

海 事 處  
香港統一碼頭道三十八號  
海港政府大樓



**MARINE DEPARTMENT**  
HARBOUR BUILDING,  
38 PIER ROAD,  
G.P.O. Box 4155,  
HONG KONG.

網 站      **WEB SITE :** <http://www.mardep.gov.hk>  
本 處 檔 號      **OUR REF.:**  
電 話 號 碼      **TEL. NO.:** 2852 4401  
傳 真 號 碼      **FAX NO.:** 2854 9210

30 November 2012

Miss Mary SO  
Clerk  
Public Accounts Committee  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

(By fax 2840 0716 and email)

Dear Miss SO,

**Public Accounts Committee**

**Consideration of Chapter 9 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 59**

**Provision of local services by the Marine Department**

Thank you for your letter dated 23 November 2012.

My responses to the questions raised in your letter are set out in the Appendix for your consideration. The Chinese version of my responses will be sent to you next week.

Yours sincerely,

(Francis H.P. LIU)  
Director of Marine

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Fax : 2147 5239)  
Secretary for Transport and Housing (Fax : 2523 9187)  
Director of Audit (Fax : 2583 9063)

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**Answers to Questions concerning  
the Provision of Local Services by the Marine Department**

- (a) Whether there are any difficulties for the Marine Department ("MD") to publicise on its website information of berth vacancy and upcoming tendering exercise; if so, what are these difficulties?

MD has arranged to publicise on MD's website the information of berth vacancy with effect from 1.12.2012. Tender invitations will continue to be published in the Government Gazette and local newspapers as well as on MD's website.

- (b) Whether there are any difficulties for MD to replace the unserviceable vehicle entry/exit control systems for Tuen Mun and Rambler Channel public cargo working areas ("PCWAs"); if so, what are these difficulties?

As mentioned in paragraph 2.31(a) of the report, the software operating system and spare parts of the computer hardware for the existing systems were no longer available for replacement. MD agrees with the Audit recommendation to expedite action to replace the unserviceable systems. MD has been exploring with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department the feasibility of introducing a new system at the PCWAs, including the possibility of using the Octopus system which is already in use in some PCWAs.

- (c) What is the reason(s) for MD not to conduct more frequent reviews of the financial performance of PCWAs?

Following established practice, MD carried out reviews of the financial performance of the PCWAs at three-year intervals to tie in with the tendering of PCWA berths for a new Berth Licence Agreement (BLA) term. As the 2011-16 BLAs will run for five years, MD agrees with the Audit recommendation that more frequent reviews should be conducted. MD is conducting an interim review of the 2012-13 financial performance of the PCWAs. The review will be completed in March 2013.

- (d) What is the reason(s) for the limited supply of authorized surveyors whose duties are to conduct surveys of low risk vessels, and whether consideration would be given to, say, collaborating with vocational training institutions in coming up with more training places for people who aspire to become authorized surveyors?

Authorized surveyors must possess the required qualification and experience. The required qualification is being a Registered Professional Engineer (Marine and Naval Architecture Discipline) and having his name on the register established under section 7 of the Engineers Registration Ordinance (Cap 409), or having Corporate (professional) membership of a maritime institute. The required experience is at least four years' maritime practical experience in the field of maritime professional in marine engineering and/or naval architecture, including marine engine and system maintenance or repairing, operation inspection or technical services of vessels, ship design or structural construction or ship-repairing/maintenance, or teaching/training; and plan approval, inspection or survey of newly-built or existing vessels.

As ship building and ship repairs are no longer major industries in Hong Kong, there are currently limited places in the local tertiary institutions on marine engineering and no local academic courses for naval architecture. Any qualified professionals will also have to satisfy the specific experience requirement in plan approval and survey of local vessels in order to become authorized surveyors.

The Government launched a Sea-going Training Incentive Scheme in 2004. This provides subsidy to encourage youngsters to take up and complete sea-going training with a view to developing their future careers in the port and maritime industry. As at today, more than 200 youngsters have joined the Scheme and out of these, three deck officers and two marine engineer officers have been qualified as Master Mariners and Chief Engineers respectively. After gaining relevant experience, some of them may acquire the professional requirements to be authorized surveyors.

In response to the Audit recommendation in paragraph 3.14 of the report, MD is reviewing the survey work arrangements and requirements with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in performing its dual role as a survey service provider and a regulator.

- (e) What is the reason(s) for MD not to issue reminders to vessel owners with expired licences irrespective of the expiry dates, and whether consideration would be given to stepping up efforts in contacting the vessel owners with expired licences, such as by telephone, facsimile, electronic mail and cable?

As mentioned in paragraph 3.20 of the report, since November 2008, MD has conducted four rounds of exercises issuing letters to remind owners of specific Classes of vessels with licences expired for a certain period to renew their operating licences. Since October 2011, the MD has carried out monthly reviews to identify vessels of all Classes with licences expired for one to two months for issuing reminders. Following the Audit recommendation, MD will issue reminders to all expired licence cases irrespective of the expiry date in phases, and will follow up by telephone calls to closely monitor the feedbacks and evaluate the effectiveness of this measure.

- (f) What is the reason(s) for MD not to require address proof for renewal of vessel licences?

In accordance with Section 37 of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Certification and Licensing) Regulation, Cap. 548D, the owner of a local vessel shall within seven working days after any change in the particulars specified in the certificate of ownership notify the Director of Marine of the changes. The owner's address is one of the specified items in the certificate of ownership. MD will follow up on the Audit recommendation and require vessel owners to present their proof of address when applying for licence renewal starting from December 2012 with six months' grace period.

- (g) What is the reason(s) for MD not to strengthen enforcement action against private moorings not used by the designated vessels as recommended by the Director of Audit in paragraph 4.14 of Chapter 9 of his Report No. 59?

As mentioned in paragraph 4.7 of the report, the Shipping and Port Control Regulations (Cap 313A) provide, inter alia, that a private mooring shall not be used by any vessels not owned by or under the control of the mooring owner except with the consent of the mooring owner or by direction of the Director of Marine.

MD will step up patrol at designated mooring areas to check whether the private mooring is no longer used by the designated vessels, and take enforcement action as appropriate, including to verify whether consent has been given by the mooring owner. MD is also upgrading the computer system to enhance the linkage between the vessels' licence information and the database of private moorings to facilitate its patrol officers to take more effective and efficient enforcement action against any irregularities identified.

- (h) What is the difficult(ies) encountered by MD for not being able to expedite the translation process of marine accident investigation reports, and whether MD will actively explore ways to address the problem?

Factors affecting the translation process of marine accident investigation reports include the technical nature and length of the reports, the professional language used in the drafting and the regular change in posting of Official Languages Officers in MD.

In most marine accident investigations, the translation of the investigation reports into the Chinese language is only required for accidents involving local or river trade vessels. MD will amend the investigation guidelines to specify that for incidents that involved local or river trade vessels operators, the related investigation reports should be drafted in Chinese.