

SBCR 2/581/85 Pt.27

18 February 2002

Clerk to Security Panel
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Mrs Sharon TONG)

Dear Mrs Tong,

Emergency Ambulance Service

At the Security Panel meeting held on 7 February, Members have enquired about the Administration's response to a consultancy recommendation to secure an addition of 29 ambulances by April 2002. I am writing to supplement and clarify information provided at the meeting.

The Fire Services Department (FSD) has pledged to meet 92.5% of all emergency ambulance calls within a target response time of 12 minutes. To provide an efficient and quality ambulance service to the community and to meet the growing demand, the FSD always seeks to take appropriate measures to improve the management and deployment of its fleet, and to secure addition of resources as and when necessary.

In the latest consultancy study completed, apart from recommendations for implementation of paramedic ambulance care, a number of recommendations for management and organisational improvements of the emergency ambulance service were made, including those for changes in the shift arrangements, introduction of dedicated fleets to answer specific types of calls, the building of more ambulance depots, use of a new methodology to forecast demands and needs for resources and provision of additional resources in the short term.

The proposed addition of 29 ambulances was arrived at solely by the new forecast methodology which we consider has provided a useful tool to help quantify possible requirements in future. At the same time, in planning for resource allocation, we need also to take into account other relevant factors including the actual response time performance, the actual

and forecast growth in the number of calls, the implementation of other management and organisational improvement initiatives such as those recommended by the consultancy, etc.

As far as 2002–2003 is concerned, we have earmarked provisions for the creation of 68 new posts, addition of three ambulances and replacement of 23 ambulances, to provide the necessary resources to strengthen the emergency ambulance services for meeting the growing demand and to implement the provision of paramedic care on all ambulances. Such commitment will of course be subject to the passage of the appropriation bill to be introduced into LegCo later.

As we have explained in the Panel paper (LC Paper No. CB(2)858/01-02(01)), we have studied the consultancy findings and recommendations and will take forward an implementation plan taking into account the resources available and the prevailing policy, with immediate priority given to transition to full provision of paramedic ambulance service in three years' time. Regarding further development which may have substantial financial implications, the FSD will consider appropriate measures to ensure cost-effectiveness, and, if necessary, seek additional resources in the normal manner.

I hope members will find the above information useful. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

(David Wong)
for Secretary for Security