

**PLASTIC FREE SEAS**  
無塑海洋

January 13, 2017

Subcommittee on Refuse Collection and Resource Recovery  
Panel on Environmental Affairs  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, HK

Dear Chairman and Committee Members,

Plastic Free Seas is a registered Hong Kong charity focusing on educating the public, in particular students, on the issue of plastic marine pollution and related waste issues. In addition to our education programmes, we liaise with the government and corporates in an attempt to solve these problems. Effective waste management on land will ensure that less waste ends up washing onto our beaches and coastlines. Through our extensive work cleaning beaches over the years and investigating the issue of waste in general in HK, we have some insight as to waste reduction measures that should be implemented to reduce the impacts on our surrounding water.

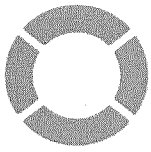
### **Waste Sorting**

Even though Hong Kong has a very high number of waste and recycling bins, the placement of these bins haphazardly (eg single orange bins frequently placed away from recycling bins) results in decreased use of recycling bins and contamination of the recycling stream. Despite the funding that the ECF has provided for education on the issue of waste and recycling, there has been little improvement in these areas. Improper recycling (contaminated bins) leads to a large portion of the source separated rubbish being sent to landfill. With the implementation of waste charging, this problem may be exasperated if the public is not better educated and incentivised to sort properly.

What plans does the EPD have to improve the sorting of waste at source?

### **Lack of Processing in HK**

With regard to the issue of refuse collection and resource recovery, one issue we would like to discuss is the lack of infrastructure in HK for the next stage after resource recovery, in particular for plastic. Plastic, and most other recovered resources, are exported for recycling. The recycling of plastic depends upon demand, and when the value of oil is low, there is less of a demand for plastic to be recycled, especially if it is not processed to pellets or flakes.



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無塑海洋

The current system in Hong Kong utilises many small-scale receiving and sorting facilities, and these plastic 'recycling' operators struggle to acquire the quantities and regular supply of valuable and clean plastic they need to make this business profitable.

We feel that there needs to be improvements in the collection and recovery of this resource and there needs to be fewer but larger processing plants equipped to efficiently sort and process plastic to flakes or pellets in Hong Kong.

### **Community Recycling Centres**

On the EPD's Waste Reduction website, it states that the Community Recycling Centres have been created as places to disseminate information; to bring recyclables of lower value (plastic, glass and WEEE); and for residents who do not have source recycling to bring their recyclables.

If these centres are for residents of buildings without source separation, people should be able to bring all of their recyclable materials to the centres. Recycling needs to be convenient, and going to more than one location to dispose of different types of recyclables is not convenient.

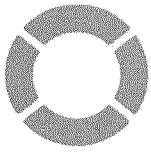
Although not a great substitute for residential source separation, the Community Recycling Centres do seem to provide a valuable service educating, raising awareness and facilitating recycling of plastic by businesses in the local communities. That said, in our opinion this should not be a necessary service if proper recycling collection was in place for all sectors of the community.

### **Plastic Drink Bottle Deposit**

We strongly feel that it is imperative that a deposit for plastic drink bottles be implemented under the PRS to increase the recovery of this plastic and to keep it separate for efficient recycling. There is a demand for recycled PET in Hong Kong yet there is not enough of a supply to meet this demand. This material is too valuable to allow it to be sent to landfill or to be incinerated.

### **Polystyrene**

Finding an alternative to polystyrene, both the large boxes used to keep items cold (ie fish, vegetables) and the smaller containers used for food and beverage take-away meals and drinks is of utmost importance as broken down polystyrene comprises a large percentage of the waste found on beaches. Many places around the world have imposed bans on this single-use disposable product. A tax or levy on the use of polystyrene (and other single-use disposable plastic items) in an effort to reduce the usage is also a possible solution.



**PLASTIC FREE SEAS**

無塑海洋

### **Single-use plastic packaging for food**

The increasing prevalence of non-recyclable and excessive plastic packaging used by produce retailers (especially supermarkets) is a cause for concern. Mandatory Producer Responsibility Schemes (PRS) need to be introduced by the government to ensure excessive plastic packaging is reduced. This action will decrease the amount of plastic passing through recycling plants that then ends up in landfills. Excessive packaging is also a concern for customers as they will have to pay extra to get rid of unwanted packaging. Once waste charging is implemented, if all the single-use and often non-recyclable plastic packaging is put in the recycling bins (to avoid waste charges), an unnecessary extra burden will be inflicted on the recycling system.

### **Illegal Dumping**

To eliminate illegal dumping, it is necessary to better enforce the existing regulations against dumping. The impending waste charging has the potential to increase the incidents of illegal dumping. Therefore, the public needs to know that there are policies in place and that law enforcement will be strictly implemented. Presently, the number of fines has no correlation to the amount of illegal dumping happening.

### **Medical Waste**

Although not directly related to waste collection and recovery, the issue of medical waste washing up on the beaches last year should also be mentioned as it is a category of waste which is affecting the people of Hong Kong. From our beach cleanups we know that these items of potential harm come from several land-based source points. Syringes and medicine vials used in both human and animal settings are most likely being illegally dumped. Setting up *priority task forces* to investigate where this waste is coming from is imperative to prevent harm to the public.

If you have any questions or would like further clarification on any of the above, please feel free to contact me at [dana@plasticfreeseas.org](mailto:dana@plasticfreeseas.org) or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

Dana Winograd  
Director – Operations  
On behalf of Plastic Free Seas