

Jersey Competition Regulatory Authority

Media Release

Embargoed until 12 noon, Tuesday 14 March 2006

JCRA Consults on General Practitioners' Exemption Request

The JCRA is seeking views from Jersey consumers, and any other interested parties, on an application by the proposed after-hours general practitioners' cooperative for exemption from the Competition Law.

The cooperative comes within the remit of the Competition Law because it appears to prevent the general practitioners participating in the cooperative from competing with each other on fees and service levels for after-hours services.

Such arrangements are normally considered inconsistent with Competition Law, hence the recent decisions by the members of the Jersey Dental Association, and the Law Society of Jersey, to abandon uniform fees. However, the cooperative may qualify for an exemption from the Competition Law if there are exceptional features relating to medical services in general, or after-hours medical services in particular, which mean that a cooperative of this kind is ultimately in the consumers' best interest.

Bill Brown, Executive Director of the JCRA said:

“Consumers’ interests are at the heart of Competition Law. While reduction of price competition and consumer choice are normally against the consumer’s interest, there may be exceptional cases where there are other benefits for the consumer which outweigh the effects on competition. We are keen to establish through this consultation whether or not the proposed cooperative is such a case, and we will be in contact with the Consumer Council and others to ensure that the views of all interested parties are taken into account.”

Comments on this matter must be submitted in writing and sent to: Exemption Consultation, c/o JCRA, 6th Floor, Union House, Union Street, St Helier, Jersey JE2 3RF. Comments also may be submitted by email to enquiries@jcra.je, with ‘Exemption Consultation’ identified in the subject-line. The deadline for comments is **5 p.m. on 31 March 2006.**

ENDS

For all media enquiries please contact Mr Charles Webb, Legal Adviser, on 01534 514990.