

香港特別行政區政府
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

運輸及房屋局
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來函檔號 Your Ref.

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18 May 2020

Mr Derek LO
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr LO,

**Request for Discussion on Relaxation to
Rent Assistance Scheme**

Regarding the letter from Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, Hon KWOK Wai-keung and Hon HO Kai-ming to the Legislative Council Panel on Housing dated 27 April 2020 requesting for discussion on relaxation to Rent Assistance Scheme (RAS), our reply is provided below.

2. Following the Government's payment of one month's rent for lower income tenants living in the Public Rental Housing (PRH) domestic units of HA in January 2020 and in view of the impact of the COVID-19 on the economy, the Government introduced a series of counter-cyclical measures which included, among others, paying another one month's rent for lower income tenants living in the PRH domestic units of HA and the Hong Kong Housing Society so as to ease their financial burden. The rent payment will be implemented soonest as the Legislation Council has just passed the Appropriation Bill on May 14.

3. As regards the RAS under HA, which aims at granting relief in the form of rent reduction to domestic tenants who are facing temporary financial hardship, eligible non-elderly households will be granted 25% or 50% rent reduction while eligible elderly households will be granted 50% rent reduction for a period of two years. According to the prevailing stipulation, applicants should provide income proof for confirming their eligibilities based on income computation of the average household income for the three months preceding the month of the application for rent assistance. However, for some special

hardship cases with drastic change of family circumstances (e.g. death of an income earner, sudden unemployment of the sole breadwinner, serious illness /disability / hospitalization of an income earner due to an accident, etc.) supported by relevant documentary proofs, discretion has been exercised to count only the current assessable income (i.e. the household income for the month of application) instead of the average household income for the past three months.

4. In addition, HA has been considering temporary relief measures, including the withholding of issuance of Notice-to-Quit to alleviate the difficulties of the rent defaulting households from May to October 2020, upon receiving their applications. For those tenants in need of comprehensive or long term financial assistance, they may apply to the Social Welfare Department for Comprehensive Social Security Allowance (CSSA). As at the end of March 2020, 112 400 tenants which were receiving CSSA were also receiving rent subsidies, accounting for 14.4% of the total domestic tenants of HA.

Yours sincerely,

(Original Signed)

(Ms Jenny YH CHAN)
for Secretary of Transport and Housing Bureau