

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 106/2005
9 November 2005

The Opposition this morning abstained on the Government's proposals to cut back from 20% to 10% the rebate given to businesses which pay their rates on time, and explained that its policy had not changed from the position adopted in 1997 when the rebate was introduced and they also abstained.

The cut back in the rebate was one of the revenue-raising measures announced by the Government in the budget. This was originally planned to come in on 1 July with retrospective effect but is now being introduced in the current quarter from 1 October.

The policy as regards this measure, adopted by the Opposition in 1997 and again today, was to abstain because what the Government has done is discriminatory against homeowners and residential tenants.

As argued in 1997, the Opposition view is that the discount should have been extended to all residential properties as well as commercial, when it was brought in at 20% and that should still be the position today when it is being cut back to 10%.

The Opposition moved an amendment in 1997 to this effect which was defeated by the Government.

The policy of the Opposition continues unchanged and is to give 20% discount to all ratepayers, commercial and residential, as an incentive for prompt payment of rates.

ENDS