



GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

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Government have read with great interest, but sadly little surprise, the recent press statement issued by the GSLP spokesperson on Housing, Mr Charles Bruzon, on the Medical A+ Waiting List. That the GSLP resorts to misinterpretations and exaggerations in order to pursue its objectives is nothing new. Indeed, Mr Bruzon has had to be corrected by the Minister for Housing and by Government on a number of occasions. However, this latest statement may prove to be the most misleading and factually incorrect to date. The Minister for Housing, Fabian Vinet, is pleased to inform the public of the true situation, which is demonstrably different to that detailed in Mr Bruzon's statement and which yet again proves that the GSLP will criticise government at any cost, even if it entails describing as black something that is self-evidently white.

Mr Bruzon has said that the creation by the GSD Government of the A+ category in the medical housing waiting list "has proved to be little more than a gimmick", adding: "The creation of the A+ category was simply a propaganda exercise... The reality is that this new category has not solved anything." This is simply not true. What is even more serious is the fact that Mr Bruzon knows it is not true. Similarly, when Mr Bruzon says that "... there are no flats available for them [Medical A+ applicants] at present, no matter how medically urgent their case has become", he is fully aware that his statement is simply not true. The general public may wish to question why the GSLP Opposition are willing to mislead them in order to score political points.

The Minister for Housing, Fabian Vinet, has reacted to the GSLP's statement and to a subsequent interview by their Housing Spokesperson on Radio Gibraltar, saying:

"Mr Bruzon and the GSLP know full well – because they have been given all the relevant figures by me in Parliament at each and every session of Questions – that there are now more offers of accommodation being made to applicants on both the Medical A+ List and Social List than ever before. Mr Bruzon and the GSLP know that is true not only because they have been given access to the figures they ask for, but because I have explained to them in Parliament that a conscious effort has been made to give extra priority to those on these lists. Mr Bruzon knows – as he himself admitted during an interview on Radio Gibraltar – that the number of people on the Medical A+ Waiting List (that is, those who in the opinion of the Housing Allocation Committee - membership of which includes a doctor - merit inclusion) necessarily fluctuates and that the number of people who choose to apply to be categorised for

inclusion in that List also fluctuates. It therefore logically follows that if despite the fact that more allocations are made than ever before, there are sometimes within a particular period of time more people joining the list than leaving, it is because there are an unusually large number of people being categorised as Medical A+ by the Housing Allocation Committee. If Mr Bruzon wants the number of people on the Medical A+ List to drop even further, while accepting that more allocations are taking place now than in the past, he can only advocate one of two ways of achieving this, other than by the provision of more housing: Either Mr Bruzon would rather we allocate whichever flat becomes available, without having regard to the specific needs of the medical applicant (for instance, ground floor flat or availability of lift for ease of access), an inescapable reality that limits the number of suitable flats that can be offered in such cases, or he would rather the Housing Allocation Committee suddenly imposes a stricter approach and limits the number of people categorised as A+, regardless of their medical condition. Government has no desire to adopt either of these approaches and we can only presume that neither would the Opposition wish us to do so."

Mr Vinet continues: "Government believes that the GSLP will come to regret having made its statement because it allows Government to explain the true situation and in doing so demonstrate just how mistaken the Opposition are. I am pleased to reveal that of the 36 persons who today make up the totality of the Medical A+ List, 5 have already been offered flats and will be removed from the List as soon as they sign their respective tenancy agreements; 16 have been offered flats at the new Albert Risso House for senior citizens and have indicated their desire to wait until its completion and do not want to be rehoused until then; 4 have offers at the excellent new rental estate currently being built and have specifically said they wish to wait for its completion and do not want to be re-housed elsewhere; and one has a flat earmarked at Varyl Begg Estate that is presently being cleaned and prepared so that a formal offer can be made. That only leaves a grand total of 10 applicants, but even they already have 10 specific flats earmarked from those being released back to housing stock by tenants moving elsewhere by the summer. In effect, therefore, arguably the real number of applicants on the Medical A+ List today is at best zero and at worst just ten. So much for Mr Bruzon's assertion that the List is a gimmick and a propaganda exercise and that it has not solved anything!"

"The facts detailed above," said Mr Vinet, "clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the Medical A+ List. Of course I want all waiting lists to be as short as possible and for allocations to be made as quickly and as efficiently as possible. I believe there is more to be done and I guarantee that more will be done, but the least that the public should expect from those who criticise Government is for them to do so by reference to the truth and not by allowing their desire to score political goals to masquerade as genuine concern."