

**Meeting of the Legislative Council  
Panel on Constitutional Affairs  
20 July 2015**

**Work Progress and Structural Review of the  
Equal Opportunities Commission**

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**Purpose**

This paper serves to update Members on the progress made by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in respect of the Commission's strategic priority work areas, and the structural review conducted by the Commission that led to the reinstatement of a Chief Operations Officer (COO).

**Statutory Role and Functions of the EOC**

2. The functions and powers of the EOC are set out in the four anti-discrimination ordinances, namely Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO), Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO) and Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO). As stipulated in the Ordinances, the Commission shall:

- (i) work towards the elimination of discrimination, harassment and vilification;
- (ii) promote equality of opportunity between persons: regardless of gender, disability, family status and race;
- (iii) encourage persons who are concerned with the matter related to any unlawful discriminatory act to effect settlement by conciliation; and consider granting assistance to a person in instituting proceedings under the ordinances concerned, where there has not been a settlement;
- (iv) review the working of the ordinances and submit proposals for amendment as necessary;
- (v) undertake or assist the undertaking of research and educational activities which are necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions;
- (vi) issues codes of practices and guidelines under the Legislation; and
- (vii) conduct formal investigations for any purpose connected with the carrying out of its functions as it thinks fit or as directed by the Chief Secretary for Administration.

## **Performance Pledge**

3. In accordance with its statutory role and functions, a large part of the EOC's work is handling enquiries and complaints concerning discrimination from members of the public. Enquiry is very often an important first step prior to the lodging of formal complaint in writing. It allows the enquirer to collect useful information and explore options for resolving the issue. Each year, the EOC receives a large number of telephone and email enquiries from individuals, who believe that they have been the victims of discrimination, as well as from businesses, community organisations and other parties seeking information about discrimination issues and equal opportunity. In 2014, the EOC handled 20,089 enquiries, as compared to 21,260 in 2013.

4. As for complaints, the EOC handled a total of 828 complaints lodged under the four anti-discrimination ordinances in 2014, as compared to 939 in 2013. The decline could be attributed to a number of reasons, such as enhanced awareness of preventing discrimination, as achieved through publicity, public education, research and advocacy, and legal action undertaken by the EOC. For instance, the EOC issued legal proceedings in 2012 under the SDO in the District Court on behalf of a woman, whose former employer inserted a one-day break between her old and new contracts in order to deprive her of statutory maternity leave pay. By taking the case to the Court, the EOC hoped to raise public awareness of the discriminatory practice and remind employers of the protection against pregnancy discrimination under the SDO. In January 2014, the Court ruled in favour of the plaintiff, and ordered the defendant to pay damages to the plaintiff, including damages of injury to feelings and loss of maternity leave pay. The ruling sent a strong message to employers that it is unlawful to avoid the statutory entitlement to maternity leave for employees. Indeed, the number of complaints on pregnancy discrimination has dropped steadily in recent years, from 173 in 2009 to 130 in 2011, and then to 83 in 2014. In handling all the complaints, the EOC has set a performance pledge of concluding 75% of the complaints within 6 months. In 2014, the EOC managed to conclude 78% of the cases within 6 months, with the average conclusion time being 124 days. The successful conciliation rate was 73%, which rose significantly from 61.6% in 2010.

## **The EOC's Strategic Priority Work Areas**

5. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs (the "Panel") on 23 April 2014, Members were briefed on the EOC's priority work areas and initiatives, which were developed after extensive consultation with key stakeholders and the Board of the EOC. These include:

- (i) Discrimination Law Review (DLR)

- (ii) Legal Protection for Sexual Minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex, or LGBTI persons) from Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- (iii) Education and Employment Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities
- (iv) Integrated Education for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and its Implication on Employment Opportunities
- (v) Adopting an Updated and Unified Definition of Disability in the Performance of Government Functions
- (vi) Anti-Sexual Harassment Campaign in the Community

The Commission is pleased to report that further progress has been made in these work areas, as summarised in the paragraphs below.

## **Latest Progress of Work**

### ***Discrimination Law Review***

6. As reported at the meeting of the Panel on 16 March 2015, the EOC already completed the public consultation on the DLR, which was conducted from 8 July to 31 October 2014 to seek public views on how the existing anti-discrimination laws of Hong Kong should be modernised and enhanced. The exercise drew enthusiastic response from the community, with approximately 130,000 public submissions made to the EOC. Out of these, about 200 were from organisations, while the remaining came from individuals. Given the large number of submissions, the EOC has been engaged in analysing and recording the responses in a database in the past months. It is expected that a draft report, which provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the responses, will be ready in the latter part of 2015. Simultaneously, the EOC plans to make a submission to the Government outlining the Commission's recommendations on the law reform proposals by end 2015.

### ***Legal Protection for Sexual Minorities from Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity***

7. In working towards the elimination of discrimination in Hong Kong, the EOC is seriously concerned that sexual minorities in the city continue to encounter discrimination and harassment in the public sphere due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, which are often intertwined with other forms of discrimination. The EOC reckons that some members of the community have doubts about the legitimacy of EOC's involvement in this area. While the EOC's mandate to challenge discrimination, specifically handling complaints and taking cases to the Court, is limited to the scope of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability, family status and race

discrimination under the existing ordinances, the EOC believes there is also a need to examine, to speak out and enhance the community's understanding of other areas of unfair discrimination through research and advocacy work, for instance, which is indeed crucial for building a truly inclusive society with equal rights for all. At present, there is a lack of solid understanding among the community of the discrimination treatment facing sexual minorities. In order to gain better insight and perspectives of the discrimination experienced by the LGBTI persons, and solicit views on the approaches to combat discrimination, the EOC commissioned the Gender Research Centre (GRC) of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) to conduct a "Feasibility Study of Legislating against Discrimination on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status" (the "Study") in May 2014.

8. This Study, which encompassed literature review, public forums, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and telephone questionnaire, is meant to complement the work of the Government's Advisory Group on Eliminating Discrimination against Sexual Minorities. It serves to facilitate and bring forward discussions on the topic by relevant groups and the civil society, and is conducive to and expedient for the performance of the EOC's functions. The research team at the GRC has already completed all field work of the Study, and is currently working on the report. It is expected that the final report will be ready in the second half of 2015, pending which the EOC will present to the Government to facilitate its consideration of the appropriate legislative, policy and other steps for tackling the issue.

9. To further promote constructive dialogue on the topic, the EOC joined hands with the European Union Office to Hong Kong and Macao and the GRC to co-organise an international symposium "Working Together for an Inclusive Society: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Rights in Comparative Perspective" on 28-29 August 2014. Bringing together over 200 local and overseas participants, including experts from the academia and legal profession, government officials, legislators, representatives from LGBTI concern groups, religious bodies and non-governmental organisations, human rights advocates and business leaders, the symposium examined the issues and experiences relating to LGBTI persons in Hong Kong and the European Union. The two-day symposium featured a high-level roundtable meeting and a full-day conference with panel and open-floor discussions, examining the process and justifications for anti-discrimination legislation to protect LGBTI persons, the importance of engaging stakeholders from different sectors, including family and religious groups, and addressing the concerns of the community about the impact of the legislation. The EOC has published a report on the symposium, which is available on the EOC website at [www.eoc.org.hk](http://www.eoc.org.hk).

## *Education and Employment Opportunities for Ethnic Minorities*

10. Over the last two years, the EOC has intensified efforts to tackle the systemic barriers encountered by the ethnic minorities in accessing equal opportunities of education and employment. Through advocacy, outreach, stakeholder engagement, public education and publicity, the EOC strives to promote the messages of racial integration and equality in the community. With additional recurrent funding from the Government, the EOC has recently set up an Ethnic Minorities Unit (“EM Unit”). Comprising staff members of different ethnicities, including Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Nepalese, Pakistani and Thai, this Unit is dedicated to addressing the specific needs and difficulties of ethnic minorities, such as most recently, their difficulties in opening bank accounts and applying for other banking services. The Unit’s work will be centred on three key aspects, as highlighted below:

- (i) Policy – At the policy level, the Unit will liaise with relevant Government bureaux and departments, business associations and employers, and work with them on developing and/or enhancing policies and guidelines that facilitate the inclusion and equal opportunities of ethnic minorities. For example, the EOC has been urging the Government to relax the language requirements for certain civil service positions, and will continue to seek for more openings in both the civil service and public sectors for ethnic minorities. Consideration is also being given on launching an employment promotion campaign, which aims to bridge the expectations between major enterprises and job-seekers, and expand the employment resources for ethnic minorities.
- (ii) Training – In view of the difficulties experienced by ethnic minorities in accessing different services, which often stem from misunderstanding of the culture of ethnic minorities, the Unit will devise and offer cultural sensitivity training for service providers, including banks, property management organizations and real estate agents, through a series of talks, workshops and an online training module. In addition, workshops will be organised for educators and teaching staff with a view to building an inclusive school environment free of abuse.
- (iii) Outreach – On outreach, the Unit will establish regular communications and networks with ethnic minority leaders, community groups, tertiary institutions and other stakeholders, and explore partnership projects targeting different ethnic minority groups, such as drama or mentorship project for ethnic minority youths. These networks will also facilitate

engagement activities to solicit views and understanding of the needs of the ethnic minorities.

11. With due regard to the calls from the EOC, concern groups and the community for enhanced educational support for ethnic minority students, the Government has introduced a number of measures, including a new Chinese Language Learning Framework and Applied Learning (Chinese) Subjects, in 2014. In order to assess the effectiveness of these measures, the EOC has conducted discussions with different stakeholder groups, including school principals, ethnic minority student groups and prominent scholars on teaching and learning Chinese by non-Chinese speaking students. The Commission will continue to monitor closely their implementation and identify areas for improvement.

***Integrated Education for Students with Special Educational Needs and its Impact on Employment Opportunities***

12. Similarly, the EOC is keeping a close watch on the latest support measures by the Government for students with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. In 2012, the EOC released a “Study on Equal Learning Opportunities for Students with Disabilities under the Integrated Education System”, and urged the Government to take prompt actions in respect of the following areas:

- (i) Promote early identification of students with SEN;
- (ii) Increase resources and manpower for special education;
- (iii) Advance public awareness on the integrated education policy; and
- (iv) Enhance and speed up training for teachers.

The EOC is pleased to see that the Government has undertaken to step up support for students with SEN, and announced a series of initiatives in the Policy Address of the Chief Executive in 2014 and 2015, which are geared towards early identification and intervention of students, and enhanced support for students and parents. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these measures is yet to be seen, and the EOC will continue its effort to monitor their implementation, and advocate for an inclusive school environment for students with SEN.

13. Another issue that has raised concern is the inadequacy in school places and support services, which affect both Chinese (Cantonese) and non-Chinese speaking students with SEN and their families. The EOC has been in dialogue with the parents’ group, and will continue to liaise with the related parties, including the Education Bureau, on addressing the issue.

14. Meanwhile, the EOC has also been liaising closely with the tertiary education institutions in Hong Kong on the support for university students with SEN and/or disabilities. Acting as a facilitator, the EOC has instigated the formation of a “Local Tertiary Education Institutes Platform”, which serves as a platform for discussing equal opportunity issues of common concern and sharing best practices among the institutions. In November 2014, the University Grants Committee allocated a special one-off funding of HK\$20 million for its funded institutions to enhance support for students with SEN in 2015/16, with input from the EOC. The Commission will continue to play the role of a facilitator in promoting an inclusive environment and equal learning opportunities in the tertiary education sector.

### ***Adopting an Updated and Unified Definition of Disability in the Performance of Government Functions***

15. The EOC continues to hold great concern for barriers to equal opportunities encountered by people with disabilities (PWDs). Apart from urging the Government to broaden and standardise the definition of “disability” for its services by taking into account attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder PWDs from participating in society, the EOC has also been advocating for greater employment opportunities and accessibility for PWDs, such as by co-organising the Web Accessibility Recognition Scheme with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer.

16. The EOC notes that the Government has established an inter-departmental working group to review the eligibility criteria for disability allowance under the Social Security Allowance Scheme (the “Scheme”) and related matters, and the working group has conducted a consultancy study on the practices on financial assistance for PWDs outside Hong Kong. While the working group is still examining the findings of the consultancy study, the EOC will continue to monitor the implementation of disability and rehabilitation policies by the Government, and assess their compliance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance. Given that the Ombudsman already identified a number of deficiencies of the Scheme during its Direct Investigation in 2009, and that the Court, in a judicial review of the Scheme, had commented that the Scheme was unsatisfactory, the EOC urges that the Government should expedite action to reform the Scheme by removing the discriminatory elements in it, so as to avoid further legal challenge for disability discrimination.

### ***Anti-Sexual Harassment Campaign in the Community***

17. Preventing sexual harassment remains one of the major ongoing initiatives of the EOC, given the high prevalence rate of this unlawful act in different sectors. In

2014, 40% (108 cases) of the 267 complaints handled by the EOC under the SDO were related to sexual harassment. The EOC's strategies for combating sexual harassment include:

- (i) Conduct research and studies to raise awareness – Between April 2014 and May 2015, the EOC released findings of a number of surveys on sexual harassment, which showed that:
  - (a) 6.5% of the responding foreign domestic workers had allegedly been sexually harassed in the workplace or at a work-related event in the preceding 12 months;
  - (b) 19% of the responding workers in the service industries had been sexually harassed while at work in the preceding 12 months; and
  - (c) Only 12% of the responding National Sports Associations had formulated an anti-sexual harassment policy.

In addition, the Commission provided funding support to concern groups and non-governmental organisations for conducting surveys on the topic, such as sexual harassment against promoters of supermarkets. All these surveys helped raise the community's awareness of the prevalence of sexual harassment and its negative impact on both the individuals and the organisations, and the importance of preventing it.

- (ii) Provide training and resources to empower the community on preventing sexual harassment – In view of the survey findings, the EOC has stepped up its public education and promotional efforts, such as by arranging seminars and workshops on preventing sexual harassment for members of labour unions, professional organisations, the Hong Kong SME Development Federation and other related parties.

To help organisations formulate and put in place anti-sexual harassment policies, the EOC has developed a policy framework for companies in Hong Kong. As for the individuals, to equip them with knowledge of their rights and liabilities under the law, the EOC has organised training for professionals in different sectors, such as education, healthcare, medical and airline industries.

Similarly, the EOC has intensified efforts to promulgate the importance of preventing sexual harassment in the educational sector, following the release of the results of the "Questionnaire Survey on Sexual Harassment for the Education Sector" in 2013, which showed that almost half of the



responding schools did not have a policy on sexual harassment. Apart from organising a series of seminars and workshops for school principals, administrators and staff, the EOC published a “Framework for Sexual Harassment Policies in Schools”, and created a dedicated resource page on the EOC website. In 2014, the EOC conducted another survey, which showed a marked increase in the percentage of schools (88%) that have an anti-sexual harassment policy or policy statement since the survey was last conducted in 2013.

In addition, the EOC has been providing training to university student leaders since 2014 to instil in them the importance of preventing sexual harassment when organising student activities, such as orientation camps. This June, the EOC will organise another workshop “Play Smart: Say NO to Sexual Harassment” for the student leaders.

18. Following the passage of the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill 2014 in December 2014, which renders sexual harassment of a provider or prospective provider of goods, facilities or services by a customer unlawful, the EOC has lined up a series of publicity and public education initiatives, including TV and radio API (announcement of public interest). Apart from producing a new leaflet “Sexual Harassment – The Sex Discrimination Ordinance Protects Providers of Goods, Facilities or Services”, the EOC has also uploaded “Tips for SMEs on Prevention of Workplace Sexual Harassment” on its website, which provides guidelines for SMEs to prevent the unlawful act and handle related complaints.

***Study on the Sitting of Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness and other Social Welfare Facilities***

19. In addition to the various surveys on sexual harassment, the EOC has initiated a “Study on the Challenges Encountered in the Sitting of Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness and other Social Welfare Facilities”. This Study aims to gather first-hand information from various stakeholders with a view to understanding the causes of the difficulties in sitting social welfare facilities in various districts, and making recommendations on how to remove the barriers. The fieldwork related to the Study has already been completed, and a report is currently under preparation. The report will serve to support the EOC’s advocacy on non-discrimination, such as against patients and ex-patients with mental illness and/or disability.

## **Structural Review of the EOC**

### ***Reinstatement of Chief Operations Officer***

20. As mentioned in the paper (LC Paper No. CB (2)1314/13-14(05)) submitted to the Panel in April 2014, the EOC initiated a review of its organisational structure in 2014. The review was intended to enhance the operational efficiency and governance of the EOC, by recommending an organisational structure that would allow the Commission to fulfil its mission and obligations even more effectively, in the light of the public's rising expectations and service demand of the EOC. While conducting the review, consideration was also given to the recommendation of the Audit Report No. 52 on having a Chief Operations Officer (COO) for the EOC. Having consulted staff members and sought the endorsement of the EOC Board, the Commission has decided on reinstating the COO post (formerly titled Chief Executive CE), which existed when the EOC first came into operation in September 1996 but was later deleted in 2000.

21. In making the decision to reinstate the post, due consideration has been given to the fact that the functions of the EOC have expanded through these years with the implementation of the RDO in 2009, and the issues related to discrimination are becoming ever more complex, all of which have called for the need to strengthen the organisation's executive leadership and governance.

### ***Division of Work between Chairperson and COO***

22. The COO will report to the Chairperson, support and deputise him in the overall administration and management of the Commission office. In terms of division of work, the COO will focus on internal management, specifically driving performance improvement and strengthening governance, by providing guidance on operational policies, process review and procedural enhancement, leading internal communications and mobilising cross-team collaboration. In addition to directly managing the Complaints Services Division, the Legal Service Division and the Corporate Planning and Services Division, the COO will oversee the multi-disciplinary work teams established for implementing the EOC's strategic priority areas, such as advocating for equal educational and employment opportunities for ethnic minorities, and for equal learning opportunities for students with SEN. Given that the collaboration and support of different divisions are needed in this, it would be advisable to have a COO with considerable seniority and operational experience to supervise and co-ordinate the work teams.

23. On the other hand, the Chairperson, while continuing to lead the Commission together with the EOC Board, and advise on the mapping of the EOC's overall

strategic directions, will focus externally on stakeholder engagement and communications, and seeking for partnership with different sectors and organisations. These areas of work are especially important, as the society of Hong Kong becomes increasingly concerned about issues related to discrimination and equality, and there is a rising trend for speaking up and participating in the debate about social issues, as indicated in the strong public response to the DLR public consultation. Through engagement and communications, the EOC aims to garner the support of different sectors to more collaborative initiatives, with a view to mainstreaming the values of equal opportunities. The Chairperson will continue to manage directly the Corporate Communications Division and the Policy, Research and Training Division, which work involves close liaison and engagement with external stakeholders. The new structure of the EOC is enclosed at the Annex.

### ***Recommendations by the Director of Audit***

24. The reinstatement of the COO post is in line with the recommendations in the Director of Audit's Report (No. 52). As highlighted in the Report, "the results of past reviews conducted by three different parties (the EOC, the Independent Panel of Inquiry and the Home Affairs Bureau) have all pointed to the need to separate the posts of the Chairperson and the CEO, in order to provide an effective system of checks and balances". The Audit research also indicates that, in a publication "Corporate Governance for Public Bodies – A Basic Framework", the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants also recommends that "the roles of chairperson of the board of a public organisation and its CEO should be separated and that the positions be occupied by different persons, in order to strengthen the structural checks and balances". In view of this, Audit recommended that the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs should expedite action to take the matter forward and bring it to a satisfactory conclusion.

### ***Benefits of Reinstating the COO Post***

25. The EOC notes that some Members of the Legislative Council had raised concerns about reinstating the COO post back in 2006, and expressed that this might undermine the independence of the Commission in administering the anti-discrimination ordinances, and cause the EOC to become executive-led and the Chairperson to be sidelined. Nevertheless, the EOC believes that there is sufficient mechanism to ensure the independence and balance of powers within the EOC. For instance, the Administration and Finance Committee under the EOC Board is tasked with overseeing the internal management and staffing of the Commission, including the Chairperson, the COO and other senior staff. Decisions concerning major policies

and strategies of the EOC are made collectively by Members of the EOC Board and its Committees. All these can ensure balance of powers.

26. As a matter of fact, the reinstatement of the COO post, and the delineation of duties between the Chairperson and the COO would avoid excessive concentration of power in the Chairperson. For example, currently the appraisal of divisional heads is conducted by the Chairperson only. With the COO on board, the appraisal will be jointly performed by both the Chairperson and the COO, hence ensuring a fairer and more comprehensive assessment. The COO will also instigate better internal communications and co-ordination between divisions with a view to building the capacity of staff and enhancing the overall efficiency of the organisation, such that the EOC is better equipped to meet the ever higher expectations of public service among community members. Meanwhile, the Chairperson, by delegating some of the administrative duties to the COO, can afford more time to engage and consult stakeholders on the current and potential discrimination issues, influence and lobby stakeholders on equal opportunity measures, and draw up strategies for advancing the EOC's work.

27. The COO post will be equivalent to Point 3 of the Civil Service Directorate Pay Scale. With confirmation from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau (CMAB) on the provision of additional resources, the EOC has proceeded with the recruitment of the COO through open and competitive process. To ensure fairness, the Chairperson will only act as a member rather than the chair of the selection board, which will comprise of EOC Board Members.

28. Simultaneously, the EOC will implement other recommendations of the structural review, including re-alignment of duties between divisions and re-ranking of certain directorate posts. In regard to the re-alignment of duties, the training functions, which used to be part of the Corporate Communications Unit, will be combined with the Policy and Research Unit and turn into a Policy, Research and Training Division. There is much synergy in combining these functions, as more targeted training can be developed and offered to corporations and organisations based on the research findings, while consultancy services can help organisations formulate and enhance their equal opportunity policies, programmes and best practices. Section 63(5) of the SDO (Cap 480) provides that the Chairperson shall be appointed on a full-time basis. As regards the re-ranking of directorate posts, under the new structure, the number of directorate posts, including the Chairperson and COO, will become 6, which is the same as in 1996 when the EOC was established, and so would be the level of the Chairperson and the COO. These changes, other than funding provided by CMAB for the COO post, are cost-neutral and aimed at meeting operational needs and creating better synergy between divisions, and will involve no additional resources.

The EOC will closely monitor the effectiveness of the new structure and conduct a review in two years' time after its full implementation by engaging external experts and advisors.

### **Need for a Permanent Office**

29. As also stated in the paper for the Panel in 2014 (LC Paper No. CB(2)1314/13-14(05)), a major concern for the EOC is the increase in office rent due to market conditions and movements beyond the Commission's control. Despite the EOC's RAE Bids for acquisition of a permanent premise for a number of years, it is disappointing that the EOC has so far not received any positive response from the Government. With the increase in staff numbers mainly due to the creation of the EM Unit and the reinstatement of the COO post, the current premise is unable to accommodate the full staff manning. As such, it has been decided that an additional nearby office of 1,810 sq. ft. gross will be leased to accommodate the EOC's additional staff.

30. The EOC will use its reserves to fund this new additional office for a lease of up to three years, but this should only be a temporary and contingency measure. The EOC's reserves should normally be set aside in the first instance for new and one-off initiatives directly related to the promotion of equal opportunities. Once again, the EOC respectfully seeks the support of Members of the Legislative Council for a permanent office. Pending a decision to be made by the Government, it is hoped that the Government would provide additional subvention to meet the EOC's increase in rental of about HK\$5.2M per annum, which is the difference between the initial rental of HK\$22 per sq. ft. gross provided by the Government when the EOC first started up, and the current rental of the existing premise at HK\$44.5 per sq. ft. gross, where it is in a position to do so. The new additional office of 1,810 sq. ft. also requires funding of HK\$1.26M per annum at HK\$49 per sq. ft. gross inclusive of rent, rates, air-conditioning and management fees.

### **Cost Control and Management**

31. The EOC's operation is primarily funded by the Government. In 2014-15, the subvention from the Government stood at HK\$104.6 million. The EOC has all along adopted a stringent and prudent approach in managing and expending its resources, by vigorously controlling cost. Owing to a marked increase in office rental (\$3.97M) beyond the EOC's control in 2013/14, the EOC had to tap into its reserve to cover the rental and hence recorded a deficit for the same amount in 2013/14. Nevertheless, the EOC remains in a sound financial position and maintains \$21M in its reserve to meet

contingencies or unexpected expenditure for operational needs in the future. In 2014/15, the EOC managed to achieve a surplus of HK\$2.22M.

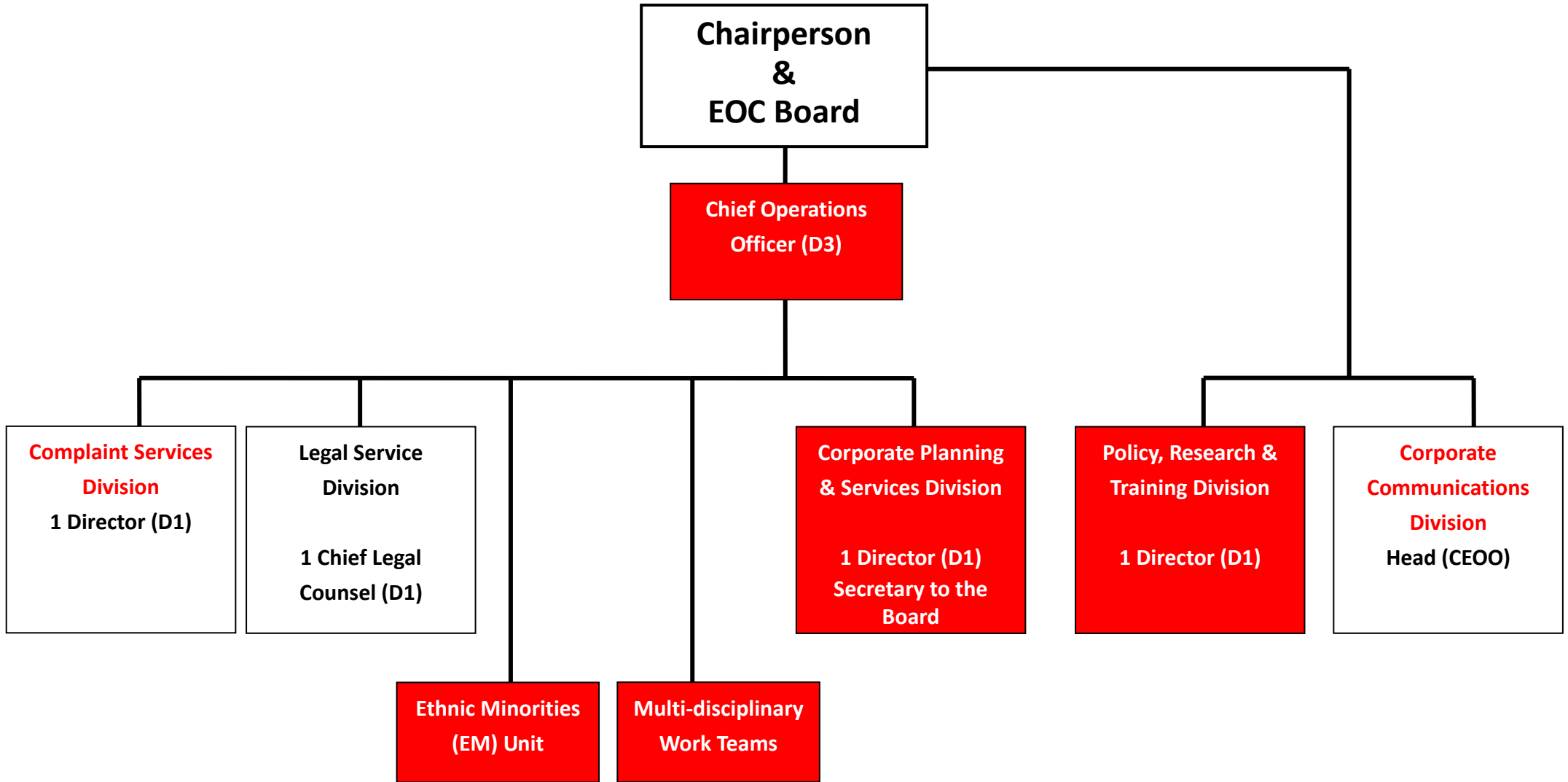
32. In terms of staffing, as at 31 May 2015, the EOC has 88 full-time staff, with 5 officers at senior ranks (including the Chairperson and COO) comparable to the Directorate ranks in the civil service. As mentioned at the Panel meeting on 16 March 2015, the EOC has brought in temporary, part-time helpers (up to 24) to assist in the recording of the public responses received during the DLR public consultation.

33. The EOC is fully aware of the expectations of the community for the Commission to administer the anti-discrimination laws in a fair and just manner, to defend and speak up for the cause of human rights and social justice, and to advance the values of diversity and equality. All along, the EOC has been operating independently and transparently, and under the scrutiny of the legislature and other external parties, such as the Ombudsman. The EOC is committed to working with different stakeholders and groups, the Government and the Legislative Council to empower and engage the community in eliminating the barriers to equal opportunities, and build a diverse and pluralistic society built on mutual respect for all.

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Equal Opportunities Commission  
July 2015

EOC Organizational Structure



Note: Changes are in red.