

**For information  
on 22 May 2006**

## **LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

#### **Burial Grant under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme and services for the deceased**

#### **PURPOSE**

This paper briefs Members on the burial grant under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and services for the deceased.

#### **OBJECTIVE AND AMOUNT OF THE BURIAL GRANT**

2. Under the CSSA Scheme, a burial grant is payable to the deceased recipient's family or relative/friend to meet the burial expenses of the deceased recipient. Such expenses may include charges for the death certificate, coffin, sacrificial articles, clothing for the deceased, cremation and hiring of ritual hall etc. The amount of the burial grant payable is the actual expenses after deducting the donations or the prescribed maximum level, whichever is less. The maximum level of the grant is pegged to the burial grant payable under the Emergency Relief Fund, which is adjusted annually in accordance with the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A). It was increased by 1.2% to \$10,430 on 1 April 2006 to take account of inflation.

#### **APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR THE BURIAL GRANT**

3. The deceased recipient's family member or relative/friend, who is responsible for the burial arrangements for the deceased, can submit an application for the burial grant to the Social Security Field Unit of the Social Welfare Department (SWD). The applicant is required to produce necessary documents including the death certificate, burial/cremation order and the receipts or estimates of burial expenses.

4. The number of applications for burial grants in past 3 years and the amount of expenditure involved are set out in the table below:

Year	No. of Applications	Burial Grant Paid (HKD)
2003/04	12 875	\$ 132 million
2004/05	13 437	\$ 136 million
2005/06	12 810	\$ 130 million
Total	39 122	\$ 398 million

#### **PROVISION OF FUNERAL SERVICES**

5. There are funeral service providers in the private sector offering inexpensive funeral services to families in need. Their services include arranging for death certificates, coffins, clothing and make up for the deceased, photo arrangement, cremation and hiring of ritual hall etc. Generally speaking, the current level of burial grant can sufficiently cover the basic funeral and related expenses.

#### **END OF LIFE SERVICES**

6. In addition, over 200 elderly centres are providing a wide range of community support services for the elders. They organize seminars to help the elders get acquainted with matters such as making a will, handling legal matters and making funeral arrangements. The social workers of some elderly centres also offer counseling on hospice service. The gist of services provided by some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is at Annex.

7. To strengthen the end of life services, the SWD has issued letters to all elderly centres to encourage them to pay special attention to the elders' needs for end of life services and to render assistance through individual counseling, group activities and referral to relevant organizations for further assistance if necessary.

8. SWD will organize a sharing session this year for workers of elderly services to exchange experience and to strengthen their expertise in the provision of end of life services.

9. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

**Health Welfare and Food Bureau  
Social Welfare Department  
May 2006**

**Support services on funeral arrangement for elders provided by NGOs**

(a) St. James' Settlement

Provide a “worry-free service” to enable those elders with weak social network to plan ahead and decide the funeral etiquette according to their wish, and to implement the elders’ end of life plans upon their death. The service also provides photo-taking service, talk and exhibition on funeral matters, will making and related legal consultation service, support and inquiries on funeral matters and tele-care and home visits, etc.

(b) Tung Wah Group of Hospitals

The Community Services Division provides its service users free of charge phototaking or photo arrangement and will making services, introduces the concessionary scheme of the Hospitals’ end of life service and follow-up according to the wish of the deceased.

(c) Caritas – Hong Kong

The elderly services units have launched a ‘Ning An’ Scheme to provide end of life services for those elders with weak social network according to their wish. Services provided include talks on the meaning of life and death, consultation services on funeral matters, therapeutic and supportive groups, tele-care and home visits, handling of funeral matters according to the wishes of the deceased and bereavement counseling. It might cover the expenses of hiring the funeral hall on discretionary grounds.

(d) Society for Promotion of Hospice Care

The agency promotes hospice care, provides bereavement counseling and organizes related professional courses.

(e) The Comfort Care Concern Group

The agency promotes hospice services to the seriously ill or dying patients and their family members through the joint efforts of professionals, volunteers and relatives of patients. Its services include grief counseling, volunteer training and recruitment, home and hospital visits, professional training and seminars on community education, hotline consultation service, volunteer support service on burial matters and support from those having experienced grief.