

Raising social security payments and adjusting eligible age for elderly CSSA from 60 to 65 from February

The Government announced today (January 7) that the standard payment rates under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the rates of Old Age Allowance (OAA) (including those payable under the Guangdong Scheme and the Fujian Scheme), Old Age Living Allowance (OALA) and Disability Allowance (DA) under the Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme will be increased from February 1 this year. In addition, the eligible age for elderly CSSA will be adjusted from 60 to 65.

A spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said, "Based on the established adjustment mechanism, i.e. according to the movement of the Social Security Assistance Index of Prices, the Government earlier made a proposal to increase by 2.8 per cent the standard payment rates under the CSSA Scheme and the rates of OAA, OALA and DA under the SSA Scheme (see Annex I). The proposal was subsequently approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council and will take effect on February 1.

"An additional expenditure of \$1.253 billion per year will be incurred for the adjustment, benefiting some 1.26 million recipients of the two Schemes."

The spokesman added, "According to the established mechanism, the maximum rent allowance under the CSSA Scheme will also be adjusted upwards by 2.7 per cent on the same day (see Annex II) based on the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A) rent index for private housing."

In addition, in view of the improved life expectancy of the population of Hong Kong and the trend of extending the retirement age to 65, the Government announced in January 2017 that the eligible age for elderly CSSA would be raised from 60 to 65. Upon the adjustment of the computer system and completion of preparatory work, the Government will implement the arrangement on February 1 this year.

The spokesman said, "Persons aged between 60 and 64 who have received elderly CSSA before February 1 this year will be grandfathered and not be affected. The CSSA payments of persons with disabilities or persons in ill health will not be affected either. They will, regardless of age, continue to receive CSSA payments which are higher than those applicable to able-bodied adults."

According to the data released by the Census and Statistics Department, the labour force participation rate of persons aged 60 to 64 in Hong Kong has climbed continuously since 2004. The Government is committed to providing support to the employment of mature persons and its effort includes staging large-scale thematic job fairs and district-based job fairs on part-time

employment. The Labour Department has also enhanced the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged which has become the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged to encourage employers to hire mature persons through the on-the-job training allowance. Furthermore, the Employees Retraining Board has been providing suitable courses for mature persons. Mature persons can also make use of the Continuing Education Fund for learning.

CSSA and SSA recipients who have enquiries may contact their respective social security field units or call the SWD hotline at 2343 2255.