

The 72nd Meeting of the Elderly Commission
Press Release

Elderly Commission welcomes introduction of Old Age Living Allowance

At its meeting held this afternoon (October 18), the Elderly Commission was pleased to note that the Government could formally launch the Old Age Living Allowance in March 2013 at the earliest. The Commission also issued the following statement:

"All Members of the Elderly Commission who attended the meeting today unanimously resolved to request the Government to implement as soon as possible the Old Age Living Allowance for poverty alleviation, and agreed that there should be a mechanism for declaration of income and assets, adopting the corresponding limits of the existing Normal Old Age Allowance, in order to ensure that limited public resources could target helping elderly people in need. The Elderly Commission appealed to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council to approve the funding proposal as soon as possible, for the benefit of over 400 000 elderly people."

The Chairman of the Commission, Professor Alfred Chan, said, "Hong Kong's population is ageing rapidly. The number of elderly people aged 65 or above will surge from about 980 000 at present to 2.56 million in 2041, representing 30 per cent of the population at that time. It will put heavy pressure on our welfare and medical systems.

"Since the new allowance is for alleviating poverty, and that the commitment has to be financially viable, there must be a mechanism for the applicants to declare their income and assets, and the income and asset limits for the current Normal Old Age Allowance can be adopted, so that the Government can identify those in need. This will ensure that the Government can target resources to help them."

Professor Chan said further, "The public in general wish to see liberal and simple eligibility criteria for the new allowance and early implementation of this initiative, so that needy elderly people could benefit as soon as possible. The Commission was pleased to know that the Government had devised a set of simplified and convenient application procedures for different types of elderly people, and that the Social Welfare Department would start preparatory work once the legislature had approved the funding."

According to the Government, the payment rate of the Old Age Living Allowance will be adjusted annually according to the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices. The income and asset limits for the allowance will also be adjusted annually accordingly to the established mechanism. The Commission took note of this.

In the long run, the Commission hopes that the Task Force to study Hong Kong's social security and retirement protection systems, to be set up under the new Commission on Poverty and chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, would examine closely how the livelihood of our elderly people could be further improved.

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