

**Minutes of the
Social Welfare Advisory Committee (SWAC) Meeting
held on 20 January 2003 (Monday)**

Present

Mr Wilfred Wong Ying-wai (Chairman)

Ms Vivien Chan

Mr Darwin Chen

Mrs Cheung Ang Siew-mei

Mr Chow Chun-kay, Stephen

Miss Christine Fang Meng-sang

Mr Keith Lam Hon-keung

Mr Wilfred Lee Chee-wah

Mrs Mary Leung Ling Tien-wei

Professor Diana Mak Ping-see

Mr Poon Huen-wai

Mr Wan Chi-keung

Miss Deborah Wan Lai-yau

Mr Stephen Yau How-boa

Miss Katharine Choi (Secretary)

In Attendance

Rehabilitation Advisory Committee

Dr Raymond Wu Wai-yung

Mrs Doris Ho Ko Suet-yiu

Mr Yeung Ka-sing

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau (HWFB)

Dr E K Yeoh	Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mrs Carrie Yau	Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food
Mr Robin Gill	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)

Miss Diane Wong	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Welfare)
Mr Stephen Pang	Commissioner for Rehabilitation
Mr Tommy Lai	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Rehabilitation)

Social Welfare Department (SWD)

Mrs Carrie Lam	Director of Social Welfare
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(For item 2)

Mr Patrick Nip	Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services)
Mrs Brenda Fung	Principal Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services) ²
Mr Paul Wong	Assistant Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (Elderly Services) ⁴
Mrs Rachel Cartland	Assistant Director of Social Welfare (Social Security)

(1) 2003 Policy Address: Briefing on Initiatives related to Social Welfare

Members noted the section entitled “Caring and Just Society” in the Policy Agenda, together with the paper prepared by HWFB, which set out how the Bureau intended to achieve its social welfare policy objectives.

2. Regarding welfare policies, Members suggested that more emphasis should be placed on welfare planning at the district level; strategic planning should be part of the overall welfare planning

mechanism; the SWAC should have a role to play in the welfare planning mechanism; and any directional changes in welfare planning should be accompanied by corresponding mindset changes within the welfare sector.

3. The meeting concluded that future welfare planning exercises would be significantly different, with more emphasis put on enhancing resource efficiency, reprioritization of services, exploration of alternative sources of support, as well as collaboration with the private sector etc.

(2) An update on the CSSA Scheme and measures to help able-bodied CSSA recipients achieve self-reliance (SWAC Paper No. 01/03)

4. Members were briefed on the latest position of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) system, its functioning as a social security system, as well as the initiatives to assist the able-bodied recipients to achieve self-reliance.

5. Members made the following comments:

(a) there were concerns about the financial sustainability of the current CSSA system, and also the across-the-board application of comprehensive assistance to all CSSA recipients, which might not be in line with its originally intended principle, i.e. to address the basic and essential needs of the disadvantaged. There were also other views that the current rate was relatively high when compared with the income of the lowest-income groups. It was suggested that the current mechanism for working out the level of CSSA rates should be reviewed;

(b) there were views that the Government should give special consideration to those who were genuinely in need. It was suggested that the needs and background of different recipient groups (e.g. the elders, people with disabilities, the unemployed) should be clearly identified and differentiated, and appropriate assistance and treatment should be given to meet their needs;

(c) it was agreed that the CSSA recipients should be made aware of their responsibility to reciprocate and the culture of self-reliance

should be promoted throughout the society. It was also agreed that the CSSA system should provide more incentives for recipients to re-enter the labour market;

(d) there were suggestions that the Government should review the CSSA arrangements for new arrivals (e.g. the one-year residence requirement), and ensure that they did not encourage reliance on CSSA.

6. The meeting concluded that there was a need to re-assess whether the present CSSA system could cater for the present-day situation, whether different treatments should be applied to different groups with different needs, and how changes to the system could be introduced to minimize the impact on recipients.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

January 2003