For information on 8 January 2013

LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Usage and Promotion of Gardens of Remembrance, Scattering Cremains at Sea and Internet Memorial Service

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the usage of the Gardens of Remembrance, scattering cremains at sea and the Internet Memorial Service and sets out the Administration's efforts in the promotion of these services.

Background

- 2. Owing to the scarcity of land in Hong Kong, the Government has, over the past few decades, actively encouraged cremation as a means of disposal of the bodies of the deceased. The statutory six-year exhumation cycle for coffin burials has been implemented and maintained in all public cemeteries while a 10-year exhumation cycle is being adopted for non-permanent coffin burials in cemeteries managed under the Board of Management of Chinese Permanent Cemeteries (BMCPC). We have also ensured that there are adequate cremation facilities to provide cremation sessions for the public in a timely manner. The above measures have proved effective, and the number and percentage of cremations out of the total number of deaths have risen substantially in the past 36 years from 7 300 and 35% in 1975 to 37 900 and 90% in 2011 respectively.
- 3. With a growing and aging population, the annual number of deaths is projected to increase from 42 700 in 2010 to 50 300 in 2020. Correspondingly, the number of cremations is expected to increase from 38 000 in 2010 to 47 300 in 2020. The increasing demand for cremation service gives rise to an increasing need for niches.
- 4. At present, there are a total of eight public columbaria managed by

The eight public columbaria are located in Cape Collinson, Diamond Hill, Wo Hop Shek, Fu Shan, Kwai Chung, Cheung Chau, Peng Chau and Lamma Island.

the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the FEHD) providing a total of 213 300 public niches, which include 45 250 new niches in the new Wo Hop Shek Kiu Tau Road Columbarium and the Diamond Hill Columbarium extension. These are supplemented by the columbarium facilities run by non-government organizations (e.g. the BMCPC), religious entities and the private sector. To increase the supply of public columbaria, the Government is pursuing the 24 potential sites for columbarium development identified across the territory in each of the 18 districts.

- 5. While the Government is making every effort to columbarium facilities, it is not realistic to expect the supply of new niches to ever catch up with the rising demand due to the growing population and competing demands on the finite supply of land in Hong Kong. We are also mindful of numerous challenges we face in seeking to build columbaria in individual districts, including topographical conditions, land use compatibility, infrastructural support, traffic and environmental implications, and last but not least, the concern and objection of residents in the vicinity of the proposed As it is increasingly difficult to find land suitable for columbarium development, it begs the question whether storing cremains in columbaria could be sustained in Hong Kong in the long term. The Government has been taking steps to foster a change in mindset and culture by encouraging community acceptance of more sustainable forms of "green burial" which includes scattering cremains at Gardens of Remembrance and at sea. Increasingly, these forms of interment are no longer just some good-to-have alternatives but are becoming more and more relevant to relieving our reliance on columbarium niches and minimising the spaces required for such facilities.
- 6. Apart from that, with the prevalent use of the internet, the FEHD has developed the Internet Memorial Service for paying tribute to the deceased at any time and from anywhere. Details of the FEHD's promotion efforts are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Gardens of Remembrance (GoRs)

7. Scattering cremains in GoRs is a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way of interment. There are currently ten GoRs in operation within the eight public columbaria managed by the FEHD. They have scenic and tranquil settings and are decorated with seasonal flowers regularly. Dedicated walls are erected for mounting plaques in memory of the deceased. Memorial rituals may be performed before scattering cremains. The public can choose to have the ashes of the deceased scattered by themselves or by FEHD staff. In addition, there are two GoRs, one in the Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery managed by BMCPC and the other in the Pokfulam Chinese Christian Cemetery managed by the Hong Kong Chinese Christian Churches Union.

- 8. The GoRs constructed in the early years are modest in size. To encourage wider use of GoRs and allow more choices, new and bigger GoRs have been constructed in recent years. The new Diamond Hill GoR, commissioned in July 2012, has a sizable area of 2 360m² with dedicated spaces for mounting about 6 000 plaques. The new GoR inside the Wo Hop Shek Kiu Tau Road Columbarium, to be commissioned around the first quarter of 2013, has an area of about 2000m² and provides about 9 000 memorial plaques.
- 9. The annual cases of scattering cremains in GoRs of the FEHD have increased significantly over the past decade, from only five in 2000 to 1 874 in the first eleven months in 2012 (see <u>Annex I</u>). There have been about 147 applications for scattering cremains in the GoR of the BMCPC's Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery for the first year since its commissioning on 28 December 2011. The GoR in the Pokfulam Chinese Christian Cemetery has handled about 170 scattering cases since its introduction in 1998.

Scattering Cremains at Sea

- 10. Scattering cremains at sea is another sustainable way of interment. It is widely practised in many parts of the world such as Korea, Singapore, Canada, United Kingdom, France, USA, Australia and many cities in the Mainland, such as Beijing, Shanghai and Tianjin.
- 11. Prior to July 2007, the application process for scattering cremains at sea was lengthy. Applications were considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the relevant departments. Starting from July 2007, the FEHD has streamlined the procedures under which an application for scattering cremains at the three designated local waters² will normally be approved within five working days. This has brought about an immediate five-fold increase of applications for sea scattering, from 27 cases during the first six months of 2007 (before the implementation of the streamlined procedure) to 133 in the subsequent six months in 2007. The number of applications in 2008 and 2009 stood at 243 and 279 respectively.
- 12. To further promote the scattering of cremains at sea, the FEHD introduced for the first time a free ferry service for the public in January 2010. Since January 2012, the FEHD has further enhanced the free ferry service

The three designated locations (i.e. East of Tap Mun, East of Tung Lung Chau and South of West Lamma Channel) were chosen in consultation with the Marine Department, Environmental Protection Department, Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Drainage Services Department and Water Supplies Department and District Councils (including Tuen Mun, Tai Po, South, Islands, Tsuen Wan and Sai Kung) to minimise any possible impact on the environment.

by employing a bigger vessel which can accommodate over 200 passengers per sail. Besides offering a more stable and comfortable sea voyage, the bigger vessel provides a more spacious venue for holding memorial ceremonies for the deceased. A funeral director is on board to assist family members and friends in the memorial ceremonies and facilities are provided to accommodate different religious rituals. Bio-degradable bags are provided for holding cremains to allow the scattering of ashes in the water.

- 13. According to a questionnaire survey conducted among the users of the ferry service during the period of January-November 2012, around 97% of the 520 users were satisfied with the service. They were particularly satisfied with the assistance of the funeral director and the FEHD staff as well as the ritual objects (e.g. fresh petals, joss sticks) and beverages provided during the trips.
- 14. As the new ferry service is well received by the public, the FEHD has further increased the number of sails from twice to thrice each month since June 2012. Since the introduction of free ferry service in 2010, there has been an increase of over 160% of applications for sea scattering, from 279 in 2009 to 729 in the first eleven months in 2012. Of the 2 194 cases processed during the period, about 83% of the applicants made use of the FEHD's free ferry service while 17% made use of self-arranged vessels for scattering cremains at sea. As the free ferry service for scattering cremains at sea has become popular, the FEHD will further increase the number of sails to four times per month starting from January 2013.

Internet Memorial Service (IMS)

- 15. To further promote sustainable forms of interment and remembrance, a memorial website (memorial.gov.hk) was launched by the FEHD in June 2010 to enable users to pay tribute to their lost loved ones at any time and from anywhere in place of burning joss sticks and paper offerings. Users can create a free memorial webpage in memory of the deceased. They can self-design or select a thematic layout, write the deceased's life story, express condolences, upload photos and videos, select electronic offerings etc.
- 16. The IMS website won the Best Public Service Application (Public Services Website) Silver Award in the Hong Kong Information and Communications Technology Awards 2011. Up to November 2012, over 4 500 users have been registered in the IMS website, about 4 900 memorial webpages have been created, and the hit rate reached over 1 123 000.
- 17. To enhance the service, the FEHD launched the mobile version of the IMS website (m.memorial.gov.hk) in September 2011. Assistance is provided to families using the GoRs and the free ferry service for scattering

cremains to create memorial webpages for their lost loved ones. In addition, for applicants who have provided their email addresses in the application form for cremation (FEHB 135), the FEHD will automatically create an IMS account for them to create memorial webpages for the deceased.

Publicity Measures

18. In 2011, there were 2 309 green burial cases (i.e. scattering cremains in GoRs and at sea), which represented a seven-fold increase over those cases in 2007. While green burial is gaining popularity, the number of cases is still relatively small compared to the number of deaths in a year. The FEHD has found it necessary to step up publicity and educational programmes to enhance public awareness and acceptance of sustainable alternatives of handling cremains as well as paying tribute to the deceased. Major publicity efforts are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Hong Kong Senior Fair

- 19. The FEHD set up a booth in the Hong Kong Senior Fair in May 2012 with a view to directly promoting GoRs and scattering cremains at sea to senior citizens. A 10-minute publicity video titled "Sunrise Sunset, The Circle of Life Goes On and On" (日出有時 日落有時 生生不息 周而復始) was produced for broadcasting in the FEHD's booth to encourage the adoption of green burial. A new booklet on the theme of "Returning to Nature What Nature Creates (回歸自然 生生不息)" (green burial booklet) was also published for distribution (Annex II). Revisions were also made to "A Guide to After-Death Arrangements" (辦理身後事須知) to include more information on the options and services of green burial. All these publicity materials have also been uploaded onto the FEHD website.
- 20. Over 50 000 guests visited the three-day Senior Fair. According to a visitor's survey conducted in the FEHD's booth, as many as 76% of the respondents were aware of the services of scattering of cremains in GoRs or at sea as well as the IMS services. About 80% of the respondents accepted these alternative means of interment. In respect of promotion, 48% of the respondents took the view that publicity for these scattering services should be stepped up. An overwhelming 98% of the respondents appreciated the green burial video and most of them considered that it could enhance public acceptance of green burial. The FEHD will continue to take part in the Senior Fair in May 2013.

Publicity by Health Education Exhibition and Resource Centre (the Centre)

- 21. The Centre under the FEHD, which is located at Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon Park, features green burial as well as the IMS service as one of its educational themes. Relevant information is displayed on panels, and the green burial video is shown regularly at the mini theatre of the Centre. Copies of the green burial booklet, "A Guide to After-Death Arrangements" and the IMS leaflet are placed in the Centre for distribution to members of the public.
- 22. The Centre's out-reach educational programmes have also incorporated the topic of green burial since mid 2012. Up to November 2012, around 60 talks to elderly centres/homes and six public seminars on green burial have been conducted. To help promote green burial to young people, the Centre has started to include green burial messages in its school talks since end 2011. As at November 2012, the Centre has organised 85 school talks covering around 12 700 students.

<u>Co-operation with government departments and non-government organizations (NGOs)</u>

- 23. The FEHD has enhanced collaboration with various government departments and NGOs in promoting more sustainable means of interment. The hyperlink of the FEHD's green burial information has been established in the websites of the related government departments (Department of Health, Environmental Protection Department and Social Welfare Department), after-death service NGOs, the elderly and the youth portals, etc. (see Annex III). The publicity materials on green burial have also been distributed to these departments/ organisations. The FEHD will also beef up the green burial pamphlet to include information on organ donation managed by the Department of Health and the donation of bodies for medical education and research by the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- 24. The FEHD has also established contact with NGOs which promote life and death education, such as Ark Life Education House of St. James' Settlement and Will In Action. We will explore with them other co-operation opportunities such as joint publicity or activity. Over 30 organisations including after-death service NGOs, elderly centres/homes, etc. have organised tours to GoRs managed by the FEHD.
- 25. Operators of private cemeteries, such as the BMCPC and various religious groups have also been actively promoting sustainable means of interment in recent years. The BMCPC has also produced a green burial video and uploaded it onto its website. To meet increasing demand, some operators are considering developing new GoRs or improving the existing

GoRs in their cemeteries, including the Christian Chinese Cemetery in Pokfulam and the Buddhist Cemetery in Cape Collinson. At the same time, some religious groups have stepped up educational programmes to promote the scattering of ashes to their followers. The Government will work closely with these operators to encourage their work on this front.

Announcements in the Public Interest (APIs)

26. In light of the positive feedback we have received on our publicity work so far, we consider that it is time such messages be brought to the wider community. We have recently completed two radio APIs on cremains scattering services and started broadcasting the APIs on all radio stations since mid October 2012. Preparation for the production of a television API on green burial is now in progress.

Way Forward

27. The promotion of scattering cremains in GoRs or at sea requires incessant efforts. We will continue to improve our facilities and services and step up our promotion efforts to facilitate the transformation of the traditional interment arrangements in our society.

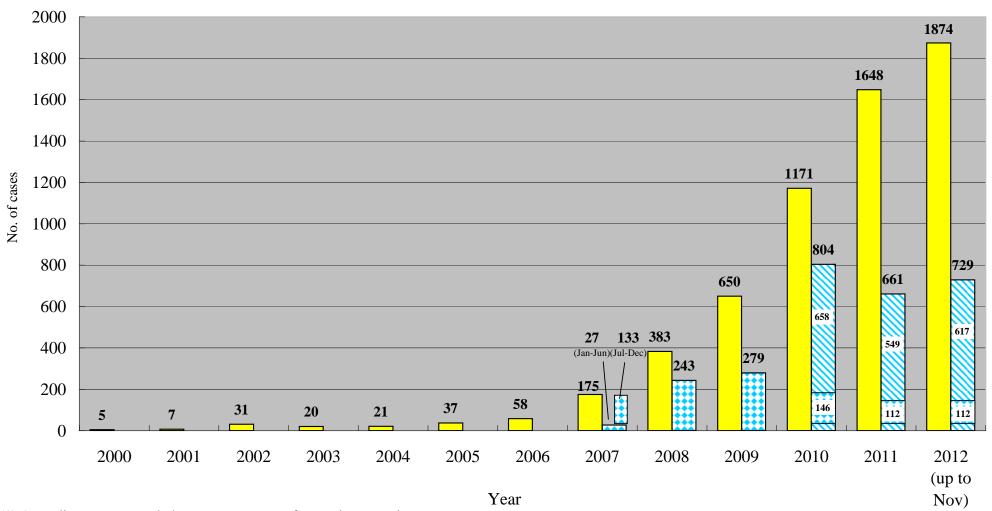
Advice Sought

28. Members are invited to note and comment on the Administration's efforts in promoting green burial and the IMS service.

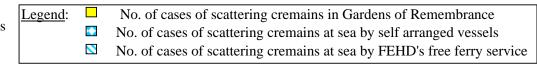
Food and Health Bureau Food and Environmental Hygiene Department January 2013

Annex I

No. of Cases of Scattering Cremains in Gardens of Remembrance and at Sea



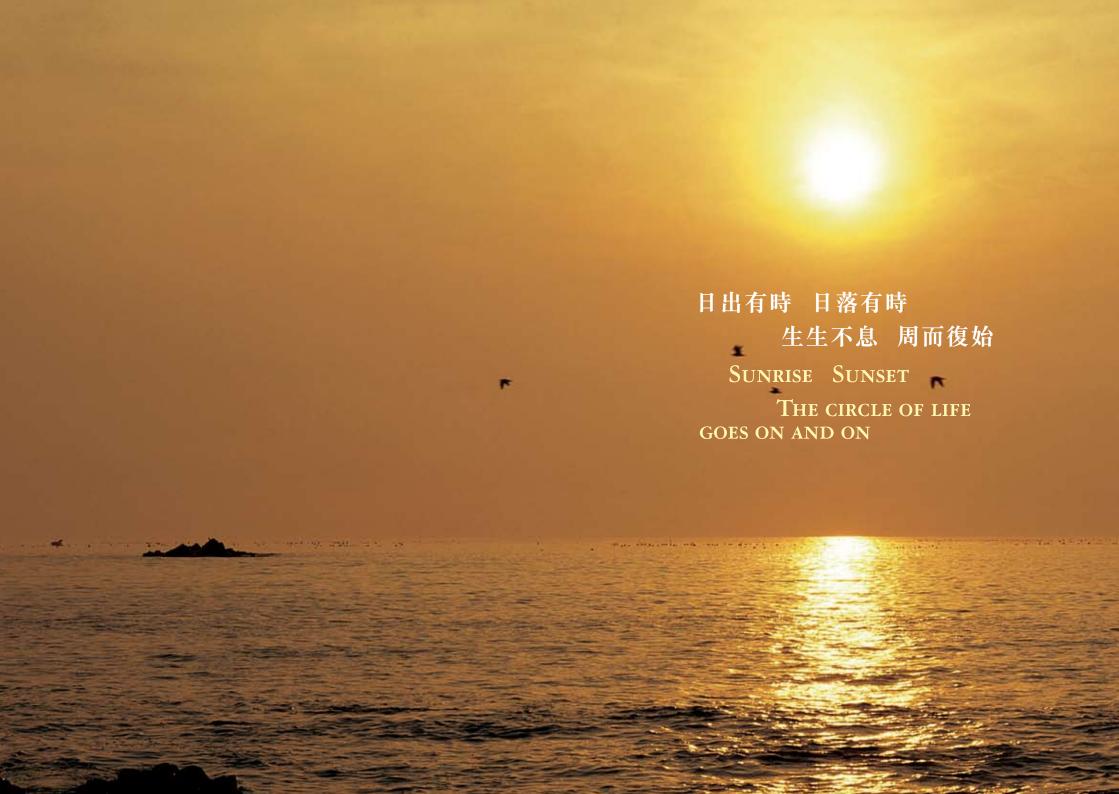
- (1) According to our record, there were no cases of scattering cremains at sea during 2000 2006.
- (2) Since July 2007, the procedure for handling applications for scattering cremains at sea has been streamlined.
- (3) Since Jan 2010, free ferry service has been provided for scattering cremains at sea.
- (4) Since Jan 2012, a bigger vessel has been employed for scattering cremains



回歸自然 生生不息

RETURNING TO NATURE WHAT NATURE CREATES





紀念花園

我希望兒孫、摯友想起我的時候, 想起陽光清風、鮮花綠草, 以及生命的美好。 我希望留給世界多一片空間, 多一口清新空氣。 所以我選擇安息於大自然的懷抱。

一位選擇把骨灰撒放在紀念花園的有心人

GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE

I hope that when my children and friends remember me, they will think of warm sunshine, gentle breeze, flowers and greenery and the beauty of life.

I want to leave more precious space and fresh air to the world, so I have chosen to rest in peace with nature.

The wish of a person who has chosen to have his ashes scattered at a Garden of Remembrance



選擇將骨灰撒放在鮮花點綴的青草地上,落葉歸根, 綠蔭後人,讓親友可隨時在 這翠綠憩靜的自然環境下 回想與自己的美好回憶。

市民可於食物環境衞生署所設的紀念花園親自或由專人代為撒放離世者的骨灰,有關服務費用全免。此外,他們可於園內舉行送別 儀式,紀念花園亦設有牌區紀念先人。



One may choose to return to nature by having his/her cremated ashes scattered on flowery grassland. Family members and friends can come to these tranquil surroundings at any time to remember the deceased.

Members of the public can choose to scatter the cremated ashes of their loved ones themselves or with the help of dedicated staff at the Gardens of Remembrance provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. The service is free of charge. Memorial rituals may be performed. Commemorative plaques may also be mounted at the Gardens of Remembrance in fond memory of the deceased.







海上撒灰

我在子女的陪同下,把丈夫的骨灰徐徐撒放大海。我的丈夫愛海,所以他選擇離開後回歸大海。

丈夫生前知道食物環境衞生署提供海上撒灰服務, 覺得十分適合自己,特別囑咐我們在他身故後 要把他的骨灰撒入大海。把丈夫的骨灰撒進海中, 就像讓他回家。

SCATTERING CREMATED ASHES AT SEA

Accompanied by my children, I scattered my husband's cremated ashes into the sea. My husband loved the sea. He chose to return to its embrace when he left.

My husband learnt about the service provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and thought the service suited him. He asked us to scatter his cremated ashes at sea when he passed away. It's like homecoming for him.



食物環境衞生署提供免費 海上撒灰服務,讓至親的 骨灰回歸大海,無拘無束地 與大自然融合一起。 每當我們看見遼闊的大海時, 亦可追思先人。

有關免費渡輪服務通常於 指定星期六早上由北角東渡輪 碼頭出發,前往香港水域內的 指定地點。

申請人亦可申請自行安排船隻前往指定地點撒灰。

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department currently provides free service for scattering cremated ashes at sea so that our loved ones may return to the sea and be reunited with nature. We may pay tribute to our beloved whenever we have sight of the boundless sea.

The free ferry service departs from North Point (East) Ferry Pier on specified Saturday mornings to the designated areas in Hong Kong waters.

Applicants may also apply for private boat trips to the designated areas for scattering cremated ashes.





每位申請人可攜同七名家人 或親友出席儀式,如有需要, 申請時可向食物環境衞生署 提出增加參加儀式的人數。

渡輪上有專業禮儀師協助家屬 親友進行悼念儀式,亦備有 設施方便進行不同宗教儀式。

儀式後,家屬親友可以撒放 鮮花瓣,讓花香陪伴先人骨灰 回歸自然。







Each applicant can bring up to seven family members or friends on board. Applicants can also apply for more members to attend.

A funeral director will be on board to assist family members and friends during memorial ceremonies. There will also be facilities to accommodate different religious rituals.

After the memorial ceremonies, family members and friends can pass the cremated ashes of their loved ones, together with fresh petals, into nature's embrace.



無盡思念網站

有人近在眼前,但是咫尺天涯, 有人遠在天邊,但思念穿越時空。

為先人在「無盡思念」網站建立紀念網頁, 讓親友透過網頁,互相分享舊的回憶, 新的經歷。

親友一字一句就好像飛揚的蒲公英, 跨越時空,穿梭回憶, 將摯親感情不斷延續下去。

MEMORIAL.GOV.HK

Fond memories of our loved ones will linger on.

Creating a memorial webpage for our beloved at "memorial.gov.hk" allows family members and friends to share past memories and new experiences.

Their words are like flying dandelions, transcending time and space, passing on love that never dies.



我寫下了嫲嫲的故事

我在食物環境衞生署的 「無盡思念」網站 (www.memorial.gov.hk)為 已故的嫲嫲開設紀念網頁, 讓親友可隨時隨地在網上 追憶及悼念她。







我在「無盡思念」網站的 紀念網頁,寫下嫲嫲的生平 及資料,並上載了相片集和 錄像。親友可在紀念網頁 傳送留言及選擇預設的網上 祭品(如鮮花、水果、食物等) 表達心意,亦可利用流動 電話,透過網站的流動版 (www.m.memorial.gov.hk) 瀏覽網頁及留言。







Using the Internet Memorial Service, I have written grandmother's biography and profile and posted her photographs and videos in the webpage. Family members and friends may pay tribute to her through posting messages and other "online offerings" (e.g. flowers, fruits, food, etc.) in the webpage. They may also browse the mobile version (www.m.memorial.gov.hk) and post messages through mobile telephones.

令我歡喜的是 清新的花香 和你暖暖的愛意

I CARE ABOUT
THE FRAGRANCE OF FLOWERS
AND YOUR LOVE TO ME









心祭代替形祭

以默想、書寫寄語、或者 一束鮮花向先人表達敬意, 更能保持先人安息之所 清淨幽雅。





PAYING TRIBUTE BY HEART

Observing a moment of silence, expressing our thoughts in writing or offering a bunch of flowers are good ways to pay tribute to our beloved. Paying tribute by heart helps preserve the serenity of the resting places of our beloved.

與家人分享你的選擇 讓家人為你作出合你心意的安排

SHARE YOUR CHOICE WITH YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

HELP THEM MAKE THE ARRANGEMENT OF YOUR CHOICE







申請紀念花園或海上撒灰

1. 填寫申請表格

- 紀念花園撒放骨灰: 請填寫表格FEHB 219
- 海上撒放骨灰:
 - 自行安排船隻:請填寫 表格FEHB 198
 - 使用食物環境衞生署免費 渡輪服務:請填寫 表格FEHB 198A
- 上述表格可從食物環境衞 生署網頁下載 (http:// www.fehd.gov.hk/tc_ chi/forms/index_forms. html);或
- 前往以下的墳場及火葬場 辦事處索取 —

港島墳場及火葬場辦事處 香港跑馬地黄泥涌道一號 J

電話號碼: 2570 4318 傳真號碼: 2591 1879

九龍墳場及火葬場辦事處

九龍紅磡暢行道六號 地下高層

電話號碼: 2365 5321 傳真號碼: 2176 4963

2. 申請手續

- 申請人可親自或委託 授權人提出申請,把填妥 的申請表格連同「領取 骨灰許可證」正本親身遞交 往食物環境衞生署上述 任何一個辦事處。
- 申請人亦可傳真或郵寄申請表格往上述任何一個辦事處,食物環境衞生署在接獲表格後將進一步聯絡申請人,安排申請人遞交「領取骨灰許可證」正本。

3. 處理申請時間

食物環境衛生署在接獲 紀念花園或海上撒放骨灰 申請後,一般可分別在 七個及五個工作天內完成 批核。









APPLICATIONS FOR SCATTERING CREMATED ASHES AT GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE OR AT SEA

1. Completion of Application Forms

- For scattering cremated ashes at Gardens of Remembrance: please complete the form FEHB 219;
- For scattering cremated ashes at sea:
 - To apply for private boat trips: please complete the form FEHB 198;
 - To use the free ferry service provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department: please complete the form **FEHB 198A**;
- The above forms are available at the website of the Department (http://www.fehd.gov.hk/ english/forms/index_forms. html); or
- The following Cemeteries and Crematoria Offices -

Cemeteries and Crematoria (Hong Kong) Office

1 J, Wong Nai Chung Road, Happy Valley, Hong Kong Tel. No.: 2570 4318

Fax No.: 2591 1879

Cemeteries and Crematoria (Kowloon) Office

Upper Ground Floor, 6 Cheong Hang Road, Hung Hom, Kowloon.

Tel. No.: 2365 5321 Fax No.: 2176 4963

2. Application Procedures

- Applicants may apply in person or through an authorised agent at one of the above Cemeteries and Crematoria Offices, together with the completed application form and the original copy of the "Permit to Take Away Cremated Ashes".
- The application form may be sent to one of the above Offices by fax or by post. Upon receipt of the form, the Department will contact the applicant to arrange for return of the original copy of the "Permit to Take Away Cremated Ashes" in person.

3. Time Required for Processing Applications

• The Department will normally grant approval for scattering cremated ashes at Gardens of Remembrance or at sea within seven and five working days respectively after receiving the applications.









「無盡思念」網站

若逝者曾使用食物環境衞生 署以下任何一項服務,其親 友均可於「無盡思念」網站 (www.memorial.gov.hk) 為他們建立紀念網頁:

- 在公眾火葬場火化
- 在紀念花園或指定香港水 域撒骨灰
- 在公眾骨灰龕安放骨灰
- 在公眾墳場安葬
- 在浩園或景仰園安葬

只需在有關網站輸入簡單 資料(包括申請人的電郵地址 及逝者的個人資料),便可以 為逝者開設紀念網頁。

INTERNET MEMORIAL SERVICE

Friends and relatives may create a webpage at the Internet Memorial Service (www.memorial.gov.hk) for a deceased person who had used any one of the following services provided by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department:

- cremation at public crematoria
- scattering of cremains in Gardens of Remembrance or designated Hong Kong waters
- keeping of cremains in public columbaria
- burial at public cemeteries
- burial at the Gallant Garden or Tribute Garden

Upon input of basic information into the website (including the applicant's email address and particulars of the deceased person), an applicant can create a memorial webpage for the deceased person.





因為愛 所以生命開始 延續愛 選擇回歸自然

LIFE BEGINS WITH LOVE
WHICH GOES ON AND ON
IN RETURNING TO NATURE



Annex III

Organisations with Hyperlinks of FEHD's Green Burial Information Incorporated in Their Websites

- 1. Department of Health (衞生署)
- 2. Environmental Protection Department (環境保護署)
- 3. Social Welfare Department (社會福利署)
- 4. St. James' Settlement (聖雅各福群會)
- 5. Caritas Hong Kong (香港明愛)
- 6. Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care (善寧會)
- 7. Comfort Care Concern Group (贐明會)
- 8. S.K.H. Holy Carpenter Church (聖公會聖匠堂)
- 9. BMCPC (華人永遠墳場管理委員會)
- 10. Hong Kong Buddhist Cemetery (香港佛教墳場)
- 11. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (東華三院)
- 12. eElderly (長青網)
- 13. Youth.gov.hk (青新動力)
- 14. Earth Care (地球仁協會)