

# 業務回顧

## Business Review

回應住屋需求  
Addressing Housing Needs

持續發展社區  
Building Sustainable Communities

促進和諧共融  
Fostering Care and Harmony

豐富生活姿采  
Enriching Daily Life

力求卓越服務  
Cultivating Quality Services

# 回應住屋需求

## Addressing Housing Needs

為使公營房屋計劃得以持續推行，我們的政策措施必須確保公營房屋資源得以善用和符合社會需要。

For the public housing programme to be sustainable, it is essential that our policies and practices not only make the best use of Hong Kong's public housing resources, they must also meet the needs of the community.





# Addressing Housing Needs

Our role at the Housing Authority (HA) is to develop and implement Hong Kong's public housing programme, providing adequate and affordable public rental housing (PRH) for those in genuine need. For the public housing programme to be sustainable, it is essential that our policies and practices not only make the best use of Hong Kong's public housing resources, they must also meet the needs of the community. At the same time, we seek to create an environment where our tenants can enjoy harmonious living in happy homes and caring communities.

## Public Housing for Hong Kong

PRH forms the mainstay of our activities with 28% of Hong Kong's population, some 1.9 million people, living in around 694 000 public housing units in 195 estates and courts. In order to maintain an adequate supply of PRH units to keep the average waiting time at around three years for general PRH applicants, we monitor demand closely, adjusting our production as necessary to meet our objectives. Under our current five-year construction programme, production between 2009/10 and 2013/14 is forecasted at a total of 74 000 new flats or an average of around 15 000 new units a year.

In 2008/09, around 25 000 flats were allocated to Waiting List (WL) applicants, with an average waiting time of 1.8 years for general applicants and 1.2 years for elderly one-person applicants.

## Rent Policy and Assistance

On 1 January 2008, we introduced a new rent adjustment mechanism for PRH. Replacing the statutory 10% median-rent-to-income ratio cap in adjusting rents, the new mechanism enables rent adjustments according to changes in tenants' household incomes.



*We make every effort to enable our tenants to enjoy harmonious living in happy homes and caring communities.*

Under the new rent adjustment mechanism, a review of PRH rents will be conducted every two years. The first review will take place in 2010. The rate of rent adjustment for PRH will be determined by the rate of change in the income index, subject to a ceiling of 10% for rent increases. This new rent policy, which seeks to match rents more closely to tenants' affordability, better meets our objective to provide PRH for those in genuine need, thus promoting the long-term sustainability of our PRH programme.

During the year, under the government's inflation mitigation measures to support the disadvantaged in Hong Kong, rent-paying families in PRH, except those who are paying additional rents, did not have to pay rent for three months from August to October 2008, with the



*Beautiful landscape helps create a pleasant surrounding.*



*Some 1.9 million people live in our public housing units. Picture shows the newly built Lam Tin Estate.*

government bearing these costs. In addition, all tenants were able to benefit from our arrangements to pass the government's rates concessions on to them for the entire 2008/09 year.

Our Rent Assistance Scheme (RAS) continues to help PRH tenants suffering from temporary financial hardships. Under the scheme, recipients are able to obtain a rent reduction of either 25% or 50%, depending on their circumstances. Introduced in 1992, the scheme has been reviewed from time to time and the eligibility criteria – income related requirements, residence requirements for new blocks and arrangements for removal to cheaper accommodation, for example – have been relaxed, making the scheme more readily available to tenants who need assistance. There were 11 960 families paying reduced rents under the RAS as at the end of March 2009.

### **Fostering Harmonious Families**

In 2007, in line with the government's policies to foster harmonious homes and strengthen ties within families in Hong Kong, we launched a series of housing schemes promoting harmonious families. These initiatives were designed to encourage family members to live either closer to, or with, their parents or elderly relatives to facilitate mutual care. In addition to providing better care and attention for the elderly and the disadvantaged, the schemes facilitate "ageing in the community" while also fostering a culture of care and mutual support within the neighbourhood.

On 1 January 2009, these initiatives received a further boost with the introduction of the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme, which replaced the two original priority schemes – the Families with Elderly Persons Priority

Scheme and the Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons. The new scheme makes it easier for WL applicants to live with and care for their elderly relatives. In addition to receiving a credit waiting time of six months, a qualified PRH applicant who chooses to live with at least one related elderly member under a single roof may opt for any WL district. At the same time, an applicant with a nuclear family and at least one related elderly member has the choice to live in two nearby flats in any non-urban WL district.



*Tenants are encouraged to live with or close to their parents for mutual care.*

Hand-in-hand with the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme, the Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme, which encourages young and elderly PRH families to move closer to each other for mutual help and support, was also enhanced. During the year, 1 000 flats were set aside for this scheme and the application period was extended from one month to two to allow more time for interested parties to submit their applications. Residence requirements in PRH for those wishing to move to more popular WL allocation districts were

shortened to seven years, and to just five years for families with children aged below six or an expected child with a gestation period of 16 weeks or more.

In 2008/09, some 2 400 sitting PRH tenants and around 1 790 WL applicants benefited from the above schemes and were housed.

### **Greater Transfer Opportunities**

Catering for the different requirements of tenants and recognising their changing needs, a number of transfer schemes were launched in 2008/09 to provide greater transfer opportunities for existing residents.

The major activity under this initiative consists of two Territory-wide Overcrowding Relief exercises, which provide relief for overcrowded families by moving them into larger homes. Under these exercises, 1 030 families were rehoused during the year, bringing the total number of overcrowded households down from 4 340 at the end of March 2008 to 3 730 at the end of March 2009. The latter figure, which represents less than 0.6% of total PRH households, reflects our on-going efforts to relieve the overcrowding situation in our estates.

Similarly, households living with an internal floor area of below seven square metres per person can apply through our Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme for a transfer to more spacious accommodation. Following an exercise launched during the year, 1 630 households were successfully rehoused.

Three regional transfers were also held during the year, enabling existing tenants to move to new flats within the same locality. A total of 1 620 families moved under this initiative while a further 4 600 households were rehoused under internal or special transfers for medical or social reasons.



*Outreach activities are held to promote the value of public housing.*

## Optimising Housing Resources

### Reducing Vacancy Rates

Our Express Flat Allocation Scheme (EFAS) aims to boost the acceptance rate of less popular flats. The 13th EFAS exercise was launched in July 2008, resulting in a total of some 2 110 families, including 50 families from the 12th EFAS exercise, being allocated flats by the end of March 2009.

We also offer incentives to applicants who are willing to move into flats that have been vacant for relatively long periods of time. Applicants moving into flats that have been vacant for 12 months or more but below 24 months enjoy a half rent period of eight months, while those moving into flats that have been vacant for 24 months or more enjoy a half rent period of 12 months. In 2008/09, 2 160 flats were let out under these arrangements, of which 1 210 flats were let through the EFAS.

### Combating Tenancy Abuse

In making the best use of our housing resources, we must ensure that these resources are used as efficiently, effectively and as fairly as possible. We therefore keep a close watch on suspected cases of tenancy abuse, carrying out investigations and in-depth enquiries where warranted.

The responsibility for this job falls on the Public Housing Resources Management Sub-section which conducted investigations into over 6 800 cases of suspected tenancy abuse during the year. The sub-section also checked the declaration records of another 5 700 cases or so to determine the tenants' eligibility for subsidised housing. Their efforts are supported by preventive measures taken by the District Tenancy Management Office – the biennial inspections of public housing flats, for example, together with their day-to-day management duties and tenancy knowledge. These joint efforts, together with the voluntary surrender of flats due to other reasons, resulted in the recovery of PRH units, which, combined with our new PRH production, helped achieve our target of keeping the average waiting time for PRH around three years.

In addition to these measures, publicity programmes and community outreach activities were organised to promote the value and benefits of public housing, reminding tenants to cherish their public housing resources.

### Tackling Rent Arrears

In view of our expanding rent collection networks, the rate of rental arrears fell from 3.5% to below 3% during the year. Making it easier for tenants to pay their rents and to pay them on time, Alternative Counter Collection Channels (ACCC) allow tenants to pay their rents at over 900 convenience stores and more than 50 Customer Service Centres at MTR Stations. Together with the direct transfer of rent allowances for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance households from the Social Welfare Department to the HA, as well as publicity programmes encouraging tenants to give ACCC a try, we have seen a steady and encouraging decrease in rent arrears.



*So Uk Estate will be redeveloped in phases.*

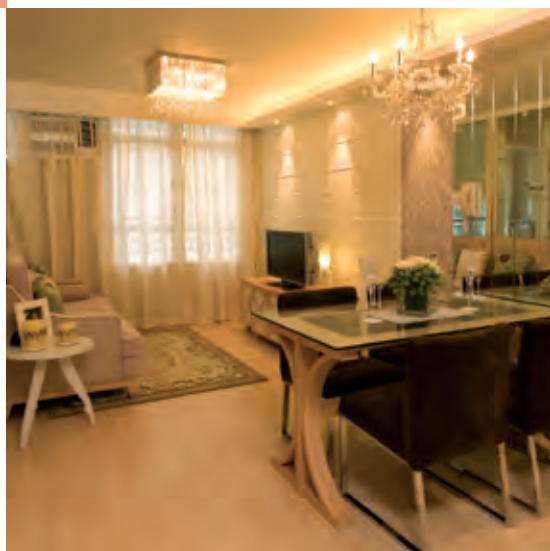
The previous rent enquiry hotline service has also been expanded with the establishment of internet services in December 2008. Tenants can now check their current rent status as well as their six-month rent payment history online. In addition, 100 Rent Enquiry Kiosks had been installed by the end of March 2009, enabling tenants to check their rents payable and, if required, to print a rent enquiry advice slip for payment.

### **Redevelopment and Clearance**

Enhancing the quality of life for residents in our older estates and making sure that they meet modern living standards, we carry out clearance and redevelopment activities when and where necessary. In 1988, a Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme (CRP) was launched to redevelop 566 old housing blocks. A total of 559 blocks have now been redeveloped and the

programme will come to an end with the clearance of the remaining seven blocks at Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate, consisting of 5 405 residential units.

With the conclusion of CRP, older estates are now evaluated under the Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme which was launched in 2005. This programme evaluates the structural safety, economic sustainability and quality of accommodation provided by our estates which are over or approaching 40 years old. Based on the results, a decision is then made on whether to demolish the building or to maintain its life for a further period of at least 15 years. As a result of the programme, the clearance of So Uk Estate will take place in two phases with Phase 1 scheduled to be completed in 2009, followed by Phase 2 in 2012. Some 3 600 families have been rehoused so far.



*Surplus HOS flats are being disposed of in an orderly manner.*

In July 2008, we also decided to clear Block 12 of Kwai Shing East Interim Housing which consists of some 820 flats housing around 600 people. This Interim Housing is due for clearance in early 2010. Arrangements for the clearance of Block 22 in Tung Tau (I) Estate, consisting of some 900 flats housing 1 400 people, were approved in March 2009 with clearance scheduled for completion in 2012.

We also offer rehousing arrangements for cleartees affected by clearances of squatters and illegal rooftop structures undertaken by the Lands Department and the Buildings Department respectively. During the year, a total of 420 rehousing applications, involving 120 applications from squatter and emergency clearances as well as 300 applications from clearance of illegal rooftop structures in private tenement buildings were processed.

## Disposal of Surplus HOS Flats

With the repositioning of the government's public housing policies in 2002, we ceased the production and sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats. With a stock of 16 700 HOS flats on hand, we commenced a programme to sell these surplus flats in an orderly manner from 2007 onwards.

The first three phases of this programme were very well-received with sale rates near 100%, resulting in a total of 9 325 flats being sold. The global economic crisis and the uncertain outlook in the local economy in the fourth quarter of 2008, however, took its tolls when the fourth sales exercise was launched in September 2008, and only 1 900 (about 60%) of the 3 221 flats offered for sale were sold by the end of the sale period. Having regard to the sale result of the fourth sales exercise and the market conditions, we have decided to put about 1 400 flats on sale under the fifth sales exercise in the fourth quarter of 2009. We will also be keeping a close watch on market conditions when formulating future sales plans for our residual stock. ■