

**Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs
and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for
Persons with Disabilities**

Information Paper for Meeting on 29 June 2007

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to report the latest position on the Administration's follow up actions on the provision of concessionary public transport fares for persons with disabilities (PwDs).

POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF FARE CONCESSION TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

2. As stated in the Chief Secretary for Administration's letter dated 18 June 2007 to the Chairman of the Subcommittee, it was the Government's rehabilitation policy to promote integration of PwDs into the society. To cater for the basic transport needs of PwDs, the Government has all along been providing rebus service and financial assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance scheme (CSSA) and Disability Allowance payments (DA). The total amount of resources committed for these purpose is \$6.9 billion in 2007-08.

3. The provision of concessionary public transport fares to PwDs to incentivise them to go out more is in line with our rehabilitation policy of promoting their social integration. It will represent an improvement to the existing social services to PwDs. If public money is involved in the provision of such concessionary fares, the Government will have to examine thoroughly before considering whether it could be funded from the welfare programme subject to the funding constraints and competitive priorities for rehabilitation services.

4. The effective use and distribution of the limited welfare resources should be one of the important factors to be taken into account when considering whether the provision of concessionary public transport fares to PwDs should be funded by public money. Under the existing welfare programme, other than the abovementioned rebus service and financial assistance under CSSA and DA, the total amount of resources committed by the Government on rehabilitation services in 2007-08 is \$9.7 billion. In the immediate future, we have a number of rehabilitation services requiring urgent enhancement including: providing residential care services to those PwDs who cannot live in the community or whose relatives cannot take care of them, providing pre-school services for children with disabilities of age 0-6 and enhancing community-based mental health services, etc. At present, the longest waiting time for residential care services exceeds 6 years and there is an increasing demand for

pre-school services for children with disabilities. Also, the problem of mental health is aggravating. In this connection, to alleviate the service demands, we have allocated additional recurrent provisions amounting to \$52 million and \$20 million respectively for providing 340 new residential/day care service places and 200 places of pre-school services, and for launching a new Community Mental Health Intervention Project in 2007-08. These are the priority areas for which we will strive for additional resources in the coming years.

5. The future Labour and Welfare Bureau will examine whether there is a need for further measures to meet the transport needs of PwDs and if so, what measures should be taken. Subject to the funding constraints and competitive priorities for rehabilitation services, a decision will be taken also having regard to how the overall welfare budget is to be utilized and allocated so as to maintain a balance in meeting the needs for different services.

ADVICE SOUGHT

6. Members are requested to note the contents of this paper.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau
June 2007