

THE STATES OF DELIBERATION
of the
ISLAND OF GUERNSEY

21st June, 2017

Proposition No. P.2017/49

AMENDMENT

Proposed by: Deputy E A Yerby
Seconded by: Deputy J S Merrett

States' Assembly & Constitution Committee

Referendum on Guernsey's Voting System

To insert, at the end of Proposition 7, the following:

“save that, instead of the process set out in paragraph 13.7 of the Policy Letter:

- (a) If no campaign group comes forward to be selected as the official campaign group for an option, there shall be no official campaign group for that option, and the government shall not act as a surrogate campaign group;*
- (b) If there is no campaign group which meets the criteria adopted by the independent Appointment Panel for selection as an official campaign group for an option, there shall be no official campaign group for that option, and the government shall not act as a surrogate campaign group; and*
- (c) The States' Assembly & Constitution Committee shall have principal responsibility for ensuring the provision of a set of impartial and comparable information on each of the options A to E (or, in the event that the States approves any other form of referendum, including a binary referendum, for each of the options in that referendum), which –*
 - (i) it shall provide in such formats and publish in such manner as it believes will be most readily accessible to all eligible voters, and*
 - (ii) may be further supplemented by the information provided by official campaign groups,*

but should, in its own right, be sufficient to enable voters to reach an informed decision on their preferred choice of option.”

Explanatory Note

SACC recommends that, if there is no official campaign group for an option, the government should step in as a surrogate campaign group. Parts (a) and (b) of this amendment would reject that. Part (a) is simple – if there is no popular will to put together a campaign group for an option, then there should be no requirement for the government to step in instead, at public expense.

In respect of part (b), we envisage there could be circumstances where the independent Appointment Panel might reach the view that no informal campaign group is *“able to promote the case in favour of that option”* and might, therefore, not endorse an official campaign group for one option, even though informal groups exist. We anticipate that this would be an unlikely move, and very susceptible to challenge; but if it did happen, again, we suggest that the government should not step in as a surrogate campaign group.

Finally, part (c) reflects our belief that SACC must be principally responsible for providing a baseline of politically-neutral, technical (but accessible) information about each option, which voters can use to inform their choice. This should be done irrespective of any additional work by campaign groups, and should be sufficient to ensure that, even if there is no official campaign group for an option, the level of information in the public domain is enough to enable voters to make a reasoned decision about their support (or otherwise) for that option. The provision of this universal information is implied in the policy letter, but becomes muddied by the suggestion that government should potentially act as a surrogate campaign group for some of the options – we want to underline that these are two distinct parts of the picture, and should not be conflated.