

DRAFT HOUSING (AMENDMENT No. 17) (JERSEY) REGULATIONS 200 (P.189/2002): AMENDMENTS

**Lodged au Greffe on 22nd October 2002
by Senator P.V.F. Le Claire**



STATES OF JERSEY

STATES GREFFE

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PAGE 5, REGULATION 1 -

In paragraphs (a) and (b) substitute the word “fifteen” for the word “seventeen”.

SENATOR P.V.F. LE CLAIRE

REPORT

In bringing forward their proposals to drop the housing regulations to seventeen years the Housing Committee acknowledges the need to address the situation that currently exists in our housing of the long-term committed resident of Jersey. This is in line with States policy at the moment and I believe the Committee is to be congratulated.

In the last year or so I have been asked to help a number of people in need in Jersey - some Portuguese residents, some Irish, some Jersey and some Scottish and English families; two homeless mothers and their three children and a number of other individuals whom I have tried to help. In attending requests for hardship and subsequent appeals to the Housing Committee, much support and understanding was afforded to me and the people I represented by the Housing Committee and its staff, all of which were extremely professional and sympathetic. In some cases I was successful and for that I thank them from the bottom of my heart. In particular I am touched and was particularly grateful for the two cases of the homeless mothers who were granted help and received approvals requested, all with Jersey-born children - one a Jersey woman and another a long, but not long enough, resident Scottish lady. To take these cases as I did, and having stood on a platform of immigration control and work permits, one might think that I could be accused of inconsistency. I deny that thought any merit, and I put it to you all that I am only trying to achieve what I have always sought; a fair system to overcome the incredible problems that exist, which we all acknowledge exist, for the most basic of human needs in relation to proper and affordable suitable housing and shelter. Having achieved such a privileged position from such a modest start in life, I am familiar with, and perhaps qualified with, the in-depth knowledge of the difficulties that exist for the less well-off and unqualified in Jersey. The fact that we can attain such positions from such beginnings is a credit to this Island and the governments that came before us. I ask and implore you to support this further reduction in qualification time so as to enable more families and people the opportunity of feeling like they belong. I also request that the Housing Committee keeps to its promise and delivers a residents' permit as soon as possible. We need to get away from this unproductive, unsocial and immoral position we currently find ourselves in. If people are allowed to stay, we should have either a work permit and resident permit type of system, or we should close the door until everyone already here is housed properly. It is shameful to continue to do otherwise. I have many friends who are in need and out of reach of decent housing for one reason or another, we are failing them and they are preparing to leave.

I can no longer countenance inaction and expansion by our policies based on affluent residents who receive preferential treatment. Was it not a criteria for the human rights issues to reflect upon (1)(1)(k) applicants jumping the queue for example, or is it our hidden intentions to follow the United Kingdom where we will choose to not employ, a consideration or part of the Law, where we will cherry pick? Perhaps we should re-draft the Law to call it the European Convention of some of the Human rights Jersey Law 2000. For those in need of decent affordable accommodation I stand firm, for a proper immigration policy I stand firm, and for proper governance of our Island of Jersey and exercise of our Laws I stand firm. I ask everyone in their respective roles within Government, whatever that rôle may be, to ensure we govern justly. I believe that the fifteen years I call for are still an awful long time and a major part of one's adult life when people are perhaps in their prime, and I urge you all to support my amendment and to send a clear signal to the relevant Presidents and Islanders alike, that it is time to deliver a proper and non-expansionist approach to solving our disgraceful and shameful housing laws. It is time to move forward and leave behind us this dark, costly and unjust period in our history.

Financial and manpower implications

I have sought information from the Housing Committee and Department about the financial and manpower implications of this amendment. Members will have noted that in its report accompanying P.189/2002 it is stated that the Housing Committee accepts that any financial implications in connection with any increase in rent subsidy provided or other cost implications will be contained with the Committee's previously agreed cash limit.

I have been informed that there are no manpower implications, but each time there is a reduction in the qualifying period there is obviously a funding implication for the rent subsidy schemes. The Housing Committee has noted that the one-year reductions from 20 years to 19 years and then 19 years to 18 years have not had any significant financial impact. This seems to be because most of the new qualifiers from the earlier reductions in qualifying period earn too much to be eligible.

It is impossible to estimate how many extra people would qualify for rent subsidy if my amendment is approved, but I have been informed that if ten people are granted subsidy for one year that would be £30,000, meaning that for this proposed 3 year reduction the total extra cost could be approximately £90,000.