

**Meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs
20 May 2019**

**Work Progress and Key Focuses of the
Equal Opportunities Commission**

PURPOSE

This paper provides an update on the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) in 2018/19 and its key focuses in 2019/20.

BACKGROUND

2. The EOC is a statutory body established in 1996 under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) (Cap 480). The powers and functions vested in the EOC, as set out in the anti-discrimination ordinances of Hong Kong, include:

- Handle complaints lodged under the anti-discrimination legislation and encourage conciliation between the parties in disputes;
- Undertake self-initiated investigations into situations and issues giving rise to discrimination, and conduct formal investigation into policies when needed to combat systemic discrimination;
- Provide legal assistance to aggrieved persons including assistance in proceedings;
- Monitor implementation of the legislation and make recommendations on reforms to enhance the legislation;
- Conduct research studies to identify trends of discrimination in society and make recommendations on public policies and measures;
- Empower the public with knowledge of the anti-discrimination ordinances through education and training courses;
- Partner with enterprises in different sectors to develop equal opportunities policies and practices, especially in the workplace; and
- Promulgate values of equal opportunities through different communication channels, and engage the public to combat discrimination through events and activities.

In 2018/19, the EOC continued to work within the parameters of its statutory mandate and deliver its full range of responsibilities, working towards its vision of creating a pluralistic and inclusive society where there is no barrier to equal opportunities. Essentially, the work of the EOC is divided into three major areas of Enforcement, Prevention and Education, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

I. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Enquiry and complaint handling

3. The EOC is the enforcer of the four anti-discrimination ordinances in Hong Kong. Its major function is to handle complaints lodged by members of the public under the ordinances, and endeavour, by conciliation, to effect settlement of the complaints. Below is the complaint-handling work of the EOC in 2018:

- Handled 10,318 enquiries, with 3,759 being specific enquiries relating to particular scenarios or incidents that might become complaints.
- Registered 1,018 complaints (including self-initiated investigation cases), a significant increase of 87% over the figure (544 complaints) in 2017.
- Handled 1,271 complaints in total (including complaints carried forward from the previous year), 71% more than in 2017 (see breakdown by ordinances in [Annex A](#)).
- Conducted investigation into 58 cases out of the total complaints handled by means of “self-initiated investigation”. These were mainly related to the provision of goods, services and facilities, and the provision of access to premises. These were noticed by the Commission, or brought to the attention of the EOC by third parties or aggrieved individuals who do not wish to be involved in the investigation.

Substantial Increase in Complaints

4. The substantial increase in complaints in 2018 could be attributed to the measures undertaken by the EOC during the year to enhance the complaint-handling process and procedures. Specifically, to address public feedback about the lengthy process of screening an enquiry and classifying it into a complaint, the EOC required all staff members handling enquiries to classify an enquiry into a complaint once an enquiry has met the below conditions or threshold test, with a case officer promptly assigned for follow-up actions. In the event that the correspondence is unclear or there is insufficient information to substantiate a complaint, the EOC would err on the side of classifying an enquiry as a complaint, rather than seeking and waiting for clarification and hence lengthening the processing time. The conditions are:

- The complaint must be in writing;
- The aggrieved person must have lodged the complaint (unless the complaint is a representative complaint made on behalf of an aggrieved person); and
- There must be an allegation of an unlawful act under the anti-discrimination ordinances.

5. In addition, the EOC abolished the practice of reassigning a case from one officer to another when an enquiry is classified or upgraded as a complaint. This would not only speed up the processing time, but also avoid the situation where the aggrieved person has to provide information and recount their discriminatory experiences repeatedly to different officers.

6. Owing to the above and other measures, the EOC was able to fulfil its performance pledge of concluding 75% of the cases within six months in 2018, despite the substantial increase in complaints, with the average conclusion time of each case being 122 days, as compared to 154 days in 2017.

Conciliation

7. Where appropriate, the EOC would facilitate the parties concerned to resolve the disputes through conciliation, on an entirely voluntary basis. In 2018, the successful conciliation rate was 66% (132 out of the 200 cases that went to conciliation), on par with the range of 60-70% in previous years. Under certain circumstances, investigation was not conducted or discontinued due to no unlawful act, lacking in substance, beyond 12-month

time bar or complainant having no desire to pursue the case. Indeed, a large majority of the complaints were either investigation not conducted or discontinued; or resolved without recourse to legal assistance or actions. Below is breakdown on the outcome of the cases concluded in 2018:

483	Not to conduct investigation
148	Investigation discontinued
3	Early resolution with respondent
120	Early conciliation successful
12	Conciliation successful after investigation
68	Conciliation unsuccessful

Legal Assistance

8. In 2018, only 68 of the 834 cases concluded were unsuccessfully conciliated. For these cases, the aggrieved parties may apply for assistance from the EOC in taking legal action on the complaints. In 2018, the EOC received 54 applications. For each of these 54 applications, whether or not legal assistance was granted, the Legal Service Division (LSD) prepared detailed reports and analyses, based on the information gathered by the Complaint Services Division (CSD) during investigation and/or by the LSD. The applications, along with the analyses, were then submitted to the Legal and Complaints Committee of the EOC for consideration and determination. In 2018, 32 out of 63 applications (including those brought forward from previous year) were given legal assistance. This figure was not only higher than that (26) of 2017, but also doubled that of 2016 (16 cases), as shown in Annex B.

9. The assistance offered by the EOC varied between each case, ranging from legal advice to the applicant and assessment of further information or evidence to representation in legal proceedings. In addition to assisting the aggrieved parties, the LSD also provides, where needed, legal advice on cases handled by the CSD, and conducts reviews of the law based on its implementation experience. Other work include: providing internal legal advice and support to the EOC on legal issues arising out of the EOC operations, reviewing contracts/agreements, drafting Codes of Practice, and providing legal support to EOC defended cases and on internal corporate governance matters.

Discrimination Law Review

10. In respect of review of the anti-discrimination laws, the EOC continued to follow up with the Government on its recommendations in the Discrimination Law Review in 2018. In December 2018, the Government introduced the Discrimination Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill into the Legislative Council for First Reading and Commencement of Second Reading. The Bill has taken forward eight out of 73 recommendations by the EOC.

11. As a Bills Committee was formed to examine the Bill, the EOC has been providing comments and information to the Government in relation to the amendments. A submission was made to the Committee in February 2019 to state the EOC's support for protecting breastfeeding women in general (rather than "woman breastfeeding her own child"), and the need to provide protection for volunteers and interns from harassment in common workplaces.

The EOC also urged the Government to implement as soon as possible the other higher priority recommendations, including: amending the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) to include the exercise of Government functions and powers; and introducing a duty to make reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in relevant fields, including employment, education and the provision of goods, services and facilities, under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO).

Process Review

12. The EOC embarked on a review of its complaint handling and legal assistance services in the latter half of 2017, with a view to examining and enhancing the effectiveness of the services. The review also covered the EOC's governance and its management structure. The review exercise was completed in February 2019, and its findings and recommendations are now being studied by the new Chairperson.

13. Meanwhile, the EOC is continuing its ongoing effort to enhance its services. For example, the EOC is liaising with Hong Kong Council of Social Service on establishing a panel of advisors comprising persons with disabilities, so that the Commission can draw on expert opinion, when needed, to add insight and credibility to the investigation and conciliation process. The EOC has also put in place various enhancement measures to the complaint-handling process, as mentioned above, even during the review.

II. PREVENTION

Research studies and surveys

14. Other than remedying the consequences of discrimination through complaint handling and legal assistance, a substantive amount of the EOC's work is geared towards prevention. Each year, the EOC commissions a range of research studies and surveys. These research studies help the EOC identify the root causes of discrimination, and shed light on the social, economic and other context that shape the community's perception and discriminatory attitudes. With the evidence base provided by the research studies, the EOC works with the Government and stakeholders in different sectors on policy formulation and reforms, procedural reviews and training programmes that serve to reduce the risk of discrimination.

15. In 2018/19, the EOC released the following research studies:

- Study on Family Status Discrimination in the Workplace in Hong Kong;
- "Sexual Harassment – Questionnaire Survey for Sports Sector 2018"; and
- "Break the Silence: Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong".

The EOC also embarked on a number of studies and made plans for new research studies in 2019/20. These include:

Undergoing

- A Study on the Challenges Faced by Mainstream Schools in Educating Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong;
- A Study on Public Attitudes towards Female Political Leadership; and

- A Study on Education and Career Pathways of Ethnic Minority Youths in Hong Kong.

2019/20

- A Study on the Challenges, Effective Policies and Best Practices of Ordinary Schools in Educating Students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong;
- A Study on Effective Strategies to Facilitate School-to-Work Transition of Young Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong;
- A Study on Perceptions of Stigmatisation and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace; and
- Equal Opportunities Awareness Survey.

Training

16. To help the public, especially employers and employees, understand their rights and obligations under the law and the importance of creating an inclusive, discrimination-free environment, the EOC conducts calendar and tailor-made training for a range of organisations in both public and private sectors. In 2018, almost 530 courses were held for more than 25,000 individuals from Government departments, public bodies, non-governmental organisations, education institutes, and businesses of different sectors, including airlines, banks, hotels and retailers.

III. EDUCATION

17. On the education front, the EOC organises a range of major events to engage the community and make use of different channels to promote the concepts of equal opportunities to community members. The EOC also collaborated with Government departments, educational and other institutes having common interest in the work of EOC to design activity programmes on promoting equal opportunities. In 2018/19, the EOC implemented the following initiatives:

- Organised 118 major events, including talks and exhibitions.
- Provided funding for 34 community projects under the Community Participation Funding Programme to promote the anti-discrimination ordinances.
- Ran an “Employment Equality Project” radio campaign with Radio Television Hong Kong Radio 1 to promote public understanding of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and the importance of inclusion, which featured radio drama and interviews, as well as a public event.
- Organised the “Tally and friends” storytelling competition and workshops, which were designed to instil in children values of diversity, inclusion and mutual respect.
- Ran a multimedia competition under the Generation “i” youth programme and invited secondary school students to voice out their views and vision of equality through short films and comics.
- Arranged 361 school drama performances themed on equal opportunities and non-discrimination for over 63,500 students across Hong Kong.
- Produced short films and documentaries on equal opportunities for the YouTube channel.
- Provided a pool of anti-discrimination resources on the EOC website, which recorded more than 857,700 visits during the year.

KEY FOCUSES IN 2019/20

18. Moving into 2019/20, the EOC continues to stride forward with its vision of building an inclusive Hong Kong, where all citizens, regardless of their gender, physical/mental/intellectual abilities, their race or family status, are afforded equal opportunities to pursue their education, employment and ways of living. In mapping out its future direction and work plan, the EOC has set the following strategic priorities:

- Conduct holistic assessment of the four areas of discrimination by reviewing statistics and past complaint cases dealt with by the EOC, so as to determine the risk level with regard to each area of discrimination for the purpose of setting the work priorities.
- Commence work on formulating a new EOC work plan 2020-2023 by conducting relevant studies and researches, and initiating communication and/or consultation with the Government, EOC Members and other key stakeholders.
- Robustly engage various stakeholders and concerned groups through regular meetings for the purpose of building up and maintaining mutual trust and collaboration on the work of EOC.

On the key focuses of the EOC in 2019/20, other than carrying on the existing work on Enforcement, Prevention (research, policy advocacy and training) and Education, the EOC will:

- Step up the fight against sexual harassment; and
- Tackle the barriers to equal opportunities faced by the disadvantaged groups in society, notably ethnic minorities and people with disabilities (PWDs).

The paragraphs below highlight the achievement and new initiatives for the above key focuses.

Anti-Sexual Harassment Campaign

19. For more than seven years, the EOC has been assisting different sectors to formulate policies for preventing sexual harassment, ever since the Commission launched the Anti-Sexual Harassment Campaign in 2012. Targeting the education, business, health, social service and sports sectors, the EOC's work involves: undertakes surveys and studies to understand the prevalence of sexual harassment in these sectors; puts together policy framework for adoption by organisations in the sectors; and provides training for the staff and personnel of the organisations. In 2018/19, the EOC undertook the following initiatives:

Sports Sector

- Mobilised the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC), the Home Affairs Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department to start a second round of anti-sexual harassment campaign in the sports sector, following the first round in 2014/15.
- Co-organised in partnership with the SF&OC a seminar and workshops for the National Sports Associations (NSAs) and other sports associations between January and March 2018, and conducted a questionnaire survey, which showed that 52% (22 NSAs) of the responding NSAs have already developed their own written policy on

anti-sexual harassment, a significant improvement over the 12% (7 NSAs) in 2014. Furthermore, among those 20 NSAs that have not yet developed an anti-sexual harassment policy, 17 claimed they planned to do so within the next 12 months.

- From 1 February to 31 December 2018, provided nine training sessions to almost 600 staff members from eight sports organisations.

Religious Sector

- Conducted meeting with nine major Christian denominations in Hong Kong to explore the possibility of collaborating on prevention of sexual harassment in churches. Co-organised a “Seminar on the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Churches” with the Divinity School of Chung Chi College of The Chinese University of Hong Kong in October 2018, and a similar seminar with the Hong Kong Christian Council in March 2019, with two more workshops in April and May 2019.
- Prepared a Framework for Prevention of Sexual Harassment Policy in Churches for reference by the churches.
- Gave a talk to Catholic clergymen in December 2018 and participated in seminar for lay church leaders in March 2019.

Education Sector

- Released the “Break the Silence: Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong” in January 2019, in which nearly one-fourth (23%) of the student respondents across nine universities indicated that they were sexually harassed within 12 months before the survey was conducted and yet only 2.5% of the students had lodged complaints with their university.
- Following the release of the study, met with Presidents and/or Vice-Presidents of eight of the nine participating universities between February and early April 2019 to discuss possible measures for addressing sexual harassment in universities. Responses from senior management of the universities were positive. Some universities indicated that they would require all new students to attend compulsory general education lecture on sexual harassment or explore mandatory online training for all staff. In addition, four of the participating universities invited the EOC to give debriefing on the study findings to their staff and/or students.
- Provided 50 training sessions covering sexual harassment for over 2,540 academic and administrative staff members, as well as students of universities and tertiary institutions in 2018. Continued to collaborate with 13 tertiary institutions to promote the online training module “Preventing Sexual Harassment on Campus”.
- Held 14 training sessions for over 1,230 principals and teachers of kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools in 2018.
- Made a submission on the review of sex education in schools to the Education Bureau (EDB) in September 2018, in view of the upcoming review of the subject by the Bureau. The submission laid out the views of the EOC that sexuality education in schools should encompass and stress the importance of respecting others’ bodies, and cultivate positive attitudes towards relationships, gender roles and gender equality. It should also provide opportunities for young people to express their views and to ask questions on these subjects so that correct information would be disseminated. Eventually, sexuality education should aim at helping young people develop responsible decision-making and respectful behaviour, which would in turn help eliminate sexual harassment in the long run.

Public and Private Sectors

- Conducted a total of 364 training sessions on the anti-discrimination ordinances and sexual harassment for over 17,000 participants in 2018, including 13 training sessions for 1,160 staff members of the Hospital Authority.

Dedicated sexual harassment unit

20. Notwithstanding the effort by the EOC, sexual harassment remains prevalent in different sectors of the Hong Kong society. The #MeToo movement that began to spread virally in October 2017 has not only inspired individuals locally and internationally to speak out about their experiences as victims of sexual harassment or abuse, but it has also propelled organisations to seek for change in culture and policy. Riding on the momentum, the EOC will step up its sexual harassment prevention effort in 2019/20. Subject to the availability of funding resources, the EOC aims to set up a dedicated unit to champion for the cause. Armed with legal professional and specially trained staff, the dedicated anti-sexual harassment unit will be tasked with:

- Conducting holistic review of the current legal protection regime against sexual harassment, identify the gaps and recommend legislative amendments where appropriate; and
- Providing a one-stop support platform to those affected by sexual harassment, including advice on provisions of the law, options of lodging complaints and seeking redress, referral to therapeutic and counselling services, and self-help resources, amongst others.

21. By offering free advice and the opportunity to be heard in a safe and confidential manner, the dedicated unit is designed to help those affected by sexual harassment explore the options available and support them to make an informed decision about the next step they would like to take. It is also hoped that the support would help improve the current trend of underreporting of sexual harassment, particularly those who have reservations about approaching their own organisations for advice and help.

22. Simultaneously, the EOC will continue its ongoing work of policy formulation and training, targeting the tertiary education, sports and religious sector in 2019/20, while following up with the Government and relevant stakeholders on possible reforms to the sex education curriculum. To follow up the recommendations in the report of the “Break the Silence: Territory-wide Study on Sexual Harassment of University Students in Hong Kong” and the discussion with university management on sexual harassment prevention, the EOC Chairperson met the Chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Convenor of the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) on 25 April 2019. HUCOM proposed the joint commissioning of the EOC by eight UGC-funded universities to conduct a follow-up survey in three to five years’ time, and the UGC responded positively to the funding of such commissioned research. The provision of training materials by the EOC for the eight universities and the establishment of an equal opportunities office in each university were also discussed at the meeting. The EOC would continue to follow up with UGC and HUCOM on the progress.

23. On sex education, the EOC and Lee Hysan Foundation co-organised a “Roundtable on Reforming Sexuality Education in Hong Kong” on 6 May 2019. About 40 stakeholders

from the education sector, including representatives from secondary and primary schools, school sponsoring bodies, universities, teachers' trade unions and NGOs promoting sexuality education in schools attended and participated in the discussion. The EOC would compile the opinions into a submission to the EDB, and follow up the ideas proposed by the Roundtable participants to enhance the implementation of sex education, as part of the EOC's efforts on prevention of sexual harassment in schools.

Removing the obstacles facing ethnic minorities

24. The EOC established a dedicated Ethnic Minorities Unit (EMU) in 2015 to tackle the barriers faced by ethnic minorities (EMs) in Hong Kong. Through a three-pronged approach of policy recommendations, training and outreach, the EMU has been identifying and recommending measures for addressing the challenges of EMs in the areas of education, employment and access to goods, services and facilities. In 2018/19, the EOC implemented the following initiatives:

Education Issues

- Made submissions to the Legislative Council and met the Education Bureau in 2018 to discuss existing policies and measures.
- Organised over 25 sharing sessions and interviews with stakeholders under the Working Group on Education for EMs to collate feedback on the measures. Major comments included: insufficient training for teachers in teaching Chinese as a second language, weak second language pedagogic elements, and absence of measurement indicators for the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework. The EMU is in the process of analysing the feedback with a view to issuing a report within 2019.

Employment Issues

- Worked with employers in both public and private sectors to extend employment to EMs e.g. supported the Hospital Authority to extend job recruitment to EMs.
- Engaged in ongoing discussion with the Employees Retraining Board and NGOs on developing training programmes for EMs to join the residential health care sector.
- Launched the Racial Diversity and Inclusion Charter for Employers, which contains a set of good practice guidelines for employers. As at early May 2019, 60 organisations have pledged their support to the Charter and to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace for employees.

Access to goods, services and facilities

- Secured Government funding for conducting the "Study on Potential Models for Accreditation and Recognition of Interpreters and Translators in EM Languages in Hong Kong", which aims to change the current situation of informal and non-standardised interpretation services in EM languages.
- Provided training to frontline staff of various Government departments, organisations and service providers on ways to address the cultural and language barriers of EM service users. Altogether 114 training sessions on the RDO and cultural diversity were conducted in 2018, with 69 for members of the mainstream community, such as Government officials, teachers and employers of local businesses, and 45 sessions for EM communities including foreign domestic workers.

25. In 2019/20, the EMU will continue the current three-pronged approach and undertake the following initiatives:

Education Issues

- Release a report on the stakeholders' feedback on the existing EM education policies and measures, particularly the Learning Framework and Chinese examination options, with recommendations to the Government;
- Develop an audio-visual kit and online training module for schools on prevention of racial discrimination and promotion of racial inclusion;
- Produce an Easy Guide on inclusive school policy; and
- Explore, and where appropriate, propose practical means and measures aiming at breaking the language barriers faced by the EMs, as well as enhancing racial inclusion between the EM and the mainstream community.

Employment Issues

- Continue to promote the Racial Diversity and Inclusion Charter in the business sector, organise roundtable sessions for sharing good practices, and seek collaboration with the Charter signatories in developing a human resource deployment strategy with built-in equal opportunity elements;
- Develop the Corporate Awards for Racial Diversity & Inclusion for giving recognition to employers that create a diverse and inclusive workforce/workplace environment; and
- Link up prospective major employers, such as Hospital Authority with NGOs, to open up job opportunities for EMs.

Access to goods, services and facilities

- Conduct training on the RDO and cultural sensitivity for service providers in both public and private sectors;
- Monitor the progress of the “Study on Potential Models for Accreditation and Recognition of Interpreters and Translators in EM Languages in Hong Kong”; and
- Follow up on case examples collected by NGOs on difficulties faced by EMs in accessing public services.

Addressing unemployment of people with disabilities

26. Also facing major hurdles in exercising their equal rights, especially to employment, are people with disabilities (PWDs). Notwithstanding the effort by the Government and other organisations to improve the situation in recent years, PWDs still face structural and attitudinal barriers that block their equal access to employment, as indicated in the complaint statistics and past researches:

- Complaints lodged under the DDO took up more than half – the largest share – of complaints under the four anti-discrimination ordinances. Of the disability-related complaints handled by the EOC, nearly 70% were related to employment.
- In an EOC-funded survey in 2014, the Unleash Foundation found that firms were reluctant to hire those with disabilities and over 60% of employers interviewed had no plans to do so within the next five years.

27. The EOC believes that more work needs to be done to increase the employment opportunities of PWDs through a holistic approach of data analysis and research and tailor-made measures targeting employers. Specifically, efforts should be made to debunk myths and misconception, and change the way many employers have come to view PWDs, by educating them about the needs and accommodation of PWDs, highlighting to them the tangible benefits of an equal, accessible work environment for all, and guiding them on steps of recruiting and retaining PWDs. The EOC's work will involve:

- Through a risk-based approach, conduct analysis of the discrimination issues of the major types of disabilities (i.e. loss of body parts and/or functions, visual, hearing and speech impairment, mental illness and intellectual disabilities), and identify the employment challenges associated with each type of disability, as well as the remedial measures. As mentioned above, the EOC will conduct two studies related to employment of PWDs in 2019/20, namely A Study on Effective Strategies to Facilitate School-to-Work Transition of Young Persons with Disabilities in Hong Kong and A Study on Perceptions of Stigmatisation and Discrimination of Persons with Mental Illness in the Workplace;
- Engage employer groups and enterprises to identify new career pathways and job opportunities for PWDs, and connect them with NGOs/disability groups running employment programmes;
- Equip employers on managing an equal and accessible work environment, by offering them advice on the legislative context of hiring PWDs, the accommodation of PWDs in the workplace, and resources on recruiting, hiring and retaining PWDs. Help them refine their hiring policies and methods in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities; and
- Collaborate with NGOs / disability groups on providing disability sensitivity training for staff of companies and enterprises.

Concerns for Family Status Discrimination Issues

28. Other than EMs and PWDs, the EOC will also act on removing the barriers faced by other marginalised and disadvantaged groups in society, such as women with family care responsibilities. According to findings of the EOC's "Study on Family Status Discrimination in the Workplace in Hong Kong" released in 2018, almost 8% of employees with family care responsibilities, most of them being less educated women, reported being discriminated against on the ground of family status in the past two years. To address this, the EOC will continue to monitor and study the trend. Further effort will be made to promote family-friendly employment policies in Hong Kong, with a view to ensuring an equal and discrimination-free workplace for employees.

STAFFING AND FINANCIAL SITUATION

29. The EOC's operation is primarily funded by the Government in the form of a lump sum allocation. For years, the EOC has adhered to the principles of prudent fiscal management and efficient use of resources. In the financial year up to 31 March 2019, the EOC's expenditure stood at \$117.1M, while the total income, including Government subventions and other income, was also \$117.1M. As at 1 May 2019, the EOC has 98 full-time staff, with 5 officers (including the Chairperson) at senior ranks comparable to Directorate Ranks in the HKSAR Civil Service. The new Chairperson is currently examining

the organisational structure of the EOC, and the Commission may make recommendations to the Government upon completion of the examination.

30. As mentioned in the last submission to this Panel (LC Paper No. CB(2)851/17-18(05)) in February 2018, following the relocation of its office, the EOC has restored its financial position to a healthy level. However, given the consistent uprising trend in rentals of commercial buildings in Hong Kong, the EOC is facing the perpetual risk of running into deficit in the not-too-distant future, as the rental of the current EOC office premise is expected to increase when its leasing contract is due for renewal in August 2020. It is hoped that the Government would give serious consideration on providing full compensation to the EOC on future rental increases, or even providing the EOC with a permanent office.

CONCLUSION

31. For almost 23 years of its operation, the EOC has continued to adapt and evolve amid the changing social, economic and political context of Hong Kong, paying heed to the views of stakeholders and expectations of the community, while upholding its transparency. Moving ahead, the EOC will continue to work closely with the Government, legislators and stakeholders in implementing the anti-discrimination ordinances, provide expertise on policies and practices relating to equal opportunities, identify the barriers that stand in the way of equality for many in society, and act as the driving force in the fight against inequality. Through regular reviews and consultation with stakeholders, the EOC will continue to look for ways of delivering its duties and functions even more efficiently and effectively.

Equal Opportunities Commission
May 2019

Number of Complaints Handled by the EOC in 2018

Ordinance	SDO	DDO	FSDO	RDO	Total
Employment field	321	378	41	18	758
Non-employment field	73	262	16	104	455
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>394</i>	<i>640</i>	<i>57</i>	<i>122</i>	<i>1,213</i>
Self-initiated investigations	9	37	2	10	58
Total	403	677	59	132	1,271

Number of Applications for Legal Assistance

Year	No. of Applications processed (including those brought forward from previous year)		Ordinances			
			SDO	DDO	FSDO	RDO
2016	<i>Given</i>	16	7	7	1	1
	<i>Not given</i>	20	8	10*	1	1
	<i>Under consideration</i>	2	0	2	0	0
	Total	38	15	19	2	2
2017	<i>Given</i>	26	11	14	0	1
	<i>Not given</i>	12	5	7	0	0
	<i>Under consideration</i>	9	5	4	0	0
	Total	47	21	25	0	1
2018	<i>Given</i>	32	19	13	0	0
	<i>Not given</i>	21	6	14	0	1
	<i>Withdrawn</i>	1	1	0	0	0
	<i>Under consideration</i>	9	3	5	1	0
	Total	63	29	32	1	1

*One application was not granted assistance during 2016, but upon the Applicant's request for review, the application was subsequently approved in 2017.