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# 滿足未來住屋需求

Meeting Housing Needs into the Future



# Meeting Housing Needs into the Future



**Top:** We must address our tenants' aspirations for better living environments.

**Bottom:** There are about 130 000 public housing applicants on the Waiting List as at the end of March 2010.

In our efforts to maintain a sustainable public housing programme for Hong Kong, we must not only meet our customers' primary needs for accommodation, we must also address their aspirations for better living environments that will enable them to live in harmonious homes within caring communities. At the same time, we must optimise the resources available to us, ensuring that they are used efficiently, rationally and equitably in order to meet Hong Kong's housing needs into the future.

## Providing Housing for the Needy

Our role at the Housing Authority (HA) is to provide adequate and affordable public rental housing (PRH) to those in genuine need and to assist the government in keeping the average waiting time for PRH at around three years for general waiting list (WL) applicants (excluding non-elderly one-person applicants). It is also our target to maintain the average waiting time for elderly one-person applicants at around two years. To meet these targets, we have undertaken a production programme that delivers an average of around 15 000 new housing units annually over the next five years.

In 2009/10, we allocated 20 875 flats to applicants on the WL, with an average waiting time of around two years for general WL applicants (excluding non-elderly one-person applicants) and 1.1 years for elderly one-person applicants. Around two million people in Hong Kong currently live in about 703 600 rental units in 195 HA estates and courts.



Around 15 000 rental housing units are being built annually to meet the needs for public housing. Picture shows Tin Heng Estate in Tin Shui Wai.

### Rent Policies and Assistance Schemes

It has been a long-established policy of the HA to set the PRH rent at affordable levels. An income-based rent adjustment mechanism came into operation on 1 January 2008 to replace the previous statutory 10% median rent-to-income ratio cap. Providing for adjustments of rent according to changes in the household income of PRH tenants, the new mechanism thereby puts into place an objective basis to determine when, and the extent to which, PRH rent should be adjusted. This new mechanism,

which is flexible and able to better reflect tenants' affordability, will foster the long-term sustainability of our PRH programme.

Tenants who face temporary financial hardship can obtain relief from our Rent Assistance Scheme (RAS). Under the scheme, recipients enjoy either a 25% or 50% reduction in rents depending on their financial circumstances. In view of the economic downturn triggered by the global financial crisis, we have stepped up publicity to ensure that tenants are

aware of RAS. Information on the scheme has been broadcast on our Housing Channel and on radio, while also being supported by posters and leaflets. At the end of March 2010, around 11 740 families were receiving assistance under the scheme.

### Fostering Family Support and Harmonious Living

To cater for various needs arising from an ageing population, we have introduced the Harmonious Families Priority Scheme which provides eligible WL applicants with a six-month credit in waiting time to encourage young families to take care of their elderly relatives. Nuclear families with at least one elderly parent, or dependent elderly relative, can choose to live in two nearby flats in any non-urban WL districts to support and help each other. If the applicants decide to live with elderly parent(s) or dependent elderly relative(s) under one roof, they can opt for PRH flats in any WL districts.

Promoting the establishment of a family-based support network for existing PRH tenants, an annual quota of 1 000 flats was set aside under the enhanced Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme in 2009/10. With the application period for this exercise doubling to two months to allow sufficient time for prospective applicants to submit their applications, about 360 applications were received. Together with the exercise launched in 2008/09 (allocations of which took place in the current fiscal year), about 350 households benefited from this scheme in 2009/10.

The Harmonious Families Priority Scheme, together with other Harmonious Families Schemes for existing tenants, benefited a total of around 2 650 WL applicants and 2 300 PRH tenants in the year.



**Top:** Tenants facing temporary financial hardship can apply for rent assistance.  
**Bottom:** Our Harmonious Families Schemes encourage tenants to build a family-based support network.

### Enhanced Transfer Opportunities

In addition to the Harmonious Families Transfer Scheme, we offer a range of transfer opportunities to cater for the different needs of our tenants. These include the Internal Transfer, Special Transfer and Regional Transfer Schemes. The former two allow families on justified medical or social grounds to either make a transfer within the same estate or to another estate depending on their situation, while the latter makes it possible for sitting tenants to transfer to new flats in the same region. Some 4 530 households were rehoused under internal and special



**Left:** Overcrowded households can apply for transfer to more spacious flats.

**Right:** The Express Flat Allocation Scheme provides a fast track for eligible applicants to acquire a public rental housing flat.

transfers while 1 190 households benefited under the Regional Transfer exercises held in 2009/10.

One major objective of our transfer schemes is to improve living conditions for tenants crammed into overcrowded spaces. Under our Territory-wide Overcrowding Relief Scheme, two exercises were carried out during the year, enabling some 650 overcrowded households (including 10 from the last exercise launched in 2008/09) to move into larger homes. As a result, the total number of overcrowded households fell from 3 700 at the end of March 2009 to 3 300 at the end of the same month in 2010. This figure represents 0.48%, well within our pledge of below 0.6%, of total PRH households.

Under the Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme, families with less than seven square metres of internal floor area per person can apply for transfer to more spacious accommodation. During the year, 1 160 households benefited from this initiative.

### Optimising Housing Resources

We have to make the best use of Hong Kong's housing resources and maximise the usage of our housing resources. Taking a two-pronged approach, our efforts are directed at reducing vacancy rates while curbing tenant abuse of housing resources.

#### Reducing Vacancy Rates

Seeking to boost acceptance of less popular flats, an Express Flat Allocation Scheme (EFAS) exercise was launched during the year, providing a fast track

for WL applicants to acquire a PRH flat. In addition, rental incentives were offered to applicants who were willing to accept flats which have remained vacant for one year or more. An eight-month 50% rental reduction is offered for units that have not been let for between 12 and 24 months, while flats that have not been let for over 24 months carry a 50% rental reduction for 12 months. A total of 25 650 applications were received in the 14th EFAS exercise launched in July 2009. As a result, 1 460 families, including some 440 families from the 13th EFAS exercise launched in July 2008, were able to take advantage of this scheme during the year.

To ensure that flats do not sit vacant for too long between tenancy changes, letting activities are conducted while refurbishment work is being carried out. As soon as the flat is accepted by an applicant, we accelerate the unfinished work, if any, under the Acceleration-on-demand programme to allow the applicant to take over the flat in 14 days. With the implementation of this programme, the targeted average turnaround time for the refurbishment of selected vacant flats can be shortened from 46 days to 34 days, and public rental housing resources can be better utilised.

#### Combating Tenancy Abuse

To put our housing resources to the best and most equitable use, we focus our efforts on three main areas. In the first place, our frontline estate staff help prevent tenancy abuse through daily housing management and biennial flat inspections. Through

**Left:** Checking “view threads” on the web helps track potential tenancy abuse cases.

**Right:** The clearance of Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate marks the end of our Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme.



the biennial income and assets declaration under the Housing Subsidy Policy, the Policy on Safeguarding Rational Allocation of Public Housing Resources and other housing and tenancy management policies, which involve some 170 000 tenancies annually, better-off tenants no longer in need of public housing are required to either return their units to the HA or pay extra rents.

Secondly, our frontline staff help detect suspected cases in their daily duties and through flat visits. They also look into income and asset declarations to identify any anomalies. Any doubtful cases are then referred to our Public Housing Resources Management Sub-section (PHRM) who will carry out thorough investigations. High-risk cases are also selected at random for further in-depth investigation. In addition, a Web Patrol Team was formed in early 2009 to track potential abuse cases by checking “view threads” detected on the web. The PHRM completed some 12 500 in-depth investigations relating to occupancy, income and asset declarations in 2009/10.

Thirdly, we make every effort to promote awareness among PRH tenants, fostering not only an understanding of our activities, but also the need to cherish and value their PRH homes, as well as public housing at large. Regular publicity and promotional programmes are carried out to both enlist community involvement and drive the message home. During the year, road shows were held in 10 estates and a slogan competition was organised. A winning entry “Stop

Tenancy Abuse, Act for the Needy!” was eventually adopted as our new publicity slogan.

### Redevelopment and Clearance

The redevelopment and clearance of older estates form an essential part of our work, enabling us to make the best use of land resources and maintain the quality and value of our housing stock while at the same time providing improved living conditions for our tenants. To this end, we commenced a Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme (CRP) in 1988 to redevelop a total of 566 blocks. The clearance of the remaining blocks at Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate in January 2010 marked the end of this massive programme spanning over two decades.

With the completion of CRP in sight, the Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme (CSIP) was launched in 2005, under which estates that are around 40 years old are given a “health check” to ascertain their structural safety, economic viability and overall quality. Based on the findings, a decision is then taken whether to demolish the buildings or refurbish them and extend their use for a further period of at least 15 years.

Based on the investigation findings, we decided to clear So Uk Estate, Block 22 of Tung Tau Estate and Block 12 of the Interim Housing at Kwai Shing East Estate. The subsequent clearance of So Uk Estate is taking place in phases, with the first stage being completed in July 2009 and the second set for completion in April 2012. A total of 3 820 affected

families, consisting of around 9 900 people, were rehoused by the end of March 2010.

Rehousing arrangements for around 750 people in 290 families, affected by the clearance of Block 22 in Tung Tau Estate and Block 12 in the Interim Housing at Kwai Shing East Estate, were also made by the end of March 2010.

The HA also continues to offer rehousing arrangements for eligible people affected by the clearances of squatters and illegal rooftop structures undertaken by the Lands Department and Buildings Department respectively. In 2009/10, a total of 380 rehousing applications – 180 from squatter and emergency clearances and 200 from the clearance of illegal rooftop structures in private tenement buildings, were processed.

On 29 January 2010, a private tenement building, Block J at 45 Ma Tau Wai Road collapsed. Apart from arranging transit accommodation for residents living in the collapsed block, arrangements were also made for those who were made homeless, in view of the Building Department's temporary closure of Blocks E, F, G and H. Under this initiative, we processed 41 rehousing and compassionate rehousing applications, resulting in the rehousing of 25 families in PRH as at the end of March 2010.

### Disposal of Surplus HOS flats

With the cessation of our Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) in 2002, a carefully planned and phased sales programme has been carried out since 2007 to dispose of the 16 700 surplus HOS flats in stock. Five sale phases have been completed so far resulting in the sale of some 12 700 flats in total. In March 2010, the HA's Subsidised Housing Committee approved the sale of Phase 6 to take place in June 2010.



**Top:** Block 22 at Tung Tau Estate has been earmarked for clearance.

**Bottom:** Ballots were drawn for the Sale of Surplus HOS Flats Phase 5 in the end of 2009.