

**Statement by Senator Frank Walker, President of Policy and Resources
Committee on behalf of the Policy and Resources Committee**

The census

On behalf of the Policy and Resources Committee I would like to update the House on the issue of the census.

Following the decision by this house to approve proposition P116/2005, my committee have sought advice from the States Statistics Unit on whether it would be possible to run a census in 2006.

The expert view of the Head of Statistics is that it will not be possible to run a meaningful census in spring 2006. As such and given the need to run censuses at the same time of year as previous ones for comparative purposes, the earliest a census could be run is March 2007, which is only 4 years before the next one will be due in 2011.

Running a census is not a simple task. It means collecting information from everyone in the Island. To achieve this requires accurate information on where everyone lives, forms that are clear and that are understood by all members of our population, a large team of trained enumerators as well as appropriate means of capturing and analysing that data. It is not a simple case of taking the form used last time and re-issuing it. Following such an approach without proper planning would simply result in a very incomplete picture and half a million pounds being wasted.

My committee is of course very well aware of the strong feelings that are held by Members about the census and the development of statistics. Whilst over the summer all of us have received a letter from the Statistics Users Group, the independent advisory group on official statistics. In this letter the group expressed their unanimous support for the original proposal from the Head of Statistics to move to 10 year censuses. I would also like to re-emphasise that the suggestion to move to 10 year census to reprioritise funding to develop more comprehensive and timely data came from the Statistics Unit itself and not from my committee.

In order to move the issue forward we will arrange a meeting for all States Members with the Statistics Unit and members of the Statistics Users Group. Such a meeting will allow us all to hear and question first hand the issues central to the census debate. It will allow us all to understand why the experts have concluded that it would not be feasible to run a census in Spring 2006. It will also allow the Statistics Unit to explain their views about the best use of resources to provide the information we all need.