

# **Report on the Companion to the history, rules and practices of the Legislative Council**

## **Introduction**

1. The completion of the Legislative Council *Companion*, after a period of over three years of intensive work, is a major achievement which puts the Legislative Council on a comparable footing to many overseas jurisdictions in terms of having an exposition of its own procedure and practices and how they have evolved in a single, authoritative commentary.

## **Format and Content**

2. The general format & purpose of the *Companion* are set out in the Preface with some explanation of its compilation. In Part 1 there is a logical progression through the chapters from the history of the organisation and its predecessors to the arrangement of business and rules of order, the role of Members, the administrative structures, relations with the Chief Executive and the Committee system. The principles behind these arrangements are set out against the background of the general framework of the Basic Law and the common law tradition of Hong Kong.

3. In Part 2 further detail on the workings of the institution and its committees is set out, as well as the inevitably complex arrangements for financial business. The information in this section is accurately supported by rulings from the President and chairpersons of committees, as well as by precedents in the handling of business and, where appropriate, references to practices in overseas jurisdictions.

4. Finally, a third part deals with the subject of public participation and outreach, which are regarded as highly important activities in all modern legislatures. The system for redress of grievances is set out and the steps taken to engage the public of all sorts, including disadvantaged minorities, with the work of the Legislative Council. The important work of establishing an archive is described and explained.

## **Style and Language**

5. Given this considerable coverage and the diverse readership the *Companion* is likely to attract, there is inevitable overlap of certain details between the sections and across chapters but each chapter may be used discretely for reference.

6. A clear and direct language, free of jargon, is maintained throughout the text which is important both from the point of view of clarity but also from that of transparency, making the account readable for experts and the general public alike.

7. It will be important to provide a good index in such a way as to facilitate searches for procedural and constitutional information. It could be available electronically.

## **Editing**

8. I have found no reason to change the overall structure of the work. Therefore I have concentrated on elucidating the text to make its meaning clearer, adding material where I have thought it might be relevant or useful and correcting grammar and syntax as appropriate.

9. The various annexes and appendices provide useful, organisational charts and organograms on the workings of the Council and its Committees, as well as details of the administrative structure, staffing etc.

## **Conclusion**

10. It has been a great pleasure for me to have been involved in the work on the *Companion* during the period of its preparation. As an editor of Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*, I am well aware of the amount of work, effort and consultation that goes into producing an edition of this nature, with its accurate references to the Basic Law, the Ordinances, the Rules of Procedure, House Rules as well as the precedents and practices that guide day-to-day business. I have no doubt that the *Companion* now stands as a comprehensive and authoritative guide to the Legislative Council which will serve specialists, the general public and Honourable Members for generations to come.

Sir Malcolm Jack  
17th March 2016