

Transcript of remarks by CE at media session before ExCo meeting

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting this morning (January 15):

Reporter: Mrs Lam, would you take back the statement that angered and offended so many lawmakers, or apologise for it though? Second question, pan-democratic lawmakers are saying that they will vote down the next Budget if the Government doesn't withdraw the plan, and they are asking pro-government lawmakers to also join them. What do you make of that – is that holding the next Budget hostage? And on the second topic about Andy Chan's hearing, does yesterday's hearing already count as him having argued his case simply because he didn't answer any question because his lawyers aren't present and do you think, just why can't the hearing be, well, postponed or rescheduled?

Chief Executive: On the last question first, I could not comment because it is an appeal case to be handled by the Executive Council, and thereafter, as the Chairman of the Executive Council, I will need to deal with this appeal case, so it is inappropriate for me to comment on the processing of this appeal case.

On the first two questions, I have already explained that on the two occasions that I spoke on the subject of the age definition of elderly CSSA recipients, I was merely responding to questions in a factual, and in my sort of straight talk style. So, in the Legislative Council when one member urged me to withdraw the proposal, my response was to explain to her that it was no longer a proposal, it was something that has been approved in the context of the 2018-19 Estimates. If individual members felt uncomfortable with that sort of straight talk then I will be more diplomatic in future. But I still need to talk about the facts because nobody could change the facts. On this sort of linkage between the CSSA age limit with the next Budget – if I heard you correct, you were talking about the next Budget, that is the 2019-20 Budget of the Financial Secretary – if you ask me, of course, I said it is totally unreasonable because members of the Legislative Council have yet to see the content of the next Budget. I have not seen the content of the next Budget. So, to suggest that because of unhappiness over one policy issue, or maybe other policy issues in time to come, that they should now in advance say that they are not going to approve the next Budget, I don't think this is a very responsible way of dealing with Legislative Council business. At the end of the day, the community will be hurt if there isn't a Budget to support the various activities and services of the government departments.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)