

For information
on 22 May 2007

LEGCO PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES

Subcommittee on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

One-year-continuous-residence requirement under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme

PURPOSE

This paper provides information on the one-year-continuous-residence requirement under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme.

BACKGROUND

2. On 9 June 2003, Members of the LegCo Panel on Welfare Services were briefed on the Administration's proposal to revise the residence requirements for the CSSA and Social Security Allowance (SSA) Schemes as follows –

To be eligible for CSSA or SSA, a person must :

- (a) have been a Hong Kong resident for at least seven years; and
- (b) have resided in Hong Kong continuously for at least one year immediately before the date of application (absence from Hong Kong up to a maximum of 56 days during the one-year period is treated as one-year-continuous-residence in Hong Kong).

On 27 June 2003, the Finance Committee approved the proposal to take effect from 1 January 2004.

3. We have consulted the Social Welfare Advisory Committee, the Elderly Commission, the Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, Chairmen and Vice-chairmen of District Councils on the proposal to revise the residence requirement for CSSA in the context of the Report of the Task Force on Population Policy.

RATIONALE FOR THE ONE-YEAR-CONTINUOUS-RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT UNDER THE CSSA SCHEME

4. The CSSA Scheme is non-contributory and means-tested. It is funded entirely from general revenue. CSSA is a safety-net of last resort which provides financial assistance to bring the income of needy individuals and families up to a prescribed level to meet their basic needs.

5. The one-year-continuous-residence requirement aims to discourage people who have lived outside Hong Kong for a long time from relying on CSSA as soon as they return to Hong Kong. While we are committed to providing a safety net for the financially vulnerable, we also need to strike a reasonable balance between the interests of various sectors of the community, having regard to the long-term sustainability of our social security system and the need for a rational basis on which our public resources are allocated.

EXEMPTION AND DISCRETION

6. Hong Kong residents aged below 18 are exempted from any prior residence requirement, including the one-year-continuous-residence requirement under the CSSA Scheme. Where a CSSA applicant is in genuine hardship, SWD may consider exercising discretion to waive the one-year-continuous-residence requirement and grant assistance to the applicant. In determining whether the applicant is in genuine hardship, SWD will take into account all the resources available to the applicant and his/her family members, including savings and assistance from friends and relatives.

7. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
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