

Panel on Information Technology and Broadcasting - 31 May 2010

Honorable Chairman and Members,

Designing Hong Kong fully supports RTHK as an independent public service broadcaster. As such we urge – now that the policy direction has been settled, that RTHK is provided with an immediate increase in funding.

RTHK is to provide to Hong Kong people editorially independent, professional, distinctive and high-quality radio, television and new media services.

RTHK provides a platform for the discussion of public policies and issues, and the expression of views thereon without fear or favour.

The inherent public purpose of a public broadcaster is to uphold social justice. Strong safeguards are required to ensure editorial independence, including the ability to comment on Government policies.

In this respect there is no strong case for the Advisory Board for RTHK unless the mandate is limited to ensure that the organization is sustainable and that all legal and ethical standards are upheld.

The Board should not have the power to interfere in editorial policy or day-to-day operations of RTHK.

The Board should operate in a transparent manner by opening up its meetings to the public, and members should share RTHK's core values, including editorial independence and impartial and fair reporting.

Advisory Board members should also be appointed through a process of public engagement, including election and open nomination.

The Board shall respect RTHK's editorial independence, share the values of public service broadcasting and be free from political and commercial influence.

In the meantime, we urge for the urgent implementation with adequate funding of the digital audio and digital television broadcasting initiatives.

Moreover, we urge the Government to recognize that RTHK is the only station providing adequate quality English language broadcasts where other stations have chosen to focus on the profitable Cantonese language broadcasting services.

However, English language broadcasts appreciated by international talent working in Hong Kong, English speaking residents including returning Chinese, and overseas visitors. As English is now on AM only, as a world class city, priority must be given to making an FM frequency available for English language services throughout the city.

Thank you.

Paul Zimmerman,

Chief Executive Officer, Designing Hong Kong Limited