

OPTICAL APPLIANCES: SALE OF "READY READERS"

**Lodged au Greffe on 23rd April 2002
by Deputy A. Breckon of St. Saviour**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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Price code: A

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion -

- (a) to agree, in principle, that the optical appliances commonly known as “ready readers” should be available for purchase in the Island by persons over the age of 16 without restriction; and
- (b) to request the Health and Social Services Committee to bring forward for approval before the end of November 2002 the necessary amendments to the Opticians (Registration) (Jersey) Law 1962 to give effect to the proposal and to request the Policy and Resources Committee to allocate the necessary law drafting time to enable this matter to be included in the 2002 Legislation Programme.

DEPUTY A. BRECKON OF ST. SAVIOUR

REPORT

At present in Jersey it is illegal to sell reading spectacles known in the trade as “ready readers”, unless “under the supervision of a registered medical practitioner or a registered optician” (Article 13 of the “Opticians (Registration) (Jersey) Law 1962).

Apparently when this Law was drawn-up it was in part to protect people from themselves - as it was considered “unsafe” to allow people to purchase spectacles without “supervision” as they may have other sight defects which would not be detected - this situation still exists today.

My proposition does not seek to discourage people from having eye tests, as I realise that as well as defects in sight there are other health-related problems which can be diagnosed during an eye test and referred to another medical adviser and early detection can have significant benefits.

However, I am seeking to give people a choice. There has been much debate and discussion about financial and practical assistance with eye, dental, and foot care for senior citizens. I believe that the changes I am proposing can go some way towards this at little or no cost to the public purse. Making ready readers available could give a choice to people who may not change their spectacles due to cost alone.

Many senior citizens do not leave the Island and therefore do not have the opportunity to purchase ready readers elsewhere.

Ready readers are now widely available in U.K. department stores, corner shops, airports, garages (and also in Guernsey).

Presbyopia is a common problem

As we get older our eyes lose their ability to focus properly on objects close up. This condition is called “Presbyopia” or “ageing eyes”. It is perfectly normal and affects us all around the age of 40 - in the main this problem is in need of magnifying glasses.

Competition

While I believe we could be in danger of spending many millions of pounds on macro economic competition policy matters, by people with little or no knowledge of Jersey - we could well overlook the many areas where with a little thought and effort we could improve the quality of life and reduce the real cost of living for many people with simple rather than grandiose ideas.

There are no financial or manpower implications for the States of Jersey arising out of this proposition.