

Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies

Minutes of Meeting No. 12

Date: 29 April 2005 (Friday)

Time: 2:45 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

Prof. HO Kin Chung

Mr. WONG Kwok Keung

Mr. CHEUNG Yan Hong

Dr. LAM Ching Choi

Mr. LAW Wei Tak, Victor

Prof. TSO Wung Wai

Dr. CHAN Hon Fai

Prof. CHEN Yongqin, David

Ms. LEE Ying, Robena

Ms. LEE Yoke Shum, Sam

Dr. NG Cho Nam

Mr. WONG Kwok Hay, Samuel

Dr. WONG Yee Him, John

Dr. TSE Lai Yin

Dr. CHIU Tak Lun, Michael

Mr. SIN Kwok Hau

Mr. WONG Bay

Mr. CHAN Shiu On, James

Mr. LAU Chi Ming, Stephen

Member Absent with Apologies

Ms. CHEUNG Mui Seung, Emily

Chairman

Vice-Chairman, Director of Water Supplies

The Conservancy Association

Open University of Hong Kong

Hong Kong Plumbing and Sanitary Ware Trade Association

Association of Engineers in Society Ltd

Haven of Hope Christian Service

The Hong Kong Federation of Electrical and Mechanical Contractors Limited

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Cinotech Consultants Limited

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Tuen Mun District Council

World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong

The University of Hong Kong

Wong & Fok Solicitors

Kowloon City District Council

Head, Surveillance and Epidemiology Branch, Department of Health

Assistant Director, Environmental Protection Department

Assistant Director, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Assistant Director, Housing Department

Principal Assistant Secretary, Environment, Transport and Works Bureau

Secretary, Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department

North District Council

In attendance

Mr. CHAN Chi Chiu

Mr. NG Mang Tung, Bobby

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

Item

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1. The Chairman welcomed all Members for attending Meeting No. 12 of the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies (ACQWS) and, in particular, Dr. CHAN Hon Fai, for attending the meeting of the ACQWS for the first time. He also welcomed Mr. SIN Kwok Hau who stood in for the regular representative of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Ms. LO Yuet Yee, Rhonda, who was on duty visit at the moment.
2. The Chairman extended his welcome to the representatives from the Water Supplies Department (WSD) for attending the meeting.
3. Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting

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

Fresh Water Plumbing Quality Maintenance Recognition Scheme (ACQWS Paper No. 15)
- 4.1.1 **WSD** reported the progress of the Scheme in detail and that up to 31 March 2005, 2,807 certificates had been issued since the launch of the Scheme in July 2002, including 1,710 for private and Home Ownership Scheme residential properties, 537 for public rental properties and 560 for commercial and industrial properties. For residential properties, about 719,000 households had been benefited. He thanked **Housing Department (HD)** for the full support of HD, which targeted to achieve full participation by 2006.
- 4.1.2 **WSD** then proposed the following amendments to the Application Form for the Scheme:-
 - (a) To require the water samples be taken not more than 3 months before the date of application.
 - (b) To require the applicant to declare whether there had been any water quality complaints dealt with in the 12 months period before the application and if yes, to provide details of the remedial actions taken.
 - (c) To include some other minor refinements.
- 4.1.3 In response to an enquiry from a **Member**, **WSD** explained that the validity period of the certificate was one year and the participants had to renew the certificates each year. The total

number of certificates was the cumulative number of buildings awarded the certificates. He added that some participants had not renewed the certificates despite WSD had issued reminders to them before the expiry dates. However, there was no failure case of renewal of the certificates.

- 4.1.4 The Vice-Chairman explained to a Member that the Scheme covered industrial buildings and the benefit of the Scheme included:-
- (a) Raising public awareness on water quality problems in buildings;
 - (b) Encouraging customer participation in solving water quality problems; and
 - (c) Creating competition among buildings, developers and building management agents since award of certificates would upgrade the image of the buildings, developers and building management agents, which would in turn attract more business.
- 4.1.5 A Member questioned whether surprise checks would be carried out by WSD to ensure compliance of the requirements stipulated in the certificates. WSD responded that WSD periodically carried out random sampling of water in buildings in Hong Kong, irrespective of whether the buildings participated in the Scheme or not, in order to ensure that the water supplied to customers complied with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality. So far, no non-compliance case was found in such samples from buildings.
- 4.1.6 A Member noted that one of the proposed amendments required the applicant to declare whether there had been any water quality complaints dealt with in the 12 months period before application. He asked if any action would be taken on applicants, who did not disclose such information in their applications. The Vice-Chairman replied that WSD would withdraw the certificate from a participant if it was found that he did not disclose the information required. The Chairman added that the Scheme was implemented to encourage building management agents to maintain their plumbing systems properly and no legal actions should be taken in this connection.
- 4.1.7 A Member considered that as the quality of water affected the public health, it would be desirable to enforce the Scheme through legislation. The Vice-Chairman clarified that in 2001, the ACQWS endorsed WSD's proposed two-stage implementation plan to improve the quality of plumbing

maintenance. Stage 1 focused on encouragement of customer participation in solving the water quality problem and on publicity and education to raise public awareness on water quality problems in buildings. WSD would then review the results of Stage 1 actions and the necessity to proceed to Stage 2, in which mandatory requirements would be established and enforced through legislation to ensure that good practice in maintenance of inside services was followed to prevent degradation of water quality in buildings. He added that the Scheme was quite successful since it was launched in July 2002 and there was an increasing number of participants. He assured that WSD would keep in view the need to enforce the Scheme through legislation and would consult the ACQWS and the public accordingly.

- 4.1.8 [Department of Health \(DH\)](#) asked for the reasons that participants did not renew the certificates. The Vice-Chairman replied that it might be due to the cost of water quality testing. She then suggested that WSD should provide the number of buildings with valid certificates in addition to the number of buildings awarded certificates. The Vice-Chairman agreed with [DH's](#) suggestion to work out the relevant figures for Members' reference. WSD
- 4.1.9 [HD](#) reported that in view of the heavy financial burden of renewal of certificates and the difficult financial situation of the Housing Authority, HD would only renew the certificates of the public housing blocks every 3 years. Notwithstanding this, he assured that HD fully supported the Scheme and even without the Certificate, HD would do their best in maintaining their plumbing systems to ensure good quality water supply to their tenants. He added that the 37% participation rate of public rental properties implied almost full participation in the public housing sector and that HD would review their resources and the strategy of renewal of certificates in the coming few years. The Chairman suggested WSD to discuss with HD concerning this issue in order to raise the number of public housing blocks with certificates at the same time. WSD
- 4.1.10 [A Member](#) questioned whether the validity period of certificates could be extended in order to encourage more applicants and to increase the numbers of certificates issued. After some discussions, Members considered that the 1-year validity period would be appropriate for the time being.
- 4.1.11 The Vice-Chairman agreed with [a Member's](#) suggestion to indicate the buildings with expired certificates in the list of buildings awarded the certificates published in the Internet. WSD

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4.1.12	A Member suggested WSD to co-ordinate with the District Councils to encourage the Incorporated Owners Committees and building management agents to participate in the Scheme. The Vice-Chairman assured that WSD would continue to work with District Councillors to promote the Scheme.	WSD
4.1.13	A Member suggested that WSD should assist the participants to carry out the water quality testing in the second year in order to motivate the participants to renew the certificates. WSD responded that participants might not wish the tests be carried out by WSD and reiterated that WSD with shrinking resources would find it very difficult to carry out testing for the public in addition to its own workload committed to ensure safe water quality for Hong Kong.	
4.1.14	A Member suggested that the building management agents should be required to inform their tenants about the award of the certificates. The Vice-Chairman agreed that WSD should add this requirement in the letter issuing the certificates. The Chairman supported the suggestion as it could let more people know the Scheme and monitor their building management agents.	WSD
4.1.15	A Member said that WSD could invite Members to participate in related promotion activities and functions, and he volunteered to contribute more to the Scheme. The Vice-Chairman thanked the Member for his support and said that WSD would continue to invite Members to join these activities and functions on a voluntary basis.	
4.1.16	The Vice Chairman agreed to consider the suggestion of Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB) that WSD should add a footnote to explain to the applicants that WSD would objectively and flexibly consider the information on water quality complaints given in Section F of the Application Form in assessing applications for the award scheme.	WSD
4.2	Publication of Water Quality Data	
4.2.1	WSD reported that WSD had published the water quality data for Dongjiang Water received in Hong Kong at Muk Wu Pumping Station and similar data for drinking water in WSD's Homepage each year since August 2000. The data were updated once a year at the beginning and then twice a year since October 2002. The latest data published in the Homepage covered the period from 1 October 2003 to 30 September 2004 and indicated	

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	compliance with the relevant water quality standards. The forthcoming updating of the water quality data for the period from 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005 was under preparation. He informed that the Secretary had been organizing a meeting of the Working Group on Publication of Water Quality Data in May 2005 to scrutinize the data before publication and welcomed all Members to join the meeting.	WSD
4.2.2	WSD added that data on water quality of Dongjiang's main stream at the East Bank Section in 2004 provided by the Environmental Protection Bureau, Guangdong Province, had already been published in WSD's Homepage, and the data complied with Type II Environmental Quality Standard for Surface Water of GB3838-2002.	
4.3	Visit to Guangdong	
4.3.1	The Chairman reported that 14 Members of the ACQWS had visited the Dongjiang water supply system in November 2004. WSD supplemented that Members were able to understand more about the efforts made by the Guangdong Authorities in combating pollution and protecting the environment and quality of Dongjiang water. A visit report had been prepared and distributed to all Members in January 2005, and had been published in the Homepage of the ACQWS.	
4.3.2	WSD added that the ACQWS had visited the Dongjiang water supply system annually in the past five years and asked for Members' views on the visiting spots for the forthcoming visit in September/October. After some discussions, Members proposed that the forthcoming visit should include areas upstream of Xinfengjiang and it should focus on protection of Dongjiang water quality, the drought condition and allocation of water resources in the region, water conservation measures and saline intrusion into Dongjiang. WSD would liaise with the Guangdong side to arrange the forthcoming visit and would keep Members informed of the development.	WSD
4.4	Reclaimed water reuse project at Ngong Ping	
4.4.1	WSD briefed Members the latest development of the reclaimed water reuse project at Ngong Ping. He reported that the construction work had commenced in August 2003 and about 70% of the work had been completed. It was anticipated that the work could be completed on time by the end of 2005.	

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4.5	Desalination pilot plant study
4.5.1	<p>WSD briefed Members the latest development of the desalination pilot plant study. He advised that the consultancy contract commenced in May 2003 and a works contract was awarded in February 2004. The installation, testing and commissioning of the pilot plant had been completed in November 2004 in Tuen Mun and the plant had started to operate for 12 months for Stage 1 of the contract. Three pre-treatment technologies and three types of reverse osmosis membranes had been adopted in this pilot plant resulting in nine different combinations of treatment processes. The plant could produce 240 cubic metres per day and had been operated for a few months. A study report would be completed around July 2005, which would be presented to Members accordingly. By that time, a site visit to the plant would also be arranged.</p> <p>WSD</p>
4.5.2	<p>A Member asked for the preliminary results of the pilot plant study. WSD responded that as mentioned earlier a study report would be available around July 2005. After completion of the Stage 1 of the contract in end 2005, the pilot plant would be moved from Tuen Mun in the western part of Hong Kong to Ap Lei Chau at the southern part of Hong Kong under the Stage 2 contract for another 12 months to further study desalination under different seawater conditions.</p>
4.5.3	<p>In response to the Chairman's enquiry, WSD estimated that the production cost would be around \$6.0 - \$7.7 per cubic metre, which had to be confirmed by the consultant later.</p>
4.5.4	<p>A Member expressed concern on the quality of the water produced and asked if any post treatment would be required before distribution to customers. WSD explained that the quality of water produced by the pilot plant would comply with the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality, but some post treatment processes would be required, e.g. addition of fluoride and chlorine for dental protection and disinfection purposes.</p>
4.6	Working Group on Public Education
4.6.1	<p>The Chairman advised that the first meeting of the Working Group was held on 16 June 2004 and chaired by <u>Ms CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister</u> with <u>Mr. SUEN Kwok Keung</u> as the Secretary.</p>
4.6.2	<p>WSD reported that all Members who attended the meeting agreed that the definition of "public relations" was too broad and</p>

suggested that the Working Group should focus on public education. They recommended that the name and the term of reference of the Working Group should be changed to “Working Group on Public Education” and “To advise Water Supplies Department through the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies on the department’s public education work regarding the quality of water supplies in Hong Kong” respectively.

- 4.6.3 [Two Members](#) suggested that water conservation should be added in the term of reference of this Working Group. After some discussions, Members agreed that the Working Group should also advise on water conservation matters. They also agreed that water quality and water conservation were inter-related and thus there was no need to explicitly mention water conservation in the term of reference. The proposed name and term of reference were consequently ratified in the meeting.
- 4.6.4 [ETWB](#) supplemented that the Government accorded high priority to total water management and had commenced studies on desalination and reclaimed water reuse projects, and the Government would undertake public education to raise the awareness of the public on water resources and water conservation accordingly. Members agreed that the Government should do more publicity and public education work in this respect.
- 4.6.5 [Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister](#) reported that in the first meeting of the Working Group, it was agreed that the ACQWS should facilitate a visit for the media to the Dongjiang water supply system to enable them to see the efforts of the Guangdong side in combating pollution and protecting the quality of Dongjiang water, and the significant improvement in the quality of Dongjiang water supplied to Hong Kong after commissioning the entire closed aqueduct system. She reported that the Guangdong Authorities advised us to ask the Conservancy Association to act as the organizer for a non-official visit for the media. A visit had been arranged in mid December 2004. But then, we were told to postpone it a week before the visit and [subsequently, the visit was cancelled](#). The Working Group would keep the ACQWS informed of any further development.
- 4.7 Double-sided printing
- 4.7.1 The Chairman reported that as suggested by [a Member](#), all meeting documents were printed in double-sided copies.

Ms.
CHEUNG
Lai Ping,
Lister

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4.8	Dredging along Dongjiang
4.8.1	<p>WSD reported that he had reflected a Member's concern to the Guangdong side and they replied that all dredging activities along Dongjiang were tightly controlled and the level, quality and flow rate of Dongjiang water in the vicinity of the intake at Taiyuan Pumping Station were closely monitored. Through the stringent control of the drawoff from the three major reservoirs feeding Dongjiang, the quantity and quality of water supply to Hong Kong could be guaranteed. Two Members appreciated that the Guangdong side was aware of the problem and had made efforts to control dredging along the rivers and streams in Guangdong including Dongjiang.</p>
4.9	Details of Dongjiang Water Supply System
4.9.1	<p>The Chairman reported that as requested by a Member, WSD forwarded the details of the Dongjiang water supply system for the reference of new Members.</p>
5.	There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.