

Letter from Jeremy Godfrey (former Government Chief Information Officer)

Hong Kong
10 May 2011

The Chairman
Information Technology and Broadcasting Panel
Legislative Council
Jackson Road
Hong Kong

Dear Yuk-Man

I listened to the discussion at yesterday's meeting of the IT and Broadcasting Panel, in which members expressed the wish that I should be more explicit about my concerns about the selection process for the Internet Learning Support Programme (ILSP), and about the action I would like the Panel to take.

Despite having left the Government, I have a continuing contractual obligation to maintain confidentiality, which I am reluctant to breach. That is why I have been careful to seek permission before disclosing details, and why I have not made any substantive statement to the press.

In March, I asked the Permanent Secretary for Communications and Technology (PSCT) for permission to send a paper to the panel putting on record the facts that I consider necessary to correct the misleading impression created by Government statements. However she did not grant permission. Rather, she reminded me of the Government's rules on confidentiality. In the light of the Panel's discussion yesterday, I have renewed my request. I have also asked PSCT to allow me to speak candidly in public about all aspects of the ILSP selection process.

When I left the Government, I informed the administration that I did not intend to speak publicly about my reasons for leaving unless it was necessary to correct misleading statements or to defend my reputation. However the public interest issues are of far greater importance than the impact on my reputation. It has been alleged that there was an improper attempt to interfere with the selection process for political reasons, and that the selection of dual implementers does not represent an efficient or proper use of public funds. The information the Government has provided to the Panel does not enable it to make an informed judgment about these issues, whereas the points I have proposed to put on record would give the Panel a more complete view of the relevant facts.

I cannot agree with the Government's assertion that my proposed points "do not deviate" from the account of the ILSP selection process that they have already given to the Council: if I am permitted to put these points on record, the Panel will be able to judge the accuracy of this assertion for themselves.

I suggest that you invite me to appear before the Panel to give my views and to answer questions. I also suggest that you ask the Government to give me permission to speak freely. Assuming such permission is given, I will submit a paper to the Panel in advance of the meeting. If the Government refuses to give permission, then you might consider whether to use the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance.

I am sorry that you were not able to contact me in the past few weeks. The clerk to the panel has my contact details, and I am very willing to speak to you if you would like.

As I have been approached by the media about my reaction to yesterday's meeting, I shall inform them of the contents of this note.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Godfrey