

For information  
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**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
PANEL ON PUBLIC SERVICE**

**Grade Structure Reviews for Non-Directorate Civilian Grades**

**Introduction**

The Administration briefed Members on the criteria in assessing requests for conduct of grade structure reviews (GSRs) from non-directorate civilian grades on 21 June 2010. This paper provides further information on the matter.

**Policy Considerations**

2. At the outset, it should be emphasized that the Civil Service is not static. As the aspirations of the community change with time and as government policies evolve to meet the needs of the community, so must the Civil Service and so must the work and responsibilities of all the civil service grades. No civil service grade can afford to serve the community in exactly the same way as it was first created. It should also be emphasized that the Civil Service consists of an intricate web of grades and ranks (currently there are over 350 civilian grades and 1 000 ranks). The existing internal relativities amongst the civilian grades and between the civilian grades and disciplined services grades have evolved over many years. Any change to the existing internal relativities should only be considered where fully justified. Aside from internal relativities, there is also the question of external relativities. With the implementation of the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism since 2007 and

through the regular conduct of pay surveys<sup>1</sup> and the ensuing adjustments where appropriate, the pay of non-directorate civilian grades should have been broadly comparable with that of their private sector counterparts. This has enabled most, if not all, non-directorate civilian grades to recruit people of suitable calibre and to retain and motivate them.

### **Grade Structure Reviews**

3. Having regard to the above policy considerations, GSRs will only be considered for the following purposes –

- (a) to address proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties of a specific non-directorate civilian grade, which cannot be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism; or
- (b) to enable a specific non-directorate civilian grade to function effectively on a sustainable basis in the face of fundamental changes to its job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities.

4. Recruitment and retention difficulties are assessed objectively. Generally speaking, the Administration will take into account the number of vacancies to be filled at the entry rank of a specific grade for at least the past three recruitment exercises, the offers of appointment made in each exercise, and the number of accepted and declined offers. The Administration will also consider the unnatural wastage rate (i.e. resignation and non-renewal of contracts at the officers' own volition) at the entry rank and at all ranks of a specific grade over the past three years, and compare these rates with the unnatural wastage rates for all entry ranks of civilian grades and for the overall civilian Civil Service. In this

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<sup>1</sup> Under the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism, three sets of pay surveys, namely the six-yearly Pay Level Surveys, the three-yearly Starting Salaries Surveys and the annual Pay Trend Surveys, are conducted to regularly assess how the prevailing pay for the Civil Service compares with the pay in the private sector and, having regard to the findings of the surveys, whether and how the pay for the Civil Service should be adjusted.

connection, we consider the departure rate of recruits during their probationary period, which may be due to a variety of reasons (e.g. career exploration, expectation mismatch, etc.), is not a good indication of retention difficulty.

5. We note that civil servants in some non-directorate civilian grades maintain that since many new recruits have joined the grades concerned in recent years with qualifications higher than the specified minimum requirements, GSRs should be conducted with a view to raising the minimum entry requirements and consequentially lifting the pay scales of the grades concerned. We do not agree with this view. Our established policy is to specify the minimum entry requirements of a civil service grade according to its duties and responsibilities, and to remunerate civil servants for the job they perform and not for their individual academic or other qualifications.

6. We also note that the lack of promotion prospects has been raised by civil servants of some non-directorate civilian grades as justification for the conduct of GSRs. We disagree with this view. Our established policy is to create promotion posts where there are functional justifications. The promotion prospects of a grade are affected by many variables, such as the age profile of serving civil servants in the different ranks of the grade, the workload at the different ranks of the grade, the performance of individual civil servants in the grade, etc.

7. The job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of all civil service grades evolve constantly, having regard to policy initiatives, changes in attitudes and expectations of the community, technological advancement, etc. For example, there are more regulatory controls in various areas of government work to safeguard public safety. There is rising public aspiration for better quality public services. There is greater demand for administrative accountability and transparency of actions by civil servants; and more proactive and participatory approach in public policy formulation. While these developments may give rise to additional work, they do not of themselves constitute fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades concerned.

They do not meet the threshold for conduct of GSRs. GSRs are not the solution to these challenges. Instead, appropriate human resource management measures, such as focused training and development for civil servants concerned, provision of additional manpower where justified, revamping of work processes, greater application of information technologies, etc, should be pursued.

### **Advice Sought**

8. Members are invited to note the information in this paper.

Civil Service Bureau  
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