

**The Views of the Association of Engineering Professionals in Society (AES) on  
The Development of West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD)  
At the Panel on Planning, Lands and Works - Special meeting on 6 January 2005**

1. The AES welcomes the WKCD project as one of the most important urban development projects to be implemented by the Government and the project will bring benefits to the community as a whole.
2. The AES is supportive of the major theme of the planning strategy in developing the district as a premier cultural hub in the region and an integrated player in the creative and artistic arena on the world stage.
3. The AES has no adverse comment on the strategy of estate development in the district, so long as it would provide the needed financial support to the cultural development and its scale and extent would not outrange the cultural development.
4. The AES considers that the idea of erecting a gigantic canopy, some 150 m in height and covering some 20 hectares of land, as the new landmark for Hong Kong needs to be rigorously reviewed from financial, technical and sustainable grounds.
5. The AES's initial view is that with an estimated construction cost of some 3 to 4 billion Hong Kong dollars and an estimated huge daily maintenance cost, we should proceed with great caution and perhaps the canopy alone should be subject to a value management assessment.
6. Whilst the professional engineers in Hong Kong are capable of producing an elegant technical solution so that the signature design feature could be put in place, there are still many other issues related to the canopy structure in need of detailed address. These may include terrorism attacks (e.g. aeroplane strike and bomb threat) and natural disasters (e.g. typhoon, tsunami and earthquake).
7. The canopy should also be subject to a sustainability impact assessment, which would cover areas such as environmental impact, energy efficiency and conservation.
8. Taking into account of the above considerations, the AES has the view that landmark is not necessarily restricted to the canopy option. Many of the landmarks in Hong Kong and many other cities in the world are not expensive man-made features and many were gradually developed into a landmark feature, because of their historical values or some memorable historical events of human interest or content (e.g. great love story, outstanding invention, important revolution change, etc).
9. The AES is susceptible to the single developer approach, as most of the design and construction work could be contracted to companies and firms of close relation with the successful bidding Developer. This may be unfair and unjust to many of the local medium and small sized companies, who are striving for survival in today's difficult construction market.
10. The AES would therefore like to urge the Administration to increase the extent of participation of local engineering companies in the development of the WKCD project and the execution of which should be expedited for the benefit of the community as a whole.