

Our Ref. : SWD 1/15/903DG
Tel. No. : 2892 5555
Fax No. : 2838 0757

1 December 2010

Clerk to Public Accounts Committee
(Attn.: Ms Macy NG)
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms NG,

**The Director of Audit's Report on the
results of value for money audits (Report No. 55)**

**Residential treatment and rehabilitation services for drug abusers
(Chapter 10)**

Thank you for your letter of 22 November 2010 on the captioned subject.

Our reply in response to the points raised in your letter is attached at **Annex**. Please feel free to contact the undersigned or Ms WONG Yin-ye, Chief Social Work Officer (Youth), at 2892 5122 if further information is required.

Sorry for the late reply.

Yours sincerely,



(FUNG Man-lok)
for Director of Social Welfare

c.c. Secretary for Labour and Welfare	(fax no. 2537 3539)
Secretary for Security	(fax no. 2537 0325)
Commissioner for Narcotics	(fax no. 2523 5731)
Director of Health	(fax no. 2893 9613)
Director of Lands	(fax no. 2152 0450)
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury	(fax no. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit	(fax no. 2583 9063)

**The Director of Audit's Report on the
results of value for money audits (Report No. 55)
Residential treatment and rehabilitation services for drug abusers
(Chapter 10)**

1. In consultation with the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau (ND/SB), the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has made strenuous efforts to assist drug treatment and rehabilitation centres for drug abusers (referred to “treatment centres” hereafter) in securing suitable sites / premises for re-provisioning, where in-situ upgrading or redevelopment is not feasible, with a view to meeting the licensing requirements. Of the 19 treatment centres licensed since 2002, six were licensed during 2009 and 2010. We anticipate that another two treatment centres will be re-provisioned while another five treatment centres will be upgraded in-situ for licensing in the next two years. The two centres under reprovisioning have successfully secured a suitable new site for combined operation, following necessary local consultation and concerted efforts made by SWD, the ND/SB and other government departments in collaboration with the NGO concerned.
2. In searching for suitable sites for re-provisioning of treatment centres, we have to consider a basket of factors including the capacity and operational needs of the treatment centres requiring re-provisioning; space and area requirements; conditions of existing facilities on sites available; other planned uses; accessibility, planning and land usage; scale, technical feasibility, cost and time of the conversion / construction works required; site compatibility with the treatment models or programmes of the treatment centre; views of relevant departments, etc.
3. Vacant school premises are made known to SWD either through circulation by other government departments, mainly the Government Property Agency (GPA) or the Lands Department (LandsD), or through referral from GPA or LandsD upon direct application by an operating non-governmental organisation (NGO) of a treatment centre which has identified the premises. Our records indicated that of all the vacant school premises circulated to SWD from 2004-05 to 2009-10, 53 vacant school premises were available for SWD’s assessment and consideration of re-provisioning of treatment centres. The breakdown of these 53 cases by year is tabulated in the Appendix.
4. Among them, two sites were identified and applied for by operating NGOs. SWD supported their applications because the treatment centres had genuine need of reprovisioning and the sites were considered suitable for the purpose with due consideration of the factors in paragraph 2 above. Policy support has also been given by the ND/SB along this line.
5. SWD has carefully looked into each of the remaining 51 premises. They were considered against the criteria mentioned in paragraph 2 above and found not suitable. Inadequacy in area provision, land status (e.g. falling into private land) technical difficulties, competing uses and other factors were noted. In many cases,

local objections were anticipated and were one of the pertinent issues that we had taken into account. However, it might not be appropriate to attribute anticipated local objections as the only criterion that had affected our assessment of these premises. This notwithstanding, there was no case where vacant school premises were not considered due to “actual” local objection.

6. SWD and ND/SB will continue the joint effort in identifying possible sites and promoting to the community the important role played by treatment centres and call for local support for setting up treatment centres.

Social Welfare Department
December 2010

**Number of Vacant School Premises made known to the SWD
for Consideration of Re-provisioning of Treatment Centres
from 2004-05 to 2009-10**

Year	No. of vacant school premises known to SWD	No. of vacant school premises supported	No. of vacant school premises not pursued further
2004-05	0	N.A.	N.A.
2005-06	0	N.A.	N.A.
2006-07	8	0	8
2007-08	5	1	4
2008-09	4	1	3
2009-10	36 (Note 1)	0	36
Total	53	2 (Note 2)	51

Note 1 This excludes vacant school premises which already had other planned use or had been found “not suitable for re-provisioning of treatment centres” in the previous years but were circulated / made known to SWD again in 2009-10.

Note 2 One of the two premises supported by SWD for treatment centre was later found not available due to the subsequent change in development in town planning intentions and programmes, whereas the application for the other premises is still being considered.