

Public housing residents convicted by court for false statement

A spokesman for the Housing Department (HD) today (June 10) reminded residents of public rental housing (PRH) estates to declare truthfully their income and assets.

Two PRH residents living at a PRH flat at Oi Man Estate in Ho Man Tin declared on a 2018 Income and Asset Declaration Form to have no domestic property ownership in Hong Kong and that their total household net asset value did not exceed 100 times the prevailing PRH Income Limit (the asset limit for that household was \$2,240,000). Subsequent investigation revealed that the two residents individually owned 50 per cent ownership of a domestic property in Hong Kong at the time and the estimated total household net asset value was about \$6,750,000. Both residents were prosecuted by the HD for making a false statement knowingly, contrary to Section 26(1)(a) of the Housing Ordinance. Both defendants were convicted by the presiding magistrate in Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts this afternoon and were fined \$40,000 and \$30,000 respectively. Furthermore, the public rental housing unit concerned had already been recovered by the HD in January this year.

The spokesman said that households living in PRH should complete their income and asset declaration forms accurately, which forms the foundation for the assessment of rent and their eligibility for continuing residence. Before making the declarations, households should read the content and completion guidelines of the income and asset declaration form carefully and compute their income and assets in accordance with the methods specified. Otherwise, they may be prosecuted for making a false statement knowingly, contrary to Section 26(1)(a) of the Housing Ordinance (if convicted, the maximum penalty is a \$50,000 fine and imprisonment for six months) or being prosecuted for neglecting to furnish information as specified in a declaration form, contrary to Section 27(a) of the Housing Ordinance (if convicted, the maximum penalty is a \$25,000 fine and imprisonment for three months).

Notwithstanding the above, the HD will take action to recover the undercharged rent incurred due to the inaccurate information. According to the revised "Well-off Tenants Policies" endorsed in December 2016, PRH households with domestic property ownership in Hong Kong or their total household net asset value exceeding 100 times the prevailing PRH Income Limit, irrespective of their levels of household income, will be required to vacate their PRH flats.