

LCQ5: Caring and Sharing Scheme

Following is a question by the Hon Kwong Chun-yu and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

Applications for the Caring and Sharing Scheme, under which each eligible member of the public will be granted up to \$4,000, closed on April 30. Last month, the Government indicated that the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO), which is responsible for implementing the Scheme, had received about 3.44 million applications and issued to all applicants acknowledgements of their applications. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some members of the public have indicated that they have not yet received any acknowledgement, of the to-date number of members of the public who have indicated that they submitted an application but had yet to receive any acknowledgement;

(2) whether the WFAO has uncovered any case of missing application forms; if so, of the number of forms involved and the causes for that, as well as the remedial measures put in place; if not, why some applicants have not received any acknowledgement; and

(3) of the current average number of applications that the WFAO completes processing each day, and the expected date for completion of the processing of all the applications?

Reply:

President,

The Caring and Sharing Scheme, announced by the Government last year, is implemented by the Working Family Allowance Office (WFAO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. Upon receiving the applications, the WFAO will first enter the basic personal information of applicants for issuing an SMS to acknowledge receipt. The WFAO will then verify the applicants' information with relevant government departments, vet the applications against the eligibility criteria and disburse payments to successful applicants. As at June 25, the WFAO has given bank instructions to disburse payments or encash cash cheques for more than 617 000 successful applications.

My consolidated reply to various parts of the question is as follows:

The WFAO has received about 7 000 enquiries concerning applicants not receiving the acknowledgement. According to the computer system records, the

WFAO confirms that about 10% of the cases are related to non-receipt of applications. The WFAO will allow the applicants concerned to re-submit their applications.

The WFAO issues acknowledgements to applicants based on the information entered. Applicants who have yet received the acknowledgement after submission of application form may make enquires with the WFAO. For those applicants who have not received acknowledgements, we found that some may have been caused by the provision of incomplete mobile phone number or residential address in the application form and some may be attributable to inaccurate mobile phone number entered by the WFAO staff. When handling enquiries of those applicants who have not received any acknowledgement, the WFAO staff will verify all the relevant information with the applicants and make the necessary update to ensure that the applicants can be reached in future.

Currently, the WFAO give out bank instructions to disburse payments to about 28 000 successful applications on a daily basis. With the completion of certain parts of the workflow, which would enable more flexible deployment of manpower, and with the WFAO staff becoming more familiar with the workflow, the number of daily disbursements made will rise gradually. With re-arranged workflow, the latest aim of the WFAO is to complete the processing of all applications by late September this year.

Thank you President.