

**Bills Committee on Promotion of Recycling and Proper Disposal (Electrical Equipment and Electronic Equipment) (Amendment) Bill 2015**

**Meeting on 4 May 2015**

**April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015**

The quantity of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) generated in Hong Kong has been increasing continuously, leaving Hong Kong with an enormous amount of locally produced e-waste every year and accumulated to an amount which is risking the Environment and Sustainable economy of Hong Kong and undermining her image. At the same time, more and more countries are setting up stricter regulations to control the import of such wastes.

In order to better manage the e-waste situation in Hong Kong, with reference to the “Hong Kong Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022”, EPD has proposed a mandatory produce responsibility scheme (PRS) on WEEE, and introduced the Promotion of Recycling and Proper Disposal(Electrical Equipment and Electronic Equipment) (Amendment) Bill 2015. **I echo the need of such a Bill and fully support the Government to implement the Promotion in full swing.**

The Amendment is beneficial not only to the sustainable use of resources in Hong Kong by properly tackling the e-waste problem, but also the environment, and the recycling industry, as well as to enhance the public awareness of sustainable development of Hong Kong. The following part lists several points in the Amendment and the comments worth to be noted.

**I. Positive impacts on Hong Kong environment**

- a. The Amendment provides more effective control of WEEE by offering a specific scope of regulated electrical equipment. It specifies clearly what are the mandatory PRS regulated categories of WEEE (five altogether), which account for about 85% of WEEE generated in Hong Kong.

(Ref: *“Part 2 Amendments to Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance 3. Section 3 amended (interpretation)”*)

**b.** The Amendment will profoundly improve the resource management in Hong Kong by properly dealing with WEEE, from which reusable materials are extracted by certified recycling entities. Under the licensing control proposed in the Amendment, the operating entities will obtain the waste disposal license only when its operations (e.g. dismantling, detoxification) are proven to be environmentally sound.

(Ref: *“Part 3 Amendments to Waste Disposal Ordinance”* and *“Part 4 Amendments to Waste Disposal (Permits, Authorizations and Licenses) (Fees) Regulation”*)

**c.** The Amendment will assist in reducing environmental risks caused by inappropriate storage of WEEE. Threats to the environment such as groundwater and soil contamination due to a lack of proper shelter may occur if no regulation is in place. The proposed licensing control under the WDO aims at avoiding these risks.

(Ref: *“Part 3 Amendments to Waste Disposal Ordinance”* and *“Part 4 Amendments to Waste Disposal (Permits, Authorizations and Licenses) (Fees) Regulation”*)

## **II. Better support to and facilitation of Hong Kong WEEE industry**

**a.** Financially, the Amendment gives help to support the local WEEE industry. As stated in mandatory PRS which is based on “polluter pays” principle, suppliers are responsible for the WEEE recycling and recovery. Registration fees are collected along with registration, and audits are needed from suppliers. As such, suppliers are better monitored and the financial loop is better facilitated. By properly distributing the collected funds, it will surely increase the recycling percentage of WEEE locally and facilitate the WEEE logistic flow in Hong Kong.

(Ref: *“Part 2 Amendments to Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance- Added Part 4 Regulated Electrical Equipment- Division 2 & 3”*)

**b.** The proposed license control lays the foundation to facilitate a “healthy” development of the local WEEE recycling industry, apart from the environmental benefits mentioned in Part I. Operations related to storage, treatment, reprocessing, and recycling of WEEE will be evaluated before issuing a license. It undoubtedly helps keep track the performance of these operations, the related facilities and resource management. It also encourages local WEEE recycling industry to upgrade their technology and associated equipment, to order to meet the new regulations and license control.

(Ref: *“Part 3 Amendments to Waste Disposal Ordinance”* and *“Part 4 Amendments to Waste Disposal (Permits, Authorizations and Licenses) (Fees) Regulation”*)

**c.** The proposed licensing control also assists in addressing issues in handling WEEE regarding Environment, workers’ Health and Safety (EHS awareness in handling WEEE). The recycling entities must take EHS considerations and follow a good practice (e.g. stack management, fire hazards, security, standard operation procedures, etc.) before applying for a license. As such, the risks of EHS in WEEE industry will be greatly reduced.

(Ref: *“Part 3 Amendments to Waste Disposal Ordinance”* and *“Part 4 Amendments to Waste Disposal (Permits, Authorizations and Licenses) (Fees) Regulation”*)

**d.** The Amendment will also help control the e-waste improper trading in and out of Hong Kong, which may aggravate the e-waste situation in Hong Kong if it is not regulated. In order to tackle the problem, the Amendment proposes a permit control on the import and export of regulated e-waste. Eligible recyclers as WEEE recipients are required to obtain legitimate permit before any import or export activities taken place.

(Ref: *“Part 3 Amendments to Waste Disposal Ordinance”*)

### **III. Enhancement of public awareness of sustainable development**

a. As fees are collected from suppliers and more investment is put into recycling industry, it is inevitable that part of this financial burden will rest on the consumers' shoulders. As stated in the Amendment, "(r)ecycling label and receipt must be provided when distributing regulated electrical equipment". On the positive side, consumers will become more aware of the WEEE issue in Hong Kong. Similar to the plastic bag charging scheme, the promotion of recycling and proper disposal of WEEE will enhance general public's awareness of rational buying of electrical and electronic products and proper ways of disposing old ones.

*(Ref: "Part 2 Amendments to Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance- Added Part 4 Regulated Electrical Equipment- Division 3")*

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