

For information
on 11 July 2005

Legislative Council
Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting
Broadcasting Services of Radio Television Hong Kong

Background

The Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) is a Government department that serves the role of a public service broadcaster (PSB). Its aim is to inform, educate and entertain the general public and specific target audiences through a balanced mix of high quality programming. RTHK is editorially independent to ensure provision of fair, balanced and objective news and public affairs programmes. It provides a channel of communication for different sectors of the community and the Government to put forward their views on matters of public interest. RTHK is funded by the Government, and it does not receive any commercial sponsorship and advertisements.

2. Under the Framework Agreement between the Secretary for Commerce, Industry and Technology (the Secretary) and the Director of Broadcasting (the Director) which specifies the respective responsibilities of both parties in relation to each other, the Secretary is responsible for providing policy guidance to the Director in defining the programmes of activities on radio, television and new media services, as well as agreeing the underlying activities. The Secretary also has the responsibility to review the policy aim and operational objectives of these programmes. The Director, on the other hand, is responsible for managing the activities of each programme of activity, and helping the Secretary to review and re-define the policy aspects of each programme to achieve the aims and mission of RTHK.

Public Service Broadcasters and Commercial Broadcasters

3. PSBs provide an alternative to commercial broadcasters in providing unbiased and diverse programmes free from commercial considerations. Since PSBs have an assured source of funding and do

not have to compete with commercial broadcasters for ratings, they are in an advantageous position in producing high quality programmes, in trying out innovative ones which commercial broadcasters may feel inhibited about as well as in providing programmes which commercial broadcasters are not commercially motivated to produce. This fits into RTHK's mission of serving a broad spectrum of audiences and catering to the needs of minority interest groups, as well as delivering programming which contributes to the openness and cultural diversity of Hong Kong. It also aligns with RTHK's aim of providing quality output.

4. PSBs should enrich programme choice for the public in terms of genre, types and content. Due to their unique position, PSBs should not pre-occupy themselves with competing with commercial broadcasters for ratings, or produce programmes which are supplied in abundance by commercial broadcasters. Otherwise, the distinctive role of a PSB in rendering public service will be called into question. PSBs and commercial broadcasters fulfil different broadcasting needs of the public. They have different priorities in determining the programming policy and priority. They complement, instead of compete, with each other.

RTHK's Programmes

5. In fulfilling its role as a PSB, RTHK is already providing a variety of programmes, some of which serve a broad spectrum of audiences, while others cater to minority interest. To strive for continuous improvement, the Secretary and the Director would keep programming in RTHK under constant review to enable RTHK to fulfil its role as a PSB.