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## 15 years to ease estate cram

The Government will need 15 years, based on the current relief rate, to deal with overcrowding in public housing estates, said the Secretary for Housing, Mr David Ford.

However, Mr Ford said the situation has been improving over the years.

He was replying to Mr Chan Ying-lun.

When the Housing Authority came into existence in 1973, there were 77,000 families occupying space less than 2.23 sq metres per person, and 109,000 families occupying space between 2.23 sq m and 23.24 sq m.

Over the years, the number of families in the first category showed a drop of 85 per cent (to 11,000 families); and for the second category there was a 43 per cent drop to 62,000 families — but still

an unsatisfactory situation, according to Mr Ford.

If we were to continue with our present policies, we would take some 15 years to deal with the problem based on the present pace of relief of overcrowding, he said.

But, he said, the situation was improving because officials had encouraged more people to take up home ownership.

"Since the home ownership scheme came into being, some 23,000 families have bought their own homes.

"This is helping considerably the overcrowding situation. We expect this trend to continue and hopefully increase," he said.

Mr Ford said the main reason for imposing a space of 2.23 sq metres per person was to make the best use of limited housing resources for



Mr Ford

the most deserving cases rather than tightening the eligibility criteria.

He explained that the most deserving cases were overcrowded families who could not buy home ownership flats.

Mr Ford said the demand and supply situation in public housing had not been affected by the revised space eligibility criterion.

The number of families transferred for overcrowding relief purposes in the six years up to 1984-85 was 4,100, 3,600, 4,500, 6,200, 4,800 and 5,000 respectively.

"These figures suggest that the transfer pattern has not changed substantially over

this period and nor do I expect it to do so in the future," he said.

As for those overcrowded families not eligible for relief, Mr Ford said they could improve their space situation in various ways.

He said it could be achieved by buying HOS flats with the green form or applying for larger flats through the waiting list in which case the waiting list eligibility criteria would apply.

"Overcrowded families may be provided with larger flats on compassionate grounds," he said.

Under the present policy on overcrowding relief, Mr Ford said such relief would be provided to families living in conditions of less than 2.23 sq metres per person.

In order to qualify for overcrowding relief, household income must be below \$7,500 per month and tenants should not possess domestic property.

Overcrowding relief may also be provided when tenants are rehoused for management reasons including redevelopment, improvement or conversion, or when there is a need to create small flats for single and two-person households.