



# HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY

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12 July 2002

Public Accounts Committee  
(Attn: Miss Sandy CHU)  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Building,  
8 Jackson Road,  
Central, Hong Kong.

Dear Miss CHU,

**The Director of Audit's Report on the  
results of value for money audits (Report No. 38)  
Chapter 5: Residential services for the elderly**

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2002.

As requested by the Public Accounts Committee at its meeting on 4 July, 2002, I enclose the additional information about the decision process of the Housing Authority leading to stop further production of Housing for Senior Citizens at the Appendix. A Chinese version will follow shortly.

Yours sincerely

(Marco WU)

for Director of Housing

Encl.

c.c. Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food )  
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury )  
Director of Social Welfare )  
Chief Executive, Hospital Authority ) – w/o enc  
Director of Audit )

Internal

BD/AM )

AD/AO )

## Appendix

### **Housing Authority's decision in November 2000 to stop further production of Housing for Senior Citizens (HSC)**

#### **When the Housing Authority (HA) or Housing Department (HD) was first aware that HSC was not very popular**

Having regard to elderly people's special accommodation needs, HA decided in 1985 that it should build HSCs in public housing estates with warden services so that non-government organisations could devote their resources to the care of those elderly who would require more supportive services. The arrangement was supported by the Social Welfare Department.

It was on this mission that the HA had assumed the responsibility of providing HSC to the elderly. HSCs had been all along well received by the public for its provisions including built-in emergency alarm system and 24-hour warden services. When the Elderly Commission visited one of the HSCs in February 1998, they were impressed by the cozy and protected environment of HSCs. There was no sign that HSC was not popular until 1998/1999 when the take up of HSCs began to slacken. As shown in Table 4 of the Audit Report, the vacancy rate was normal as at end March 1997 and even in early 1999 (1.7% and 3.7% respectively) but was relatively higher in 1998 (7.9%). As the take-up rate was improved in 1999 with a vacancy rate of 3.7%, we needed to closely monitor the vacancy position before making any decision that might impact on other elderly services providers.

The relatively higher vacancy rate in 1998 was attributable to the increase not only in the provision of hostel type HSCs with improved facilities but also the supply of self-contained small flats for the elderly. With a wider choice of housing types available, HSCs especially those without ensuite bathrooms were becoming less attractive.

We would like to point out that apart from the 7.9% vacant HSCs, the remaining 92.1% of the HSCs that were occupied in 1998, were maintained in good conditions with elderly people happily living there. They enjoyed very much the common facilities and activities organized for them e.g. television and other entertainment programmes, reading materials, chess playing and other social as well as healthy-aging activities. More importantly, they felt secure and safe with the 24-hour warden services provided therein.

**Whether HD had adopted any measures to reduce the planned production of HSC units and, if so, what the measures were**

We reviewed our housing provision and design regularly, taking into account the demand and changing needs of elderly people. The Committee may wish to note that the HA introduced HSC to provide housing with warden services for able-bodied elderly so that the non-government organisations could devote their resources to accommodate elderly with impairments in residential care homes. As reduction in HSC might have impacts on other elderly policies and service provisions, we considered it necessary to examine the issue together with the provision of other services for the elderly. We therefore held a series of consultations with the then Health and Welfare Bureau and its departments and at the same time decided to make an overall review of our existing elderly housing provision and strategies to co-ordinate the Government's pledge of "aging in place" and "continuum of care". It was in this context that we commissioned a consultancy study.

The HA decided to stop further production of HSCs in November 2000 having regard to the elderly people's preference for self-contained small flats. However, there was a need to maintain the existing HSCs and to allow the then on-going construction programme to continue so that elderly applicants could have a choice between self-contained small flats and the HSCs with warden services depending on their individual needs.

**The dates and outcome of HA's discussions on the issue, the justifications for the decision and copies of relevant documents**

According to one of the findings of the consultancy study, flats with shared facilities are less popular among the elderly tenants. The Strategic Planning Committee of the HA on 30 November 2000 endorsed, among other initiatives, to discontinue further production of shared-facilities HSC but concentrating more on building self-contained small flats on elderly housing having regard to the elderly's preference. Accordingly, the Elderly Commission was also informed of and supportive to this new development in February 2001. A copy of the relevant papers **SPC 75/2000** and **EC/I/1-01** and the minutes of discussions are enclosed.

**Information on the last batch of new HSC units, including target completion dates, the number of units, their locations, the timetable for allocation and the actions taken to promote these new units**

The information on the last batch of new HSC units is as follows :

	District	Estate	No. of Units	Target Completion Date
Extended -Urban	Tsuen Wan	Wah Lai	152	) 1 August 2002
	Ma On Shan	Chung On	156	
Urban	Cheung Sha Wan	Fu Cheong	131	
	Total		439	

Time-table for allocation :

All these units will be offered to eligible single persons on the Waiting List (WL) with priority given to the elderly. We anticipate that all 439 units will be offered to the elderly in the first round of allocation by end September 2002. Those units rejected by the elderly will be offered to non-elderly applicants in October 2002.

Actions taken to promote these new units :

We shall take the following publicity measures :

- Posting up notices in Wah Lai, Chung On, Fu Cheong and neighbouring estates in late July 2002 to publicize that there will be new HSC units available for letting so that local residents with elderly relatives who would like to live there may call our hot-line to indicate their interest.
- To ask the elderly applicants during vetting interviews whether they would like to be rehoused to HSC units and note down their preference. Allocation will be made according to their preferred districts, subject to availability of resources.
- To arrange group visits for the elderly applicants to see the environment and facilities provided in the three new HSCs.

- To show the video on HSCs to elderly applicants at the time when they attend interviews in our Customer Service Centre.

### **Consultancy study on Provision of Housing and Care Services for the Elderly in Public Housing Estates**

This study was a comprehensive review on HA's existing provision of housing and support services for the elderly in public rental housing of which HSC was only one of options. The primary aim was to explore the feasibility of developing an integrated mode of service delivery to achieve the two central themes advocated by the Elderly Commission, i.e. "aging in place" and "continuum of care". International references were made in the study. The new concept of Universal Design was also studied in depth. The specific objectives and tasks of the consultancy study were detailed in the enclosed full report <sup>Note</sup>. The consultancy fee was HK\$457,680. It was awarded under a competitive tender exercise.

<sup>Note</sup>: There is no Chinese version of the main consultancy report.

***\*Note by Clerk, PAC:** Papers SPC 75/2000 and EC/I/1-01, minutes of discussions and the final report of the consultancy study on "Provision of Housing and Care Services for the Elderly in Public Housing Estates" not attached.*