribution of ‘j’ category employees, they contribute and generate much more revenue per year than they take in terms of education, health care, and other public services, and will continue do so under this policy. Furthermore, this is not just about economics but also equity in the treatment of those who pay into society over long periods and inclusiveness in ensuring they are part of that society; these are things

on which a figure cannot be placed.