

Address by the Governor;
Sir Edward Youde, GCMG , MBE ,
at the opening of the 1984/85
Session of the Legislative
Council on 4 October 1984
(extract on Housing)

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(6) SOCIAL PROGRAMME AREAS

68. Hong Kong has made solid progress in recent years in improving social service.

/ (a) Housing ...

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(i) Production

69. Nowhere is the Governments' investment in the future more visible than in the field of housing. Over 2.4 million people, or about 45% of the population live in permanent public housing of various types. This year, for the fifth year in succession, the Housing Authority will exceed its annual construction target of 35,000 flats. Next year, the addition of 5,000 flats for sale under the Private Sector Participation Scheme will allow us to boost public sector production, including that of the Hong Kong Housing Society, to over 40, 000 flats annually.

70. The recent depression in the property market has led to a disappointing performance by the private sector, with only 20,000 completions expected this calendar year. There are, however, some promising signs, particularly in the market for small residential flats, and production is expected to rise to about 27,000 units in 1985. At present, some 2.5 million people live in private sector accommodation. Half of them are owner-occupiers, reflecting the growing and very encouraging trend in home ownership.

71. As I promised last year, the redevelopment of the old Mark I and II Resettlement blocks has been accelerated. By the early 1990's, the Kowloon Central Estates, which presently house no less than 105,000 people, will be improved to standards more in keeping with the present times.

(ii) Review of Housing Allocation Policies

72. Higher production figures have permitted the Housing Authority to review its allocation policies. This
/involved ...

involved widespread public consultation, including discussions with all District Boards and many interest groups. The Executive Council has now approved many of the recommendations by the Housing Authority. These include allowing single persons to apply for specially designed units in rental housing, with priority given to occupants of Temporary Housing Areas; allowing two-person families to apply for both rental and Home Ownership Scheme flats; and the provision of additional non-financial incentives aimed at encouraging existing Housing Authority tenants to apply for Home Ownership Scheme Flats. I feel sure that these new initiatives will be welcomed by all.

(iii) Squatter Areas

73. Higher levels of housing production have also enabled us to rethink our squatter clearance plans. It is now possible to see the way ahead to the rehousing of all squatters in urban areas, including boat squatters and others on land not earmarked for development. I am conscious of the perils inherent in such predictions, but, provided we can maintain production and provided immigration remains low, the main urban squatter sites should be cleared by the early 1990's.