

Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies

Minutes of Meeting No. 10

Date: 5 January 2004 (Monday)

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room, 48/F, Immigration Tower, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Members Present

Mr. FANG Hung, Kenneth

Mr. KO Chan Gock, William

Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister

Dr. CHEUNG Yun Hing, Richard

Prof. HO Kin Chung

Prof. LAM Kin Che

Mr. WONG Kwok Keung

Mr. WU Sai Him, Hugh

Mr. CHEUNG Yan Hong

Ms. CHOW Kit Bing, Jennifer

Ms. CHUI Pui Man, Wendy

Dr. LAM Ching Choi

Mr. LAW Wei Tak, Victor

Prof. TSO Wung Wai

Mr. WAI Chi Sing

Dr. CHIU Tak Lun, Michael

Ms. LO Yuet Yee, Rhonda

Dr. TSE Lai Yin

Mr. WONG Bay

Mr. LAU Chi Ming, Stephen

Chairman

Vice-Chairman, Director of Water Supplies

The Conservancy Association

City University of Hong Kong

Open University of Hong Kong

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong Plumbing and Sanitary Ware Trade Association

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers

Wong Tai Sin District Council

Eastern District Council

Islands District Council

Haven of Hope Christian Service

The Hong Kong Federation of Electrical and Mechanical Contractors Limited

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Principal Assistant Secretary, Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Assistant Director, Environmental Protection Department

Assistant Director, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Consultant, Department of Health

Assistant Director, Housing Department

Secretary, Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department

In Attendance

Mr. CHAN Pui Wah

Mr. KU Chi Chung, Damien

Mr. CHEUNG Tze Leung

Mr. TAM Yat Hung

Mr. SUEN Kwok Keung

Deputy Director, Water Supplies Department

Assistant Director, Water Supplies Department

Chief Chemist, Water Supplies Department

Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department

Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department

1. The Chairman welcomed Members and the representatives from the Water Supplies Department (WSD) for attending Meeting No. 10 of the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies (ACQWS). He extended his welcome to Mr. SUEN Kwok Keung who represented Mr. LAM Man Pang, Roger of WSD for attending the meeting since Mr. LAM was receiving training in Shanghai.
2. Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes were confirmed without any amendments.
3. Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising
- 3.1 Quality of water in buildings

Fresh Water Plumbing Quality Maintenance Recognition Scheme
 - 3.1.1 **WSD** reported the progress of the scheme in detail and that up to December 2003, 875 certificates had been issued including 677 for residential properties and 198 for non-residential properties. About 190,000 residential flats have been covered, representing 9% of the territory total. Among these flats, around 100,000 were built before 1995, representing 6% of flats in this age group; and around 90,000 were built in or after 1995, representing 16% of flats in this age group.
 - 3.1.2 The Chairman appreciated that the number of certificates issued had increased substantially and urged that more promotion should be done to encourage more buildings to join the scheme. The Vice-Chairman assured that WSD would keep on encouraging the building management companies or building owners to join the scheme. **WSD** briefed Members on the publicity works done in the past concerning the scheme and emphasized that in 2004, water conservation and plumbing maintenance will be the focus of publicity works of the WSD.
 - 3.1.3 **A Member** advised that in the fifth quality building management competition organized by the Wong Tai Sin District Council, buildings that had joined the scheme would be given extra marks. He expected that this would help to promote the scheme in Wong Tai Sin and hoped that such practice could be extended to other districts as well.

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3.1.4	As suggested by a Member, the Vice-Chairman agreed that WSD would provide application forms and relevant information to District Offices and District Councillors' Offices to facilitate distribution to the general public.	WSD
3.1.5	Housing Department (HD) reported that Housing Department would fully support the scheme and take the lead to have the buildings under their jurisdiction to join the scheme. He anticipated that around one thousand public housing blocks or over hundred thousand households would join the scheme in three stages within the next three years.	HD
3.1.6	A Member enquired on the costs for the water quality tests required for joining the scheme and whether such costs could be included in building maintenance loan scheme provided by the Building Department. WSD opined that the costs should be considered as part of the plumbing maintenance costs.	
3.1.7	A Member suggested that to help promoting the scheme, it would be advisable to tell the general public the order of costs associated with joining the scheme. After some discussions, Members understood that costs for buildings requiring replumbing would be substantially greater than those for building not requiring replumbing. Mr. WONG Kwok Keung undertook to assist WSD to find out such costs from the plumbing trade.	Mr. WONG Kwok Keung & WSD
3.2	Publication of Water Quality Data	
3.2.1	The Chairman advised that following the decision of the 8 th meeting, the Working Group on Publication of Water Quality Data held its second meeting on 10 December 2003 to discuss the new batch of water quality data for the period from October 2002 to September 2003. Prof. HO Kin Chung chaired the meeting with the participation of Dr. CHEUNG Yun Hing, Richard, Mr WONG Kwok Keung, Mr WU Sai Him, Hugh, Dr. TSE Lai Yin, and Mr WONG Bay together with the relevant WSD staff. An advance copy of the water quality data had been distributed to all Members for information prior to publication in WSD's Homepage on 18 December 2003.	
3.2.2	Prof. HO Kin Chung advised that there were noticeable improvements in the Dongjiang (DJ) water quality, in particular the drop in the level of ammoniacal nitrogen. He added that the published water quality data had not yet fully reflected the improvement in DJ water quality after the entire commissioning of the closed aqueduct system in June 2003. He expected that	

the next two publications would better reflect the improvement achieved. However, he observed some non-compliance in the levels of dissolved oxygen and total phosphorus, which reflected eutrophication of the DJ water. Notwithstanding this, he assured that it would not pose any problems to water treatment in Hong Kong.

- 3.2.3 [WSD](#) supplemented that comparison of DJ water quality in different time slots had been presented in the latest publication of data to illustrate the improvement in the DJ water quality after commissioning of the closed aqueduct system. He added that the new set of water quality data for drinking water for the same period continued to comply chemically and bacteriologically with the World Health Organization (WHO) Guidelines for Drinking-water.

3.3 Publicity in the International Fresh Water Year

- 3.3.1 The Chairman reported that the Youth Forum for the International Fresh Water Year was successfully conducted on 13 December 2003. He appreciated that Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister and Dr. CHEUNG Yung Hing, Richard had taken an active role in organizing and taking part in the forum.

- 3.3.2 Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister advised that the youth forum was well received by students and took the opportunity to express her thanks to Dr. CHEUNG Yung Hing, Richard in organising the forum in the City University of Hong Kong, and Prof. LAM Kin Che in giving a concluding speech. Dr. Cheung then briefed Members on the rundown of the youth forum. [WSD](#) suggested publishing the presentation materials and relevant details of the youth forum in the homepage of the ACQWS. [Members](#) fully supported [WSD](#)'s suggestion, as these would help the public to understand more about water supply in Hong Kong and DJ water through the Internet.

WSD

- 3.3.3 [A Member](#) suggested taking the chance to build up a sustainable relationship with the students. Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister agreed that taking into consideration of the limited resources, organising the youth forum annually would be a good starting point and might help to provide a platform for students to share experience with overseas students. The Vice-Chairman advised that [WSD](#) had already established a team of ambassadors that could help communicating with the schools and students.

WSD

3.4 Visit to Guangdong

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<p>3.4.1 The Chairman noted that 16 Members of the ACQWS had visited the DJ water supply on 8 and 9 October 2003. The Secretary reported that details of the visit were given in ACQWS Report No. 5 – Visit to Dongjiang Water Supply (8 - 9 October 2003), which had been distributed to all Members for information and record, and published in the homepage of the ACQWS on 15 December 2003.</p>	
<p>3.4.2 A Member suggested that more work could be done to let the people of Hong Kong recognise the improvement in the DJ water quality and the efforts of the Guangdong side. The Chairman agreed with the Member's suggestion and proposed to invite reporters to join the next visit subject to the agreement of the Guangdong side. WSD supplemented that the Guangdong side had expressed that they wished to promote their continuous efforts in combating pollution and protecting the environment and water quality of DJ. Some Members expressed full support to the proposal of inviting reporters to join the next visit and reminded that more preparation by WSD and ACQWS would be necessary to ensure its success. The Chairman recommended that further discussions regarding the proposed arrangement should be made when organising the next visit.</p>	WSD
<p>3.5 Treated Effluent Reuse at Ngong Ping ACQWS Paper No. 14</p>	
<p>3.5.1 WSD presented ACQWS Paper No. 14 on “Treated Effluent Reuse at Ngong Ping”, which outlined the progress and development of the project. WSD reported that construction of the Ngong Ping sewage treatment plant (NPSTP) was in progress and was scheduled to be completed in 2005. The treated sewage effluent (TSE) would be supplied to 3 public toilets and the cable car development for flushing. The rest of the effluent would be discharged to sea via a sewage pipeline. The Vice-Chairman supplemented that WSD was still working with the Mass Transit Railway Corporation Limited (MTRCL) to explore other possible uses.</p>	WSD
<p>3.5.2 A Member commented that from public health viewpoint, the risk of infection through contacting the treated effluent associated with the proposal would be very low and suggested that apart from those identified uses, the TSE might also be utilized by facilities of other departments in the vicinity. Another Member reiterated that people normally had the gut feeling that treated sewage effluent was dirty and hence education would be</p>	

important to change their perception. A Member opined that the proposal should be properly packaged to gain public acceptance and was essential to water resources management. He also suggested that the term “reclaimed water” would be more acceptable and appealing to the general public than the term “treated sewage effluent”. Another Member suggested that senior Government officials should help promoting the scheme. A Member raised that success of the scheme would depend on the knowledge of the general public and in this connection, education would be important in promoting the scheme. Another Member also tabled a pamphlet of the NEWater Visit Centre in Singapore for the reference of WSD to publicize the proposed exhibition centre in Ngong Ping.

- 3.5.3 A Member expressed that it would be understandable that lots of effort and considerable time would be required for the general public to accept the concept of waste water recycling. However, she commented that the present proposal was only a pilot scheme and of a very small scale, and doubted that there might not be adequate resources allocated to help promoting the scheme. If the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) attached great importance to the project on total water management, the project should be of a larger scale and more resources would be required. ETWB clarified that the project at present aimed at environmental protection rather than total water management. However, ETWB was investigating whether the proposal could be extended towards total water management. If so, it should be applied either for potable uses or major industrial uses that could reduce fresh water consumption significantly.
- 3.5.4 A Member expressed his worry that the media might query why the Government spent a lot of money to produce the TSE, which was just used for flushing in three toilets only. The Vice-Chairman emphasized that it was only a pilot study and was important to gather essential information for the Government to formulate the way forward.
- 3.5.5 Two Members reminded that WSD should alert the MTRCL to make provision in the cable car development for future uses of the TSE. When more operation and quality data of the NPSTP were available, the effectiveness of the proposal could be assessed and other possible uses could be identified in the cable car development and other areas. Another Member suggested that WSD should prepare and announce the programme of the project and expected this would help gaining public acceptance. A Member added that WSD should identify the possible uses for

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	different quality ranges of the TSE.	
3.5.6	The Vice-Chairman responded that the supplier of the sewage treatment plant guaranteed the quality of the TSE for discharge to the sea. The TSE would be chlorinated before distribution for flushing and irrigation. Further treatment such as membrane filtration might be considered to enable other possible uses by the cable car development of the MTRCL.	
3.5.7	WSD thanked Members for their valuable comments and assured that these would be taken into account in the implementation of the project.	WSD
3.6	Situation report on desalination pilot plant study	
	WSD reported that after public consultations and demonstrations of the noise control measures to the local residents affected, the pilot plant projects in Tuen Mun and Ap Lei Chau would proceed. Tenders for the pilot plants were invited and six tender submissions were received. The tendering results would be reported in the next meeting. The pilot plant study report was expected to complete by end 2004.	WSD
3.7	Misleading advertisements for water purifiers	
3.7.1	WSD reported that the Consumer Council published in its Choice Magazine Issue No. 322 (15 August 2003) an article on the household water purifiers. The article included a section from WSD advising readers that some of the purifier suppliers and distilled water companies distributed promotional leaflets, which had been conveying misleading messages about the quality of water. WSD had countered such messages with elucidation. In the relevant press release, the Consumer Council related WSD's view that the tap water was safe and installation of purifiers was not recommended. Our representative, <u>Mr. LAM Man Pang, Roger</u> , joined the Council's press conference on 15 August 2003 to present WSD's view.	
3.7.2	WSD added that WSD had also issued warning letters to the concerned suppliers and companies with the request to withdraw their advertisements or amend the misleading information. However, WSD tried in vain to contact one of the suppliers, the promoter of the leaflet "The Truth of Tap Water", which continued to be distributed widely via Hong Kong Post circular service. The supplier had been elusive, as it seemed that he understood that WSD was going after him. WSD had now	

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	written to the Hong Kong Post to see whether they could disclose the details of the supplier for WSD to contact him.	
3.7.3	WSD added that the leaflet made reference to research work of the City University of Hong Kong. Dr. CHEUNG Yun Hing, Richard undertook to refer the matter to the Public Affairs Office of the City University of Hong Kong for investigation and follow up action.	Dr. Cheung
3.7.4	The Department of Health (DH) confirmed that the advertisement on pi-water contravened the Undesirable Medical Advertisement Ordinance and the case was referred to the Hong Kong Police Force. She noticed that such advertisement was stopped afterwards.	DH
4.	There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.	