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28 May 2010

Mrs Constance Li
Clerk to the Finance Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mrs Li,

**Proposal to implement a verified, authenticated
and searchable electronic database of
Hong Kong legislation (“Database”)**

We refer to the funding approval obtained for the proposal under reference from the Finance Committee at its meeting of 14 May 2010. At the meeting Dr Hon. Margaret Ng asked whether the Hong Kong Bar Association had any particular view about the proposed retirement of the Loose-leaf Edition of the Laws of Hong Kong. I agreed to obtain the views of the Bar Association.

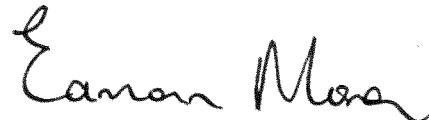
We informed both the Bar Association and the Law Society of Hong Kong of the funding approval after the meeting. I am pleased to report to the Finance Committee that both the Bar Association and the Law Society support the establishment and implementation of the Database. The Law Society has also expressed the view that the Database is long overdue.

However, the Bar Council has expressed reservations about the retirement of the Loose-leaf Edition after the implementation of the Database. They are concerned that after the retirement, access to the Laws of Hong Kong would in fact require as a precondition access to a computer connected to the internet, a printer (if a hardcopy is required) and the necessary computer skills. They consider that it is necessary also to make available the Laws of Hong Kong in a print form that is no less accessible than the present Loose-leaf Edition.

We would like to note that we appreciate the concern of the Bar Association and we are agreed on the principle and their observation. Indeed, we take it as our mission to make the laws more accessible. We have sent a reply to the Bar Association to clarify the issue in clearer terms. There is no intention at all that the Government will no longer publish a print version of consolidated legislation. In addition to the print-out function for users to download and print their own copies, we intend to continue to make available hardcopies (official whole chapter reprints) for sale to the public. The new hardcopy setup will be more accessible than the current Loose-leaf arrangement because the Database will assist to reduce the lead time from placing an order to delivery. Also, the need to arrange for the manual replacement of loose sheets will be avoided.

We stand ready to listen to the view of the Bar Association and the Law Society further from time to time so that we could deliver a new system with better services to the professions and the general public.

Yours sincerely,



(Eamonn Moran)
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