

To: Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
Bills Committee on Waste Disposal (Amendment) Bill 2005
(By Fax: 2509 9055, total 2 pages and by email)

From: Hong Kong Baptist University

Date: 19 July 2005

Subject: Written Submission of Views on the Waste Disposal (Amendment) Bill 2005
from Hong Kong Baptist University

For the effective control of clinical waste, the disposal of imported waste and transboundary movements and disposal of hazardous wastes, Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) supports the proposed measures to protect public health, conserve our valuable landfill space, and reduce the environmental impact caused by the movement of hazardous waste. Our comments regarding the major issues mentioned in the captioned Bill are summarized as below:

Disposal of clinical waste in CWTC

HKBU considers the disposal of clinical waste in CWTC a way to utilize the spare capacity in CWTC and is environmentally acceptable should the following conditions be met:

- 1) the waste source is controlled before processing;
- 2) flue gas and other emission from CWTC are appropriately treated and carefully monitored; and
- 3) waste management hierarchy on clinical waste management is enforced.

The worries of the local community on the risk of harmful emission from CWTC are understandable. However, in a series of workshops organized by the Solid Waste Management Support Group of the Sustainable Development Council, community participants generally expressed understanding that some emission is a necessary evil. Provided that the best available technology is employed to treat the discharge to a low and environmentally acceptable level and that there is high-degree of transparency in the process (e.g. prompt release of emission data) and stringent co-monitoring (by the government and the public), the community will not oppose to such waste disposal method. In fact, the landfilling of clinical waste generates equal level of hazards to the waste facilities and related workers. The current practice also generates leachate and sludge which are likely to contain harmful and infectious products from clinical waste. The environmental and health impact from the disposal of leachate discharge as a result of clinical waste disposal is probably not visible rather than non-existent.

Charging for the disposal of clinical waste in CWTC

The introduction of charges on the disposal of clinical waste is supported. HKBU would like the Government to speed up the recovery of the variable operation cost for chemical and clinical waste from 31% to 100% to uphold the user pay principle and to rid tax-payers the need to subsidize the disposal of privately generated waste in the very near future.

Forbid the disposal of imported non-hazardous waste in Hong Kong

HKBU considers the proposed move in the Bill correct. The proposed new offence however will only be an effective deterrent to the disposal of imported non-hazardous waste in Hong Kong if and only if there is an effective way to prosecute the illegal disposal of such waste in Hong Kong. Judging from the number of illegal dumping incidents occurring in Tai Po and other parts of the New Territories in Hong Kong in the last few years, we worry that the Government still does not have an effective mechanism to prosecute fly-tipping. We would therefore like the Government to step up the detection and prosecution of illegal dumping of any kind of waste and clearly set out the responsibilities for prosecuting illegal dumping and related problems among all related Government departments and bureaus.