

STATES OF JERSEY



PUBLIC IMPACT OF PROPOSITIONS: PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS (P.96/2018) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 23rd August 2018
by the Privileges and Procedures Committee**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Deputy G.C.U. Guida of St. Lawrence's Proposition: *Public impact of Propositions: proposed amendment to Standing Orders (P.96/2018)* rightly emphasizes that Members have a responsibility to think through the full implications and costs of any Proposition that they bring before the States. However, codifying this responsibility in a Standing Order is fraught with difficulty.

The Deputy's report gives an example of a Proposition requiring motorists to carry a breakdown kit, and provides an estimate of the cost to Islanders in terms of money spent and time taken to buy kits. However, taking this idea as an example, there are many other costs and benefits which could be taken into account. For example, if some kits are bought in the Island, there will be GST paid which will provide revenue for the States. In addition, shops would see extra sales, particularly as a proportion of motorists are likely to buy other things at the same time as they buy their breakdown kits. This will benefit the local economy, and could create additional employment and reduce welfare spending. There will be ongoing costs and benefits, as motorists will need to replenish items from the first aid kit as and when they are used. The Public will also benefit from a reduction in accidents arising from safer breakdown incidents, which Deputy Guida notes but does not quantify. Fewer accidents will directly benefit people not injured, who will be more economically productive, and, as a result, the Island is likely to see economic benefits.

There are also many Propositions whose economic effects are likely to be disputed and impossible to quantify. For example, a Proposition to change the composition of the States Assembly might not, on the face of it, have an effect on the Public in terms of expenditure and time. However, if change leads to higher turnout at elections, that will 'cost' the Public time at each election, and the proponent of the change is likely to argue that a change to composition will lead to more effective government with economic consequences for the Island.

Properly quantifying all of these various effects, in the absence of clear and robust methodology, will be extremely difficult, if not impossible for States departments to achieve, and will be completely beyond the means of a backbench Member, even with the assistance of the States Greffe. Particularly given the absence of methodology, any statement Members choose to make about the consequences for the Public of a Proposition will have to be accepted as compliant with the Standing Order. Such statements will not be objective: they will be a facet of the argument for the change being proposed and, as such, are likely to add little of value to the debate.