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Panel on Welfare Services

**Subcommittee on review of the
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme**

Proposed work plan of the Subcommittee

Purpose

This paper proposes a work plan for the Subcommittee on review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (the Subcommittee) and the time frame for completion of work.

Terms of Reference of the Subcommittee

2. At its meeting on 17 December 2004, the Subcommittee adopted its Terms of Reference as follows –

"To review the existing arrangements for the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and the Social Security Allowance Schemes, taking into consideration the views of the public, service users and non-governmental organisations providing welfare services."

The Terms of Reference were endorsed by the Panel on Welfare Services (the Panel) at its meeting on 10 January 2005.

Work progress

3. Since its appointment in December 2004, the Subcommittee has held a total of 17 meetings up to March 2007 to discuss various issues relating to the existing arrangements under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. The major issues studied by the Subcommittee are as follows –

- (a) eligibility criteria for CSSA and the difficulties faced by the applicants arising from such requirements;
- (b) adequacy of the standard payment rates in meeting the basic needs of various categories of recipients;
- (c) provision of special grants to meet the specific needs of different categories of CSSA recipients;
- (d) evaluation study of the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects for CSSA and near-CSSA recipients; and
- (e) revised arrangements for single parent CSSA recipients, i.e. the implementation of the New Dawn Project.

The Subcommittee has also received views from deputations on the subject matters.

Subcommittee's work plan

4. The Subcommittee plans to hold further meetings between April 2007 and March 2008 to examine the following key issues –

- (a) Provision of special grants

The Subcommittee will examine how far the provision of special grants are able to meet the specific needs of different categories of CSSA recipients, in particular whether grant should be provided for able-bodied CSSA recipients to cover the costs of dental treatment and whether grant for children to cover school related expenses are adequate to cover the miscellaneous and minor one-off expenses such as charges for internet service.

- (b) Residence requirement

The Subcommittee will examine in what manner the pre-application one-year-continuous-residence requirement has imposed difficulties on the CSSA applicants, and how the problem can be resolved.

- (c) Difficulties faced by the poor elderly in applying for CSSA

The Subcommittee will continue to discuss with the Administration ways to alleviate the difficulties faced by the poor elderly in applying for CSSA. The Subcommittee will look into

the feasibility of extending the Portable CSSA Scheme for elderly persons retiring to provinces in the Mainland other than Guangdong and Fujian, waiving the requirement of non-provision of statement of financial support, and accepting applications from the elderly on an individual basis.

(d) Calculation of assets of CSSA applicants

The Subcommittee will discuss with the Administration the rationale for including insurance policies in the calculation of assets for applying for CSSA.

(e) Evaluation study of the Intensive Employment Assistance Project for CSSA and near-CSSA recipients

The Subcommittee has requested the Administration to respond to the 10 main recommendations made in the evaluation study before implementing any recommendations. The Subcommittee will monitor the developments including the implementation plan of the recommendations.

(f) Arrangements for single parent CSSA recipients

The Subcommittee has requested the Administration to report on the review findings of the implementation of the New Dawn Project. The Subcommittee will study the review outcome and the Administration's proposed way forward.

(g) Assistance and support for persons leaving the CSSA net

The Subcommittee will examine how far the provision of temporary housing and medical assistance and support for persons leaving the CSSA net would assist the CSSA recipients to move from welfare to self-reliance.

(h) Review of the CSSA standard payment rates

The Subcommittee has requested the Administration to provide information on the items of goods and services covered by the CSSA standard payment rates. The Subcommittee will continue to study whether the standard payment rates under the CSSA Scheme are adequate to meet the basic needs of different categories of CSSA recipients.

Proposed time frame for completion of outstanding work

5. The Subcommittee will hold its next meeting on 2 April 2007 and will hold further meetings on a monthly basis thereafter until March 2008. The Subcommittee will present a report to the Panel in May 2008.

Advice sought

6. Subject to members' agreement to the above work plan and time frame, the Subcommittee will provide its work plan and the time frame for completion of work to the Panel and the House Committee for information.

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