

**For information
12 December 2000**

LegCo Panel on Health Services

Progress on Setting up of the Tobacco Control Office

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the progress of establishing a Tobacco Control Office (TCO) under the Department of Health (DH).

Background

2. It is a well-established fact that smoking causes serious health hazards and is the largest single preventable cause of death and disease. To protect the health of the community, Government's policy is to discourage smoking, to educate the public on the health risks involved, and to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke in indoor environment to the maximum extent possible. A multi-pronged approach has been adopted to control tobacco use. This includes the enactment of the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance, Cap 371 and its subsequent amendments to restrict smoking, sale and advertising of tobacco products.

3. Since the amendments of the Ordinance in 1997, certain areas of concern have been noted. These include tobacco advertisements in printed publications and tobacco retailer shops, improper health warning labels on some tobacco products, and problems in designating sufficient no-smoking area in restaurants with 200 or more seats as stipulated in the Ordinance. Difficulties are also encountered in enforcement of no-smoking requirement in public indoor areas such as restaurants and shopping malls.

Objectives of the Tobacco Control Office

4. We propose to set up a TCO under the DH as part of the measures to further enhance anti-smoking efforts. The objectives of the TCO include facilitating and assisting the public to comply with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance, and building a smoke-free culture in Hong Kong through multi-sectoral collaboration and community mobilization.

Setup and Functions of the Tobacco Control Office

5. The TCO will comprise three lay Tobacco Control Officers supported by three Assistant Tobacco Control Officers, and two clerical staff. A doctor and a nurse will provide medical input and supervision for the Office operation. The priorities of the TCO include:

- ❖ assisting managers and staff of restaurants and other public premises to comply with and enforce the legislation,
- ❖ screening of publications for illegal tobacco advertisements,
- ❖ carrying out inspection of tobacco retailers for improper health warning labels and illegal tobacco advertisements, and
- ❖ conducting anti-smoking activities and health education, complement to those being undertaken by the Council on Smoking and Health.

Progress

6. The TCO will be accommodated within the DH headquarters. Recruitment of staff is in progress and appropriate training will be provided. Health education materials are being prepared. It is planned that the Office will start operation by early 2001.

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