

Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies

Minutes of the 7th Meeting

Date: 22 July 2002 (Monday)

Time: 2:30 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room, 45/F, Immigration Tower, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Members Present

Mr. FANG Hung, Kenneth	Chairman, Hong Kong Productivity Council
Mr. KO Chan Gock, William	Vice-Chairman, Director of Water Supplies
Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister	The Conservancy Association
Dr. CHEUNG Yun Hing, Richard	City University of Hong Kong
Dr. HO Kin Chung	Open University of Hong Kong
Prof. LAM Kin Che	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Mr. WONG Kwok Keung	Hong Kong Plumbing and Sanitary Ware Trade Association
Mr. WU Sai Him, Hugh	The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
Mr. CHEUNG Yan Hong	Wong Tai Sin District Council
Ms. CHOW Kit Bing, Jennifer	Eastern District Council
Ms. CHUI Pui Man, Wendy	Islands District Council
Dr. LAM Ching Choi	Haven of Hope Christian Service
Mr. LAW Wei Tak, Victor	The Hong Kong Federation of Electrical and Mechanical Contractors Limited
Prof. TSO Wung Wai	The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Dr. CHIU Tak Lun, Michael	Assistant Director, Environmental Protection Department
Mr. KWAN Ka Lun	Assistant Director, Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
Dr. TSE Lai Yin	Consultant, Department of Health
Mr. WAI Chi Sing	Principal Assistant Secretary, Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
Mr. WONG Bay	Assistant Director, Housing Department
Mr. LAU Chi Ming, Stephen	Secretary, Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department

In Attendance

Mr. CHAN Pui Wah	Deputy Director, Water Supplies Department
Mr. KU Chi Chung, Damien	Assistant Director, Water Supplies Department
Mr. CHEUNG Ping Nang	Assistant Director, Water Supplies Department

Mr. CHEUNG Tze Leung	Chief Chemist, Water Supplies Department
Mr. TAM Yat Hung	Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department
Mr. LAM Man Pang, Roger	Senior Engineer, Water Supplies Department
Ms. WONG Sui Wah, Elisa	Public Relations Manager, Water Supplies Department

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1. The Chairman welcomed new Members, Ms. CHUI Pui Man, Wendy and Mr. WAI Chi Sing, representing the Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works, for attending the meeting of the Advisory Committee on the Quality of Water Supplies (ACQWS) for the first time. He then extended his welcome to all other Members, and also to the representatives from the Water Supplies Department (WSD).

2. The Chairman advised that similar to previous meetings, a short media briefing session would be held at the conclusion of the meeting. Prof. LAM Kin Che, Prof. TSO Wung Wai and Ms. CHEUNG Lai Ping, Lister volunteered to join the briefing.

3. **Agenda Item 1 : Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes were confirmed with the following amendment:-

Item 6.18 – line 1: add “some area of” after “informed that in”.

Agenda Item 2 : Matters Arising

4. **Quality of water in buildings**

4.1 ***ACQWS Paper No. 13 – Fresh Water Plumbing Quality Maintenance Recognition Scheme (FWPQMRS)***

4.1.1 The Chairman thanked Members for their valuable contributions and comments on the work of the Working Group on the Quality of Water in Buildings (WGQWB) during the last meeting. He advised that the Working Group had endorsed a proposal in the meeting on 13 May 2002 to launch the “Fresh Water Plumbing Quality Maintenance Recognition Scheme” to encourage building

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owners to maintain their plumbing well in order to provide tourists and residents with good quality tap water supply in buildings. Comments from the relevant trades and associations had been obtained and taken into account in finalising the Scheme. Prof. LAM Kin Che, Chairman of the WGQWB, then presented the details of the Scheme as detailed in ACQWS Paper No. 13.

- 4.1.2 The Vice-Chairman assured that unsuccessful applications would be kept in strict confidence to avoid embarrassing the applicants and discouraging applications. He stressed that it was understandable that while the Certificate would be valid for one year, the laboratory test results would only be a proof of water quality at the time of sampling. He advised that WSD would carry out random checks on buildings awarded with the Certificate, including the testing of water samples and the inspection of maintenance records, and would require corrective actions within 14 days, failing which the Certificate would be withdrawn.
- 4.1.3 **A Member** was concerned about the credibility of some laboratories in the market and asked if WSD discovered non-compliance cases after issuance of the Certificates, what actions WSD would take against the laboratories concerned. The Vice-Chairman replied that there was a requirement for important water tests to be carried out by laboratories accredited under the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (HOKLAS). He clarified that WSD would not be involved in surveillance and monitoring of the accreditation status of the laboratories. He added that HOKLAS published a directory of accredited laboratories on the Internet.
- 4.1.4 **Three Members** expressed concern about possible disputes over the interpretation of laboratory test results and the role of the proposed Appeal Board under the Scheme. The Vice-Chairman expressed that appeals were not expected in the application stage because the Scheme was voluntary and applicants would normally submit applications only when they had satisfactory

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laboratory test reports. However, appeals might be made by Certificate holders if their Certificates were withdrawn, and the Appeal Board would then have to deal with the appeals.

- 4.1.5 [The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department \(FEHD\)](#) questioned the meaning of “failure to meet the acceptance limits for testing parameters” specified in the application form. [FEHD suggested that as the Scheme was meant for quality maintenance recognition, the water quality acceptance limits for testing parameters might be set at a higher standard to match with the title of the Scheme. This would also avoid misunderstanding that failure to meet the limits would imply that the water was unfit for potable purpose.](#) The Vice-Chairman clarified that the limits were taken from the guidelines for drinking water quality of the World Health Organisation. He stressed that limits for the microbiological parameters must not be exceeded. However, slight exceedance of limits for the physical and chemical parameters did not imply unfitness for consumption.
- 4.1.6 [A Member](#) shared her experience that some property management company did not drain the “dirty” water away after cleaning the water tank. This would affect the confidence of the residents to drink direct from the tap. She doubted that water sampling under the Scheme could really reflect this situation and opined that proper procedures for cleaning water tanks should also be addressed. She believed that involving the residents during and after the application for joining the Scheme would be effective in monitoring the performance of the management company. [The Chairman of the WGQWB](#) clarified that the Scheme emphasised on both water sampling and testing, and proper maintenance of the plumbing system. The Vice-Chairman supplemented that [the Member’s](#) experience was caused by improper cleaning of the water tank and explained in detail that if the cleaning procedures were strictly followed, there should not be any water quality problem after cleaning of the water tank. [The Housing Department \(HD\)](#) added that in case the cleaning procedures were strictly followed but turbid water still persisted, it might be a problem related to the condition of the inside service piping, e.g.

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<p>rusting, and the plumbing system should be inspected thoroughly and replaced if necessary. WSD advised that a plumbing maintenance guide encompassing guidelines on cleaning water tanks would be issued shortly as part of the Scheme.</p>	WSD
<p>4.1.7 A Member queried why the acceptance level for pH value was not set lower and why testing on E. coli was required. WSD explained that lime was added in the final stage of water treatment as raw water in Hong Kong was soft. Treated water normally had a high pH value on leaving the water treatment works and would then absorb carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, consequently reducing its pH value to about 6.5 in most cases. The Vice-Chairman also explained that the media and the public in Hong Kong were very much concerned about the presence of E. coli, which had become a well-known indicator of water quality. Including it as one of the testing parameters would enhance the credibility of the Certificate.</p>	
<p>4.1.8 WSD advised Members that on receipt of an application, WSD would check the documents submitted and would also check if there were any past records of complaints on water quality in the building. WSD would help the applicant to find out the problem concerned, give him advice to rectify the problem and check if the applicant had completed the necessary improvement work before issuing a Certificate. WSD would also spot check the plumbing system in buildings awarded with a Certificate. A Member reminded that to make the Scheme meaningful, WSD should accord high priority on quality assurance of the Scheme and should allocate adequate resources to the associated work.</p>	WSD
<p>4.1.9 A Member questioned whether WSD would assume responsibility for the quality of water in buildings awarded with a Certificate. The Vice-Chairman clarified that responsibilities of WSD and building owners would remain unchanged in that WSD would be responsible for the quality of water supply up to the connection point and building owners for that downstream of the connection point.</p>	

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4.1.10	FEHD suggested that for restaurants, WSD should require the applicant to provide a copy of the restaurant licence issued by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. The Chairman agreed.	WSD
4.1.11	In response to a Member 's enquiry, the Vice-Chairman clarified that there would be no quota on the number of applications. WSD welcomed any applications from all sectors and assured that WSD would deploy adequate resources to process the applications.	
4.1.12	A Member questioned the mechanism for withdrawing a Certificate. The Vice-Chairman answered that in case of withdrawal, the Certificate holder would be required to return the Certificate to WSD and if he refused to do so, WSD would make appropriate announcement of the withdrawal through the WSD Homepage.	
4.1.13	In response to EPD 's enquiry on water sampling, WSD advised that it would be stipulated that samples should be taken in accordance with standard procedure. In this connection, a Member suggested to include the detailed requirements on water sampling in the application form.	WSD
4.1.14	Two Members alerted that the sampling procedure would be quite complicated, in particular for E. coli, and hence the associated cost might be quite high. In addition, transportation cost should not be ignored. The Chairman also expressed concern about the adequacy of laboratories and licensed plumbers, and hence the price of water sampling, testing, and inspection of the plumbing systems. The Vice-Chairman assured that there were sufficient laboratories and licensed plumbers in the market and this would help to curb the charges through competition. Notwithstanding this, the Vice-Chairman undertook to inform the laboratory industry of the implementation of the Scheme, to brief them of WSD's requirements and to persuade them to curb laboratory charges in view of the increase in demand for services induced by the Scheme.	WSD

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<p>4.1.15 A Member commented that for the Scheme to be successful and sustainable, the support and proper training of building management agents, the key stakeholders, were essential. The Vice-Chairman responded that WSD held regular seminars and discussion forums for the building management industry on plumbing maintenance and encouraged participants to help disseminating the information to their colleagues.</p>	
<p>4.1.16 A Member emphasised that active participation of the public sector would be essential. HD expressed that they would fully support the Scheme. He suggested that support from other Government Departments responsible for maintenance of government buildings such as the Architectural Services Department and Government Property Agency should also be solicited.</p>	HD
<p>4.1.17 Members endorsed the launching of the Scheme and it was agreed that the Chairman would announce the launching of the Scheme when he met the media after the meeting.</p>	
<p>4.2. <i>Publicity Works</i></p>	
<p>4.2.1 The Chairman raised that in the quest to arouse greater awareness among the general public and to recruit applicants to join the Scheme, a lot of publicity work had to be done. The promotional strategy of the Scheme would be divided into 3 stages: the first stage would be the pre-launching of the Scheme, the second stage would be to sustain awareness of the General Public and Tourists of the Scheme, the third stage would be post-event publicity. The publicity would last for about 6 months and a full review would be conducted to evaluate its effectiveness. <u>Ms. WONG Sui Wah, Elisa</u>, Public Relations Manager of WSD, who would take charge of the publicity work of the Scheme, then presented the detailed strategies of the proposed publicity work.</p>	
<p>4.2.2 In response to a Member's enquiry, WSD advised that the budget</p>	

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	for this year's publicity work would be about \$500,000.	
4.2.3	<p>A Member questioned the copyright of the proposed Certificate and its logo, and was worried about the possibility of copy or fake, that would affect the image of the Scheme. Another Member concurred that if the public discovered fake Certificates, they would lose confidence in the Certificates and the credibility of the Scheme would be hampered severely. He considered that legal advice might be necessary and suggested that WSD could set up a registry and put the names of certified buildings on-line for the information of the public. The Chairman suggested WSD to check whether the 'Quality' logo used by the Hong Kong Tourism Board was registered and to determine whether WSD should follow suit.</p>	<p>WSD</p> <p>WSD</p>
4.2.4	In reply to a query from a Member, the Vice-Chairman assured that the publicity work would be extended to all District Councils, including the Islands District Council, and WSD would distribute promotional items, such as posters, to all District Councils for display.	WSD
4.2.5	<p>A Member commented that the timing of announcement of the first batch of certified buildings was very important and should not be too long after implementation of the Scheme. Otherwise, the public might misunderstand that it took a long time and required a lot of efforts to acquire a Certificate. She also emphasised that apart from publicity work, education would play an important role in the implementation of the Scheme. The Vice-Chairman expressed that WSD would distribute leaflets to hotels encouraging them to participate in the Scheme and at the same time, he expected many public housing estates would participate. He also advised that in the forthcoming seminar on "Protect our Water for our Future" in October 2002, WSD would invite school principals and teachers to attend so that they could help passing the messages to their students. He added that some volunteers from WSD would act as WSD ambassadors to help promoting the Scheme in schools and other organizations.</p>	<p>WSD</p> <p>WSD</p>

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4.2.6	WSD supplemented that WSD would liaise with textbook publishers for inclusion of information of the Scheme when they update the school textbooks and would ask the Education Department to update their educational television programme on water supply accordingly. The Chairman suggested WSD to encourage schools to apply for a Certificate.	WSD
4.2.7	The Chairman of the WGQWB undertook to refer the Member's comments to the WGQWB for follow-up. He agreed that publicity and education should be given due emphasis in the implementation of the Scheme.	Chairman of the WGQWB
4.2.8	In connection with the education strategy, a Member enquired whether WSD would consider establishing a permanent waterworks education centre or museum. The Vice-Chairman replied that WSD had found an old building in Yau Ma Tei, which was the first water pumping station in Hong Kong. WSD was working on a proposal to convert the building into a waterworks museum and would keep Members informed of the development.	WSD
4.2.9	A Member suggested that WSD should extend the publicity work to district councils to solicit the support and assistance from district councillors in promoting the Scheme. She advised that the Home Affairs Department arranged each year a number of seminars on building maintenance for building management agents and that such seminars could be used to promote the Scheme. She also suggested that it would be helpful to the implementation of the Scheme if the criteria for adjudicating building management agents could include the performance of the agents under the Scheme.	WSD
4.2.10	Members endorsed the publicity strategies. (Mr. LAM Man Pang, Roger and Ms. WONG Sui Wah, Elisa left the meeting at this point of discussion.)	
4.2.11	A Member reported that he still heard the radio announcement in	

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<p>public interest (API) of the Department of Health (DH) advocating boiling water before drinking. DH responded that the radio API would be updated in due course whereas the television API had already been renewed.</p>	DH
<p>4.3 <i>Opinion Survey</i></p>	
<p>The Chairman advised that WSD had appointed an independent survey agency to conduct an opinion survey to gauge public opinion on quality of water in buildings. The opinion survey would provide useful data to facilitate formulation and implementation of the strategies to ensure good quality of water in buildings. The fieldwork was carried out between 13 June 2002 and 2 July 2002. It was expected that the final survey report would be completed in August 2002 and WSD would circulate or present the results in the next meeting.</p>	WSD
<p>5. Publication of Water Quality Data – 2002</p>	
<p>The Chairman reported that the water quality data for Fiscal Year 2001/2002 and a brief note had already been distributed on 28 June 2002 to all Members by e-mail for advance information, and the data had been published on the Internet on 2 July 2002. WSD then gave a brief summary of this new batch of data.</p>	
<p>6. Visits</p>	
<p>6.1 The Vice-Chairman briefed Members the latest development of the project entitled “Dongshen Water Supply Improvement Works” and asked if Members would like to visit the project before the commissioning of first phase of the project. The Chairman suggested and Members agreed that a visit should be made around October 2002.</p>	WSD
<p>6.2 A Member asked whether the Dongshen Construction VCD shown during last year’s visit had been completed by the Guangdong side for distribution to Members for viewing. WSD answered that the Guangdong side wished to include the</p>	

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completion of the whole project in the VCD, which should therefore be ready sometime after August 2003.

7. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.