

Annex B**Responses to Dr Ma Ngok's and Dr Robert Chung's Comments on
the Report on the Public Consultation on
the Development of West Kowloon Cultural District**

We note the comments of Dr Ma Ngok and Dr Robert Chung on the captioned Report prepared by the Public Policy Research Institute of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PPRI), referred to us by the LegCo's Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) Development. At the Subcommittee meeting held on 29 October 2005, Government representatives had answered Members' questions made having regard to the two academics' comments. As requested by the Subcommittee, we append below a detailed reply. In preparing this reply, we had consulted the PPRI and incorporated its views.

1. Overall

We note that in his submission, Dr Ma considered the sample size of telephone polls adequate and the poll is representative of the population. Dr Chung in his submission, considered that PPRI had done a good job in processing the data and compiling the Report. We also note Dr Chung's acknowledgment that the engagement of an independent academic research institute would enhance the credibility of the analysis and raise public confidence in the WKCD consultation exercise; and this was an advancement in consultancy work. In relation to the tender document mentioned by Dr Chung, the Government issued a Consultancy Brief when it invited submission of Proposals for the Consultancy Services from academic institutions. Government is prepared to disclose the Consultancy Brief. PPRI has no objection to this. The following is a reply made in response to the other comments of Dr Ma and Dr Chung.

2. Comment Cards**(a) Design of the Comment Card**

- (i) Between mid December 2004 and the end of June 2005,

Government carried out a major public consultation exercise on the development of the WKCD which lasted for over six months. In preparing the public exhibition for the exercise, Government had designed the Comment Card to collect public views. PPRI was appointed thereafter in February 2005 by Government as the Consultant to conduct random telephone polls and analyze public views. The above was detailed in Sections 1.5 and 1.8 of the Report.

- (ii) The Comment Card was designed to facilitate members of the public in expressing their views after visiting the exhibition. As such, the questions in the Comment Card focused mainly on various aspects of the screened-in Proposals. Notwithstanding this, respondents were free to express views on aspects other than the Proposals. For instance, there was an open-ended question (Question 7) for public to give any other comments on the development of WKCD. At the same time, there was an open-ended part for each of the remaining questions (i.e. Questions 1 to 6) for respondents to express their views.
- (iii) As a matter of fact, 12,825 out of the some 33,000 Comment Cards included written comments to the open-ended questions. This shows that there were adequate channels for the public to express their views. PPRI had conducted analysis of these written comments. The findings were clearly presented in the Report.
- (iv) PPRI used three independent telephone polls, some 600 submissions, and records of relevant seminars and meetings of District Councils and LegCo to triangulate and supplement the views from Comment Cards. This was extensively covered in the Report. Through the triangulation of views, PPRI considered the analysis of the Comment Cards reliable.

(b) Distribution and Collection of Comment Cards

The channels for distributing and collecting Comment Cards are set out on P.0-2 and P.1-3 of the Report. These channels are gisted below –

- (i) Comment Cards were distributed at the three Main Exhibition venues. Visitors could complete Comment Cards and drop

them into the collection boxes before leaving the exhibition venues; and

- (ii) visitors could submit Comment Cards via the Internet (either at the exhibition venues or elsewhere), by fax or by mail.

(c) Repeated Submission of Comment Cards

To encourage the public to express their views during the consultation period and having regard to the possibility that members of the public might wish to send in their views again after gaining a deeper understanding of the project over the six-month public consultation period, Government did not establish any rules to prohibit repeated visits to exhibitions or repeated submissions of Comment Cards. During the preparation stage of the consultation, Government fully understood that it must strike a reasonable balance between encouraging the public to express their views and discouraging false representation of public views. As a balancing measure, Government invited the public to provide personal data and make declaration of developer affiliations on a voluntary basis when they completed the Comment Cards. We believe that this helps to demonstrate that Government had endeavoured to ensure the integrity of this exercise. PPRI has also conducted separate analysis of the relevant sub-categories and set out its findings in the Report.

(d) Strengths and limitations of Comment Cards

PPRI and Government fully appreciate that Comment Card has its strengths and limitations. PPRI had presented these in Section 5 (P.5-1 and P5-2) of the Report. Given these, Government collected public views through different channels to gauge and triangulate views from various sources. The Report had also pointed out that the opinions of interested respondents, who took the time and effort to gain an understanding of the issues and the trouble to submit their views through Comments Cards deserve special attention.

(e) Opinion Survey at Exhibition venue as proposed by Dr Ma

Conducting opinion surveys at the exhibition venue would also suffer from certain limitations. For instance, they may collect views from repeated visitors to the exhibitions and may not reach those people who cannot spare the time to visit the exhibitions. In this

consultation exercise, one of the channels for collecting views was through random telephone polls. This was done through a scientific sampling method and in an unbiased manner.

3. Telephone Polls

(a) Objectives of Telephone Polls

As mentioned in Section 4.1.1 of the Report, the questionnaires of the telephone polls were developed by PPRI consultants in consultation with Government and having regard to the following objectives –

- (i) to assess public opinion on the general concept of the WKCD;
- (ii) to triangulate the results of the Comment Cards received regarding the three screened-in Proposals; and
- (iii) to assess public opinion on specific issues relating to the WKCD not covered in the Comment Cards.

Some questions of the telephone polls were designed to triangulate views from Comment Cards; while some were designed having regard to the public concerns expressed in the written submissions.

(b) Questionnaires of Telephone Polls

- (i) The background information provided in the questions is all statement of facts. PPRI included such statement of facts having regard to the written submissions received. This is a technical consideration for developing the questionnaires so as to ensure that the poll questions were simple and easy to understand, and members of the public could grasp the questions and give clear answers.

For example –

- For questions on the ‘Canopy’, all background information was statement of facts.

- For question on the ‘Single Development Approach’, the pros and cons of the approach were presented clearly in an unbiased manner. [Note : We have issued Corrigendum on the WKCD project website to amend the typing error in Section 5.6 of the Report.]
 - For questions relating to the operation mode of the arts and cultural facilities, terms like ‘Trust Fund Mode’, ‘Non-profit Making Organizations’, etc were used having regard to the views expressed in the written submissions. This follows the approach adopted under the Grounded Theory.
- (ii) Most of the questions in the three telephone polls were identical. Some changes in the second and third telephone polls were necessary to gauge and triangulate additional views especially due to the long public consultation period which lasted over six months.
- (iii) It is necessary for PPRI to consult Government in developing questionnaires for the telephone polls. PPRI could only develop useful questions after it has acquired a better understanding of the WKCD development and the scope for collecting public views to facilitate policy formulation. Such consultation would not affect PPRI’s independence. In preparing the questionnaires, Government had suggested to include questions like “was it necessary to extend the public consultation period”; and questions on the cost of the Canopy.

(c) Whether Telephone Poll Questions are leading

During the preparation stage for the telephone poll, we understood that developing questions was very important and it was necessary to ensure the questions were neutral and clear. PPRI did not consider the questions leading because –

- (i) V9, V10 – Written submissions received by Government after commencement of the public consultation exercise had touched on the planning and operation mode of the WKCD project. Some of them also mentioned terms like ‘independent

organisation’, ‘Trust Fund’ and ‘non-profit making organization’. PPRI developed questions based on these views to facilitate triangulation of public views from various channels.

- (ii) V22 – We noted from the first and the second polls that majority of the poll respondents preferred ‘early implementation of the project’ and ‘in-depth discussion on the policy of cultural development’ at the same time. In the circumstances, a question (v23 of the third Questionnaire) relating to the urgency of project implementation was added to triangulate views received from the first and second telephone polls. PPRI considered that the public did not indicate their preferred timing for completing the WKCD project. Nevertheless it was clear from their response that the majority would like to see early implementation of the project. Although they suggested that more monitoring measures should be put in place, they did not want to see the project to be delayed indefinitely.
- (iii) V24, V25, V26, V26b, V28 – We provided background information with a view to giving members of the public a better understanding of the subject to facilitate their response. We have no intention to affect public views.

(d) Knowledge about the WKCD

Amongst the 4,553 poll respondents, about 70% of them knew that there was a public consultation for the WKCD project. In addition, over 20% of the poll respondents correctly answered that there were three screened-in Proposals in the development of WKCD. This indicated that poll respondents had certain knowledge about the WKCD. PPRI also pointed out that the evidence from the telephone polls was collected in an unbiased manner, and could be demonstrated to be statistically reliable and valid. Moreover, from a public policy perspective, the opinions of the general public must deserve the utmost attention. On the other hand, members of the public are often not well informed about the issue. PPRI had analysed their opinions in that light.

4. Canopy

Below is PPRI's analysis of the views collected during public consultation –

- (a) results of the three telephone polls showed that the majority (51%) of respondents liked the Canopy as a landmark;
- (b) result of the three telephone polls also showed that among those who were positive and neutral towards the Canopy, about 66% considered that they would continue to support the construction of the Canopy if the cost of the Canopy was within 20% of the total cost of the WKCD project;
- (c) about 72% of the respondents of the close-ended questions in Comment Cards selected the canopy design of one of the three Proposals;
- (d) written comments on the Canopy were mainly negative. PPRI considers that for those who object, they would take the time and effort to send in their views while those who support may not do so.

On the basis of the above findings, PPRI concluded that public opinions on the Canopy were 'inconclusive'. This is a reliable and robust conclusion.

5. Anonymising Proponents in the interim

As pointed out by the Government representatives at the LegCo House Committee special meeting on 7.10.2005, in the light of Government's intention to introduce a number of additional requirements which could significantly affect the view taken by the screened-in Proponents regarding the development of the WKCD, Government has anonymised the Proponents in the interim to avoid premature disclosure of the rank order of the screened-in Proposals as indicated by the respondents to the consultation exercise. Government's objective is to avoid giving any possible advantage, real or perceived, to the Proponent whose Proposal has come first in the popularity ranking at this particular stage. Government undertakes to disclose relevant information at a later stage.

6. Findings of Surveys conducted by Other Organisations on the WKCD Development

During the public consultation period, we welcome views on the development of WKCD. Of the 623 written submissions received, five organizations submitted findings of six surveys on the WKCD development. We have obtained the consent of these organizations for treating these surveys as their written submissions. Hence, PPRI had presented these, including the findings of a survey which interviewed over 700 persons at each of two exit polls conducted, in Section 5.3 of the Report.

**Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau
6 December 2005**