

(Press Release)

Merger of Amenities Officer and Recreation and Sports Officer Grades

The recent press articles on merger proposal between Amenities Officers (AO) and Recreation and Sports Officers (RSO) in Leisure and Cultural Services Department stir up public concern in the grade merger. However a number of factual deviations found from the articles compel this Association to make our declaration to clear possible public misconception.

The AO grade has been established since early 1970s in the government structure generally responsible for the management of recreational facilities and at the time also including programming work. Facility management includes active elements, such as sports grounds, indoor games halls, swimming pools and passive elements such as parks, amenity areas in which professional training in horticulture and landscaping are required. The entry qualification for AO is pitched at post-secondary (matriculation) level (Not Form 5 HKCEE level !). Due to the unavailability of comparable academic training in the recreation amenity and horticulture fields in the local educational institutes at the time, newly recruited AOs are provided with a series of in-house training on recreation and horticulture, to meet the professional need of the services. The training also enables the officers to acquire a Diploma in Horticulture and Leisure Management. This qualification is recognized by academic institutes universally. Moreover, many AOs have attained an even higher level of professions in recreation, horticulture, arboriculture, landscape management and zoological management, etc. through a series of local and overseas training, many of which are at degree or even master degree level.

As compared to RSO, who only joined the two municipal departments in 1985 upon dissolution of the then Recreation & Sports Service (RSS) and tasked in recreation programming, AO has a relatively higher starting and / or maximum pay scale in various ranks, which reflects to a great extent the difference in the level of responsibility of the two grades. The difference in entry points of the recruitment rank for the two grades is attributed to the different requirements for entry qualifications, i.e. matriculation for AO and teachers' certificate / post

secondary diploma for RSO. The starting point of AO II was originally pitched at MPS point 10. It was however reduced to point 4 by the government since 2000, to have caused the present anomaly for an AO II to supervise Amenities Assistant III who is paid at entry point 7.

In fact, apart from the historical background and previous experiences in programming work prior to 1985, including but not limited to the “Learn to Swim Scheme” and “Sports Promotion”, the AO grade is now still actively involved in the organization of many major leisure activities, such as the annual Hong Kong Flower Show, numerous community planting days, courses and activities in horticultural education, etc. **We therefore cannot agree to the misleading allegation that Amenities Officer grade is not professional and not competent to undertake programming work of the new grade.**

As regards the allegation on “merger exercise is a plot to pave way for contracting out of facility / venue management”, this Association always reiterates, with the assurance of the management that the new Leisure Service Manager grade upon merger shall maintain the continual role of contract management, despite the different outsourcing attempts already or now being arranged by the department. We appreciate the goodwill intention of the department in making effort to deliver a “one-stop-shop” service, to allow the public book a facility and enroll in programmes at the same location to achieve better customer services. We therefore agree in principle to the merger exercise. **However, this Association maintains the view that the merger should not be carried out at the expenses of staff interests and in no way be construed as a means of staff exploitation.**

Should there be any enquiries for further details of the AO grade, they are welcome to contact Mr George NGAN, Chairman of Amenities Officers Association.

Amenities Officers Association
12 April 2001

By Fax (2602 1480)

4 April 2001

Mr. Edward LAW, AD(Adm)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Dear Edward,

Merger of AO and RSO Grades

I refer to our telephone conversation on 31 March 2001 in respect of the merger. As requested, I wish to reaffirm the stance of the AOA as follows :

- (a) This Association ***agrees in-principle to the merger*** subject to the terms and conditions of the Merger Package which should not jeopardize the interests of the AO grade; and
- (b) In regard to the latest revised Merger Package issued to this Association and to each of the AO and RSO colleagues in a letter signed by DLCS dated 23 March 2001, this Association has ***no objection*** to the management proceeding with the proposal, though there is still room for improvement, for instance on the entry requirement of the new LSM grade to pitch at degree level and the need to establish a manning scale for the new grade, etc.

Notwithstanding the above, this Association reserves our right to revoke the above stance *if* the terms of the Merger Package or the schedule have eventually changed not in the favour or interests of the AO grade.

We maintain our view that the management should honour the original terms of employment for AO II, which is the fundamental principle for providing a personal scale for all serving AO IIs.

Yours sincerely,

(George NGAN)
Chairman, Amenities Officers Association