

STATES OF JERSEY



BUDGET 2006: FOURTH AMENDMENT

**Presented to the States on 29th November 2005
by Deputy T.J. Le Main of St. Helier**

STATES GREFFE

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to increase the estimate of revenue expenditure of the Employment and Social Security Committee from £85,751,200 to £86,451,200 by adding –

£700,000 to enable the provision of free television licences for those households aged 75 and over living in domestic accommodation.

DEPUTY T.J. LE MAIN OF ST. HELIER

REPORT

Senator Vibert's amendment is for an increase of 2p to 4p on a pint of beer to fund television licences for the over-75s. The Senator also wants to put on an income limit of £12,770 for a single person and £20,720 for a couple – this is again missing many people who are just above the lower limit, i.e. those just above HIE, many of these people miss out on many benefits and many of these people are struggling to make ends meet, especially if you happen to own your own home (through working and saving hard) but live on fixed incomes, with nothing to spare. To miss these people out is wrong. Why have an income bar? During the last debate on this subject matter, I voted against because I felt there should be an income bar. Why should the rich and wealthy have free T.V. licences? However, since really looking into the matter with retired people, I have changed my mind. What this would do is miss out on too many needy people who are suffering hardship. Jersey is the only place in the British Isles where people over 75 do not receive a free T.V. licence. It is right everywhere else – why have we to be different? Also as I have explained, if the Assembly supports the principle of Senator Vibert's amendment, then in my opinion it is far too low. Too many people who need help will miss out. Again, only those who presently qualify for HIE will benefit. For years, the Senior Citizens Association, Age Concern, have voiced their concerns that many older folk who are above that limit are in fact worse off than their peers. The people with a few savings are penalised at every turn. Is this fair? They have not squandered their money, they have brought up their families, have saved a little for their old age and are now being discriminated against.

Finally, many over-75s live on a fixed income and, due to their longevity, their savings are dwindling. Many, for various reasons, do not have a full pension and few have a "work" pension as they were not on offer during their working lifetime. For elderly people, background noise, identification with what is going on in the world and something to look at is what they are wanting. Why should we continue to deny them this in such an affluent Island such as Jersey! Costs of electricity, gas and oil have gone up, so their heating costs will be more. Food is expensive, clothing is expensive, etc. What is unfair is that recipients of Disabled Transport Allowances can be in receipt of £51,500 annual income and still claim this benefit of £164.00 per month. How unfair is this? That's why I am proposing that the funds be found to top up the revenue expenditure of the Employment and Social Security Committee so that this T.V. licence can be funded for all over-75s in Jersey.

Financial/manpower implications

The financial implications of this amendment are self-explanatory. As stated in Senator Vibert's amendment, based on the Guernsey experience, one part-time employee may be required to administer this benefit.