

Public housing tenant convicted by court for false statement

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

A PRH resident living at Kwai Chung Estate declared on a 2018 Income and Asset Declaration Form to have no domestic property ownership in Hong Kong and that the 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 unveiled that the resident individually held 50 per cent ownership of a domestic property in Hong Kong at the material time. Together with the bank savings, investment and company assets, the estimated total household net asset value was about \$9,470,000. The resident was prosecuted by the HD for making a false statement knowingly, contrary to Section 26(1)(a) of the Housing Ordinance.

The defendant was convicted in West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts this morning (October 3) and was fined \$50,000 in total for two offences. Furthermore, a Notice-to-quit had already been issued by the HD against defendant's family with a view to recovering the public rental housing unit concerned.

The spokesman said that households living in PRH should accurately complete the income and asset declaration forms, which are used for laying the foundation for the assessment of rent and their eligibility for continuing residence. Before making the declarations, households should read the contents 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.