

MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT: PROPOSED DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE AND TRANSITIONAL
ARRANGEMENTS (P.70/2002) - SEVENTH AMENDMENT

In paragraph (a) after the words “dated 25th April 2002,” insert the words -

“except that in the said Appendix 2 -

- (i) in Section 1.2.2 the words “*Jersey’s Statistics (including responsibility for the Census)*” shall be deleted;
- (ii) after Section 1.12 there shall be inserted the following Section -

“1.13. **Independent Statistics Office**

1.13.1 An Independent Statistics Office will be established, independent from the Executive, and under the supervision of a Board appointed by the States, comprising a Chairman who shall be a member of the States, and two other members of the States, none of whom shall be members of the Executive, together with 5 other persons.

1.13.2 The Privileges and Procedures Committee will be requested, in consultation with the public and other Committees as appropriate, to bring forward for approval detailed proposals on the establishment of this Independent Statistics Office.” ”

SENATOR S. SYVRET

Report

The purpose of this amendment is self explanatory and self evident. The Policy and Resources Committee is proposing that the Chief Minister’s Department shall have responsibility for Jersey’s statistics. In modern democratic societies it has long been acknowledged that it is essential that raw data and statistics derived from such data, which are often used to inform and drive government policy, must be independently produced and be seen to be independent.

It is nothing short of bizarre that in 2002, during a period of government modernisation, the Policy and Resources Committee should seriously be suggesting that responsibility for Jersey’s statistics should reside with the central executive. Imagine if responsibility for the UK’s statistics were to reside with Downing Street and the attendant spin doctors! Or perhaps the scrapping of the Office of National Statistics and its relocation to Millbank? Such a state of affairs would not be contemplated, or tolerated, for one moment, yet such central executive control over the nature of statistics produced is, in effect, what the Policy and Resources Committee is asking the Island to accept.

The Privileges and Procedures Committee is the most appropriate body to bring forward the detailed proposals, as it is already charged with responsibility for bringing forward proposals for scrutiny which must be independent of the Executive. A similar need for independence applies in this case.

The scope and range of statistics needed probably needs to be increased so there may be some need for additional manpower and resources. This requirement is unlikely to be large as the current statistics function, presently controlled by the Policy and Resources Committee, would simply be transferred to Independent Statistics Unit.