

NOTE FOR PUBLIC WORKS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Supplementary information on 235LP – Improvements to Police stations and operational facilities

INTRODUCTION

When Members considered paper PWSC(1999-2000)55 on **235LP** - Improvements to Police stations and operational facilities at the Public Works Subcommittee meeting held on 23 June 1999, the Administration undertook to provide further information on -

- (a) the resource implications of expanding video interview room (VIR) facilities to all interviews with suspects, by comparing cases of a similar nature with and without the use of such facilities; and
- (b) the overall number of complaints against the Police as well as the improvement, if any, following the implementation of VIRs two years earlier.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

Expanding VIR facilities

2. The additional cost of providing VIR facilities includes the capital costs for renovating and equipping the VIRs, maintenance costs, operational costs (e.g. the costs for providing consumables such as video tapes and the cost of transcription) and the notional cost of releasing staff from existing duties for a two-day training programme.

3. To compare the cost of using VIR facilities with that of conventional means of interview, we have to make certain assumptions such as the useable life of the VIR equipment, the need for re-training, the total number of interviews per year,

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etc. It would therefore be more appropriate to compare cost on a per hour basis as the length of interview varies from case to case.

4. Our assessment is that the VIR interview would cost \$1,470 per hour more than a conventional interview. About 80% of the additional cost (\$1,200 per hour) is due to transcription, with the remainder being the cost of training, supplies and VIR equipment. There are other hidden costs as well. For example, handwritten statements are currently passed to a government counsel for advice before court proceedings. If a video interview is used, the Police will need, first of all, to prepare a summary of the interview for a government counsel to assess the case before advice is given. Subsequently, the full interview is required to be transcribed to facilitate government and defence counsels, judges and the Police officers to go through it many times before and during a trial. This would take up more time and resources for all concerned and significantly increase the added cost of \$1,470 suggested.

Feedback on VIR scheme

5. Records of complaints against the Police are classified according to the nature of the alleged conduct under complaint (e.g. assault and fabrication of evidence), not whether VIR facilities are used. It is difficult to directly measure the impact of VIR facilities on the number of complaints against the Police. On the premise that the use of VIR facilities would deter assault during interviews or fabrication of evidence, we have referred to the number of complaint cases on "assault" and "fabrication of evidence" as a broad indicator. Complaints against the Police in these two areas in the past three years have decreased, as shown below -

Nature of the alleged conduct under complaint	1996	1997	1998
Assault	1 265	976	910
Fabrication of Evidence	238	202	142
Total number of complaints received	3 309	2 937	2 908

6. We briefed the LegCo Panel on Security on 21 July 1999 on the provision of VIRs in the Police Force. The Administration agreed that, subject to availability of resources and physical constraints, the Administration would try to install VIRs in the 20 Police stations not provided with such facilities.

Security Bureau
October 1999

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