

**53<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Elderly Commission**  
**Press Summary**

The Elderly Commission (EC) held its 53rd meeting today (6 March 2008) with the following items on the agenda:

**(1) 2008-09 Budget**

- The Commission welcomed the new measures on supporting elders proposed in the Financial Secretary's 2008-09 Budget. They include:
  - an additional \$12.0 million to provide 160 day care places;
  - an additional \$29.8 million to provide 278 subsidised residential care places;
  - an additional \$19.3 million to provide 180 infirmary places in residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs);
  - an additional \$18 million for District Elderly Community Centres (DECCs) to strengthen their counseling and referral services and their processing of applications for subsidised long-term care services for the elderly; and
  - a one-off funding of \$200 million to help elderly people without family support to improve their homes in the next five years.
  
- Members considered the measures to increase day care places and strengthen counselling and referral services of DECCs in line with the Commission's commitment to promote and facilitate "ageing in the community".

- As far as residential care services were concerned, members were of the view that the provision of additional subsidised residential care places would benefit elders who could not be adequately taken care of at home. Also, providing infirmary places in RCHEs could enhance the quality of life of medically stable elders requiring infirm care.
- The Commission was glad to note that a one-off funding of \$200 million had been earmarked to implement a new scheme to improve the homes of elderly people. Under the scheme, elders would be provided with minor home maintenance and improvement services as well as the necessary fittings after an assessment on their financial situation and living environment. This initiative could enhance the quality of life of elders ageing in the community. The Commission noted that the Administration was planning the implementation details with a view to launching the new measure in the middle of this year.
- The Commission was pleased to note that the elders could benefit from receiving an additional month of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) standard rate, Disability Allowance or a one-off grant of \$3,000 for Old Age Allowance (OAA) recipients. Members also welcomed the in-year adjustment of CSSA standard payment rates which could help CSSA recipients tide over the relatively high inflation period.
- The Commission welcomed the Administration's effort to conduct in-depth studies on how best to improve the OAA, so as to come up with a sustainable and affordable option for the community.

- The Commission was also delighted that the Pilot Elder Learning Scheme had gained further support from the Government. To promote active ageing so that elders could enjoy fruitful lives through engaging in learning, a territory-wide school-based Pilot Elder Learning Scheme was launched by EC and the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB) in early 2007. 32 Elder Academies which were jointly operated by schools and partnering non-government organizations had commenced operation, providing 5 000 places this academic year. Elder Academies were prime icons of cross-sectoral and inter-generational collaborations to promote active ageing.
- At this stage, we would continue to liaise with the tertiary institutes with a view to extend the concept of Elder Academies to a higher level. Initially, we had obtained support from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Lingnan University, the Hong Kong Shue Yan University and the City University of Hong Kong for providing more than 700 places for elders to pursue their “studies” under the respective elder academy programme of various universities starting from 2008. EC and LWB would continue to encourage more primary, secondary schools and tertiary institutes to join this programme.

## **(2) Health Care Voucher Scheme for the Elderly**

- The Commission welcomed the Government’s plan to use the electronic voucher system, and distribute and allow elders to use health care vouchers

through the healthcare service providers. This arrangement would simplify the distribution and use of health care vouchers for bringing convenience to the elders. The elders would not have to pre-register or collect health care vouchers, nor would they need to bring health care vouchers every time they would like to use them. Instead, eligible elders would only have to present their identity cards to participating health care providers at their choice to use the health care vouchers, thus avoiding problems like losing and forgetting to bring the vouchers.

- The Commission hoped that the relevant healthcare professions would support the scheme and the operating arrangements with a view to bringing convenience to the elders.

**(3) Residential care services : Parameter of a further study by the Elderly Commission**

- Following up the recommendations of the Commission on Poverty (CoP) regarding the waitlisting situation of subsidised residential care services, the Commission has looked into the key issues to consider in residential care services and decided to conduct a further study on the subject. EC will explore the following aspects –
  - (a) how to target subsidised residential care services at elders most in need; and
  - (b) how to promote further development of quality self-financing/private residential care services and to encourage shared responsibilities among individuals, their families and the

society in meeting the long-term care needs of the elderly.

- The Commission noted that the Administration has an open mind on proposals relating to the delivery of long-term care services for the elderly. The Commission would share the research findings with the Administration when ready.

#### **(4) Active Ageing**

- Apart from the Pilot Elder Learning Scheme, the Commission also launched the Pilot Neighbourhood Active Ageing Project to strengthen intergenerational support and promote active ageing in the neighbourhood.
- Under the pilot project, non-governmental organisations would enter into partnership with residents' organisations, elder academies, religious groups, schools or the commercial sector to train up volunteers to organise activities for the elderly and pay visits to singleton elders on a regular basis to strengthen neighbourhood support. They could also help to identify hidden elders or elders-in-need for non-governmental organisations to follow up with district elderly community centres, neighbourhood elderly centres and social centres for the elderly.
- 15 individual projects had been approved which would be carried out in 15 areas across the territory, reaching out to every sector of the community, including private residential estates, public housing estates, old tenement

buildings and rural areas, and were expected to cover about 25,000 elders.

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