



**EAA reviews its work in 2014 and  
introduces its initiatives for 2015**

(28 January 2015) The Estate Agents Authority (EAA) held a press conference today at which EAA Chairman, Mr William Leung Wing-cheung, BBS, JP, and Chief Executive Officer, Ms Ruby Hon, reviewed the EAA's work in 2014 and introduced the key initiatives for 2015.

Mr William Leung pointed out that the property market in Hong Kong was dominated by the market price and the sale of first-hand residential properties in 2014. The EAA is very concerned about the conduct of estate agents in promoting first-hand residential properties and issued relevant practice circulars in the past for the trade to comply with. The EAA received 56 complaint cases about the sale of first-hand residential properties last year, representing a rise of 27% as against 44 cases in 2013. Most cases were about failure to honour the promise of a rebate, providing misleading information on a mortgage loan and making loans to prospective purchasers.

During the year, the EAA conducted 1,141 checks at 75 first sale sites and discovered 12 suspected non-compliant cases, which is a sharp increase from the three cases in 2013. He emphasised that the EAA is very concerned about estate agents reportedly making loans to prospective purchasers when promoting first-hand residential properties, which constituted a breach of the EAA's guidelines.

Mr Leung said, "The EAA is concerned about the conduct of estate agents when promoting first-hand residential properties. We will continue to liaise closely with the Sales of First-hand Residential Properties Authority and take appropriate measures to ensure the trade's compliance."



The EAA conducted 1,676 visits to estate agency shops last year, which was more than the year before, in a bid to enhance the trade's vigilance to compliance. The EAA also screened online property advertisements 610 times, which was similar to 2013.

As regards the EAA's other work, the overall number of candidates participating in the qualifying examinations showed a continuous downward trend for the fourth consecutive year, representing a year-on-year decrease of about 19%, while the number of licensees maintained at a stable level of about 35,000 throughout last year.

Stepping into 2015, Mr Leung said that the EAA will reinforce its effort on monitoring estate agents in the sale of first-hand residential properties. As well as strengthening compliance checks at first sale sites, the EAA will work on different aspects to ensure the order and conduct of estate agents in first sales are compliant with the guidelines. Moreover, the EAA will organise seminars on first-hand sales under the Continuing Professional Development scheme, to familiarise the frontline practitioners and small-to-medium sized estate agency companies with the EAA's guidelines on the subject. At the same time, the EAA is currently studying on requiring licensees who are involved in the sales of first-hand residential properties and who at the same time submit registration of intent for purchasing such properties themselves, to make a declaration. Details are pending for discussion at the EAA's Practice and Examination Committee and with the trade before any conclusion could be reached.

According to the EAA Chief Executive Officer, Ms Ruby Hon, on the education work, the EAA will optimise the e-learning platform to allow more flexibility for licensees in continuous learning. New consumer videos will also be launched soon on the EAA website and broadcast on buses.



Ms Hon also mentioned that the EAA will study on whether there is a need to raise the level of difficulty of the qualifying examinations to enhance the entry standard of the profession. The EAA will also review the effectiveness of the New Scheme for Disciplinary Cases which took effect last year, to see whether more breaches other than the existing eight specified ones should be covered by the Scheme.

Also, under the existing framework of the Estate Agents Ordinance, the EAA will review the level of sanctions and their effectiveness by studying the common breaches and sanctions of inquiry hearings, and will propose heavier sanctions on serious breaches to the Disciplinary Committee, if necessary.

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