

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY PRESIDENT OF THE POLICY AND
RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 13th SEPTEMBER 2005**

On behalf of the Policy and Resources Committee I would like to update the Assembly on the issue of the census.

Following the decision by this Assembly to approve proposition P.116/2005, the Committee has sought advice from the States Statistics Unit on whether it would be possible to run a census in 2006.

The expert view of the Head of Statistics is that it will not be possible to run a meaningful census in the spring 2006. As such and given the need to run a census at the same time of year as on previous occasions for comparative purposes, the earliest a census could be run is March 2007, which is only four years before the next one will be due in 2011.

Running a census is not a simple task. It means collecting information from everyone in the Island. To achieve this requires accurate information on where everyone lives, forms that are clear and that are understood by all members of our population, a large team of trained enumerators as well as appropriate means of capturing and analysing that data. It is not a simple case of taking the form used last time and re-issuing it. Following such an approach without proper planning would simply result in a very incomplete picture and half a million pounds being wasted.

The Committee is, of course, very well aware of the strong feelings that are held by members about the census and the development of statistics. During the summer all of us have received a letter from the Statistics Users Group, the independent advisory group on official statistics. In this letter the group expressed their unanimous support for the original proposal from the Head of Statistics to move to 10 year census cycle. I would also like to re-emphasise that the suggestion to move to a 10 year census to reprioritise funding to develop more comprehensive and timely data came from the Statistics Unit itself and not from the Committee.

In order to move the issue forward a meeting will be arranged for all States members with the Statistics Unit and members of the Statistics Users Group. Such a meeting will allow us all to hear and question first hand the issues central to the census debate. It will allow us all to understand why the experts have concluded that it would not be feasible to run a census in the Spring 2006. It will also allow the Statistics Unit to explain their views about the best use of resources to provide the information we all need.