

# **STATES OF JERSEY**



## **ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2009 (P.113/2008): TWELFTH AMENDMENT**

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**Lodged au Greffe on 12th September 2008  
by the Chief Minister**

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**STATES GREFFE**

**PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (a) –**

In paragraph (a)(viii) after the words “pages 29 to 30” insert the words –

“except that after success criterion (iv) in Objective 4 on page 30 there shall be inserted the following success criterion –

- (v) Minimum service level for processing changes of circumstances relating to Income Support households occupying rental accommodation established.”

CHIEF MINISTER

**NOTE:**

This amendment has been lodged by the Chief Minister less than 14 days before the start of the debate in accordance with the provisions of Article 11(5) of the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2005. Paragraphs (4) and (5) of Article 11 are in the following terms–

- (4) A draft annual business plan is not capable of being amended during a debate in the States on the draft except in accordance with an amendment lodged at least 14 days before the start of the debate.
- (5) Paragraph (4) does not apply to an amendment moved by the Chief Minister if the States agree that the amendment may be debated forthwith or at a time approved by the States.

In accordance with the provisions of paragraph (5) the Chief Minister will seek the agreement of the States to debate this amendment during the debate on the Annual Business Plan 2009.

## REPORT

### Introduction

The amendment (P.113/2008 Amd.) proposed by Deputy Southern sought to place an additional commitment within the Housing Department's Business Plan objectives.

The Chief Minister, with the support of the Minister for Social Security, is proposing this replacement amendment, setting an additional objective against the Social Security Department.

### Background

Income Support is administered by the Social Security Department.

The Income Support system replaced rent abatement and rent rebate, and the budget for those schemes held by the Housing Department has been transferred to the Social Security Department. Likewise, the staff previously administering rent abatement and rent rebate have also been transferred to Social Security. The Housing Department has no role in the administration of Income Support.

Rent arrears cannot be incurred due to a delay in the processing of an Income Support claim. However, if a change of circumstance, such as an increase in income, is not notified to the Social Security Department in a timely fashion, then the Department has the power to recoup the overpayment of benefit paid during this time. This would be done by reducing the level of future benefit available for a period of time until the overpayment has been recovered.

The introduction of Income Support has led to a significant decrease in the number and value of Housing Department rental arrears. This is of benefit principally to the individual tenants, who no longer have the worry of being in debt.

The report set out by the Deputy refers to a specific case under the previous rent abatement scheme, at that time under the administration of the Housing Department.

### Proposal

Whilst the original amendment was wholly unnecessary as the Social Security Department is already committed to the timely processing of applications, to oppose it might suggest that the Social Security Department is unwilling or unable to provide efficient administration. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Chief Minister has therefore lodged this amendment so that the intention of the Deputy can be included in the 2009 Annual Business Plan. This amendment –

- places the responsibility for the administration with the correct department;
- refers to Income Support claims rather than the accommodation component, as it is impossible to process a single component in isolation from the whole claim;
- identifies the claimants that occupy rental accommodation as this appears to be the area of concern for the Deputy;
- removes the phrase “service level agreement” which is a term normally used to describe an agreement between organizations in which one organization provides a service on behalf of the other one, as opposed to a customer service target between the Department and many applicants.

This amendment will add an extra success criterion to the Social Security Department objective –

*“Deliver benefits and high quality services now and in the future”*

### Financial/manpower implications

There are no financial or manpower implications for the States arising from this amendment.