

主旨: Views on Population policy by Hiukwong Group  
附件: Hiu Kwong - Response to population consultation 2014 (Final).pdf

Dear Secretariat of Steering Committee on Population policy,

On behalf of Hiukwong Group, we would hereby like to submit our suggestions in the attached document on population policy for the government's conscientious consideration.

We hope that our views would contribute to a better environment for elderly, and especially in Residential Home for the Elderly, in Hong Kong in the short coming future.

Best regards

**Alastair Chan (Ali)**  
Project Officer

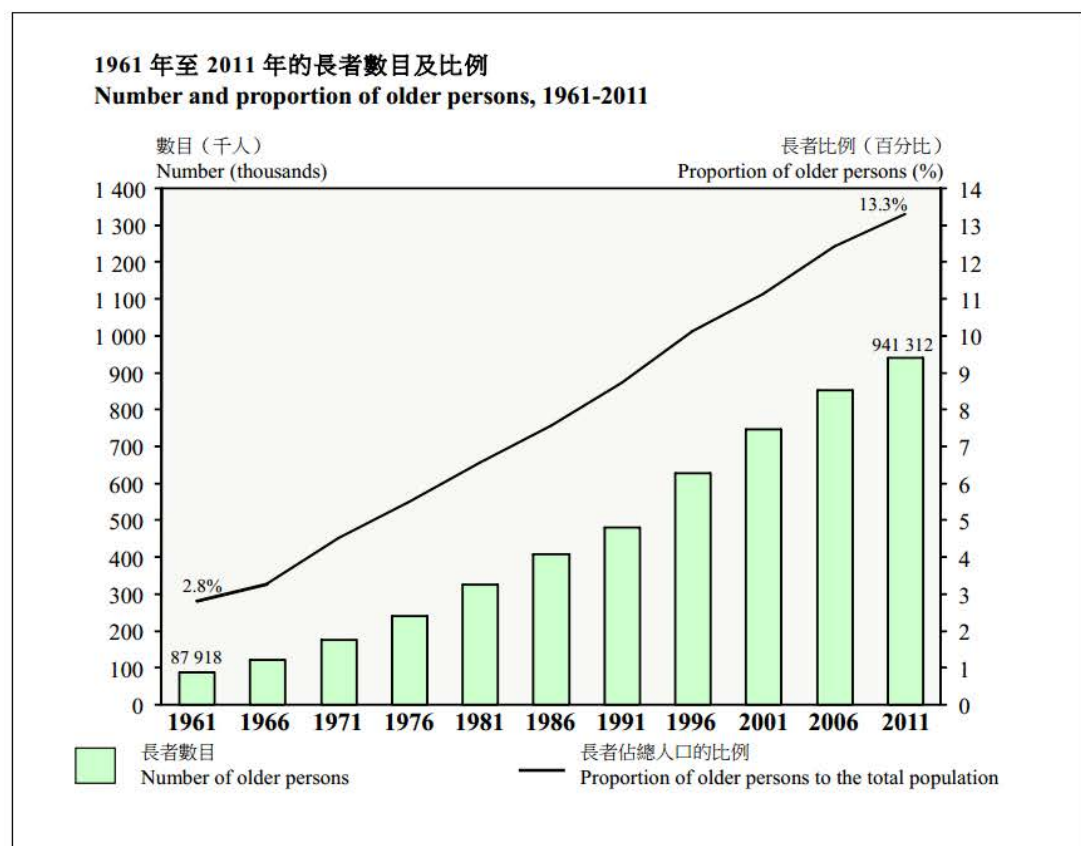
**2014**

HIUKWONG GROUP  
HENRY W.H. SHIE

**RESPONSE TO PUBLIC  
ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE  
ON POPULATION POLICY**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. At present, one in eight people in Hong Kong are aged 65 or above. Our elderly population is also rapidly growing and aging (Fig.1) as people are able to live longer and older, with an average life expectancy of 80 and 86 respectively for Men and Women. By 2050, WHO has forecasted Hong Kong to have the fifth largest elderly (65 or above) population in the world, amounting to 40% of its total population.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2. Amongst the older population, the number of people who are no longer able live independently is forecast to quadruple by 2050<sup>2</sup>, implying that the demand for elderly services such as long term care will dramatically increase in the short coming future. In contrary, projections indicate that we will begin to see the first decline of labour market. Therefore, we urge the government to put more support and planning on nurturing more labours in this industry as there are capacity and needs for more labours from youth and unemployed in order to sustain a reasonable quality of services.



**Figure 1.** Number and proportion of Older persons from 1961 – 2011

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation; Global Health and Aging Report 2011

## **2. LABOUR SHORTAGE IN RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME FOR THE ELDERLY**

- 2.1. Each individual sector has its own distinct characteristics of labours reflecting different needs and solution to problems. The elderly Long Term Care (LTC) services are now faced with a serious problem of aging of the workers and low labour participation rate, which consequentially affecting their ability to provide quality, affordable services. As the number of labour supply decreases<sup>1</sup>, the average entry age and average age of Personal Care Workers (PCW) is now 49 and 54 respectively.
- 2.2. Understandably, the elderly Long Term Care (LTC) services has always been perceived as bearing the label of “labour-intensive” in nature (Wilber, Schneider and Thorstenson, 1997) as some of the task involves hygiene and personal care, the industry may appear to some local workers as somewhat off-putting. It has always been very difficult in terms of recruitment, especially fundamental workers such as personal care workers, albeit RCHEs are willing to pay a significantly higher wage than statutory minimum wage.
- 2.3. As revealed by a report from Sau Po Centre of Aging, even homes under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme (EBPS) have expressed great difficulties in hiring workers especially care worker (CW), enrolled nurse (EN), and registered nurse (RN). The report revealed that more than half of the homes took more than 2 months to hire a new care worker, and more than one sixth of homes took more than a year to hire CW, EN, and RN.
- 2.4. Thus, it is recommended that government should implement measures, such as relaxing the current requirement of Supplementary Labour Scheme, and training schemes for the youth to encourage more labour participation in this sector, so as RCHE are provided with adequate labour force in order to be better prepare for an aging and rapidly expanding elderly population.

### **3. IMPORT LABOUR**

#### **3A) Hong kong's capacity for foreign labour**

3.1. Just as illustrated in the recent public engagement exercise on population policy consultation paper, overall, there has only been 2,415 imported workers in Hong Kong as at the end of 2012 (comprising 0.1% of total labour force), yet there are 77,900 unfulfilled vacancies in the private sectors, where manpower shortage was particularly obvious in human health services, residential services social work services, and others.

3.2. Thus, we agreed with Chief Secretary's view that: without undermining the interest of our existing local labour, without doubt, Hong Kong's capacity for foreign workers is apparent, especially when contrasting with Singapore (28% of total labour force) and Macao (comprising of 26% of the total labour force).

#### **3B) Benefits for local worker**

3.3. One of the concerns expressed in the Public Engagement Exercise on population policy is whether import labour will undermine local workers' opportunity. Here we argue that bringing in labours from abroad can actually bring more benefit to the local workers. It has been demonstrated in countries such as Singapore, that foreign labour has the capacity to fill in jobs that are less favourable by local workers, while creating the opportunity for local workers to be promoted to a supervisory role.

3.4. Since a majority of workers imported via Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) has been recruited by residential home, we believe that the industry could be encouraged to create new semi-supervisory position which help local workers, and also provide them with assistance by possibly younger imported labour.

3.5. In addition, an in-house survey was conducted in November 2013 with local Personal Care Workers, with result showing 70% of staff like the idea of semi-supervisory role responsibly for import labours as their assistance, 6% of staff doesn't, and remaining 13% chose not to respond to the survey.

#### **3C) Reviewing the stringency of Supplementary Labour Scheme**

3.6. To alleviate the immediate needs of filling vacancies less desirable by the local workers, government should consider easing the existing strict regulations under SLS on hiring import workers, and encouraging elderly businesses to create more supervisory roles for local workers to enable the idea of "import workers acting as buffer, career opportunities for local workers".

#### **4. YCNSE AND ITS IMPLICATION ON RCHE**

- 4.1. The Youth Career Navigation Scheme for Elderly Services (YCNSE) was introduced and piloted since 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2013. The scheme was designed to provide a career ladder opportunity to youth (17 – 24 years old) from F5 or above via on-the-job training and further education. The on-the-job training in RCHE has been very helpful in replenishing the lack of labours in the role of personal care workers.
- 4.2. With many thanks to the YCNSE idea, so far, we have received numerous positive feedbacks from service users, their family members, and from home managers and staffs. This was reflected in a in-house survey and students' evaluation conducted in Hiukwong group during September to October showing: 80% of 30 students have received an overall score of above 5 out of 6 rated by their mentor; In a separate in-house focus group conducted on 15<sup>th</sup> of November, all staff have expressed that students from YCNSE has been very helpful, and that they have acquired more time to spend with elderly and to be able to have extra hands to improve the care quality, including the hygiene of the environment.
- 4.3. On the face of it, observations seem to indicate that YCNSE in the long run may be a possible solution for providing on-going replacements of younger labour at the level of personal care worker. Nonetheless, since the pilot YCNSE scheme is only opened to 100 places at the moment. The scheme is yet to demonstrate in later phases its popularity amongst the youth at large, and whether it can maintain a reasonable stability of student admission every year to meet the high market demand.
- 4.4. As of November 2013, 60 student was admitted to the scheme out of 100 places, with a turnover of 10% (6 person dropped out of 60). Therefore, preliminary statistics seem to raise the point that as much as the scheme may potentially help easing labour shortage in the future, there is still a need to mitigate the huge differences between supply and demands of worker via import labour in the short to medium term.
- 4.5. It is our believe that local workers, import labour and YNCSE can co-exist to not only raising sufficient labour to take care of the elderly, but also aiding the industry with enough manpower to raise the overall standard of services, so that Hong Kong would become a more elderly friendly place, and ultimately a more competitive place to live in.

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