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Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 9 November 2010**

Conversion of aqua privies into flushing toilets

Purpose

This paper gives a brief account of past discussions of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") on the conversion of aqua privies ("APs") in the New Territories and outlying islands into flushing toilets.

Background

2. APs are village-type dry latrines without any flushing system. They are provided and maintained by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") in various locations in the New Territories and the outlying islands where no public sewerage system is available and where there is a need for convenience facilities.

3. To meet the rising expectation of the community, FEHD has, in collaboration with the Architectural Services Department, launched a programme to convert APs into flushing toilets where there are public sewers in the vicinity. There were about 550 APs in the territory in 2003.

4. As one of the measures to improve environmental hygiene in Hong Kong, the former Team Clean has recommended that the conversion programme be accelerated. About 100 APs at popular sightseeing spots and locations of high usage in the New Territories and outlying islands would be converted under the programme, including those APs with no immediate access to public sewers. FEHD has since 2005 started to implement a programme on conversion works of APs into flushing toilets by phases.

Deliberations by members

5. The Panel was briefed at the meetings on 25 November 2003, 8 May 2007, 13 May 2008 and 12 May 2009 on the Administration's proposal to convert APs into flushing toilets.

Selection of APs

6. Members were advised that in identifying APs for inclusion in the conversion programme, FEHD would take into account the following factors –

- (a) accessibility: the APs should be accessible either by land or sea transport for desludging services, if public sewers were not available;
- (b) location: priority would be given to APs located near popular sightseeing spots or in tourist areas; and
- (c) usage: priority would be given to APs with a relatively higher usage rate in the districts concerned.

7. Members were also advised that the scope of AP conversion works covers basic refurbishment including installing toilets with a flushing system, alterations to cubicles and the provision of pedestal or squatting type water closets, replacement of internal/external wall and floor finishes, improvement of hand-washing facilities, and improvement of lighting and ventilation.

Implementation timetable

8. At the Panel meeting on 25 November 2003, members were briefed on the Administration's proposal to convert about 100 APs into flushing toilets. According to the Administration, the conversion plan was expected to be completed in three years' time and in three batches starting from 2004-2005. The entire project was expected to be completed by end 2007.

9. Members generally welcomed the proposal, but asked whether the completion time could be advanced. The Administration advised that there were several factors to consider in estimating the project completion timeframe, such as manpower and complexity of projects. For some conversion projects, the technical problems such as land resumption and connection of sewage required a longer time to resolve. Three years would be a reasonable time to have 100 aqua privies converted into flushing toilets. The Administration also advised that priorities would be given to aqua privies in tourist spots and with a high utilisation rate.

10. At the Panel meeting on 8 May 2007, members were advised that as a continued effort to improve toilet facilities, the Administration planned to convert another 50 APs where were of comparatively higher patronage rate or at

locations close to scenic spots and tourist attractions into flushing toilets under Phases 3 and 4 as an extended conversion programme. The scope of the conversion works for APs covered in the extended programme would follow that for the prevailing conversion programme.

11. Members were subsequently advised that as set out in the 2008 Policy Agenda, the Administration aimed to convert all APs into flushing toilets by 2012-2013. It had thus planned to convert another 80 APs into flushing toilets under Phase 5.

12. At the meeting on 12 May 2009, the Administration advised that in response to members' request for expediting the conversion programme, and to support the Chief Executive's initiative to create jobs, it had reviewed the works programme for about 290 remaining APs and proposed to re-schedule the conversion works in two phases (Phases 6 and 7), instead of three phases as originally planned through deployment of extra resources. In addition, the commencement date of the last phase (Phase 7) would be advanced by six months from end 2010 to mid 2010. The target completion date of the entire conversion programme would be 2012-2013. Members welcomed the Administration's revised conversion programme.

Environmental concerns

13. Some members were concerned whether the foul smell problem would deteriorate if the underground septic tank was to be altered into a holding tank. The Administration advised that the foul smell problem would be improved with the installation of toilet bowl with flushing facility and the increase in desludging frequency from half yearly to two to three times a week. The Administration further advised that APs were cleansed once to three times a day depending on their utilization. The converted toilets would be provided with sensor activated hand-washing faucets.

Latest development

14. The Administration plans to seek funding approval from the Legislative Council ("LegCo") for the last phase of the conversion programme.

Relevant papers

15. A list of relevant papers and documents is in the **Appendix** for members' reference. The papers and documents are available on the LegCo website at <http://www.legco.gov.hk/>.

Relevant Papers/Documents

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Papers/Motion Debate</u>
Public Works Subcommittee	2 March 2005	Administration's paper PWSC(2004-05)61 Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. PWSC 63/04-05
	1 June 2005	Administration's paper PWSC(2005-06)17 Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. PWSC82/04-05
	20 June 2007	Administration's paper PWSC(2007-08)36 Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. PWSC 100/06-07
	13 June 2008	Administration's paper PWSC(2008-09)26 Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. PWSC135/07-08
	10 June 2009	Administration's paper PWSC(2009-10)47 Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. PWSC134/08-09
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	25 November 2003	Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)407/03-04(05) Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(2)888/03-04
	8 May 2007	Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)1785/06-07(01)

Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene	13 May 2008	Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)1868/07-08(01) Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(2)2547/07-08
	12 May 2009	Administration's paper LC Paper No. CB(2)1489/08-09(05) Minutes of meeting LC Paper No. CB(2)1754/08-09

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