



**Submissions of comments to the proposed amendments to the Guesthouse Legislation**

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Proposed amendments to the Guesthouse Legislation:

The term Guest House - has its origin as the provision of spare rooms to be rented out within a house - low rise buildings. The legislation was imported into Hong Kong and has been applied into highrise and is obviously deficient in addressing public safety and modern expectations. It sits, uncomfortably within the Hotel and Guest House ordinance which primarily deals with a well regulated major commercial activities for hotels, which are by design suitable for multi-stories high rises in Hong Kong. Hotels having very strict regulations in both building safety standards (eg sprinklers, smoke detectors, wider corridors, stairs, well design and designated means of escape and other fires safety provision. None of the above are required for operating a guesthouse. As I understand it, BD on behalf of the Licensing Authority will approve applications based on very limited requirements assuming basically guest houses = domestic/residential. It takes any approving requirements in total isolation by just what has been submitted without looking at the overall safety of a building as a whole. This is particularly a problem when we have multiple Guesthouses occupied within a building, as there are no limits on the numbers, In fact, some buildings have more guest houses than residential units which in effect should be treated in terms of safety as a full hotel.

Despite the obvious fact that most applications clearly contrive the DMC and hence the BMO as they are located in residential buildings. The authority continues to approve applications despite many strong objections for owners, residents and owners committees.

Approval also allows obvious modifications of drainages - building ensuite into every room, altering the layouts, other services, and in many cases supporting structures, the Authority failed to address the many aspects of public safety and pressure to resident such as lifts, refuse collections, people smoking and blocking common corridors and stair stairwell which is design for the means of escape for residents. This is a real safety concern and accumulated in the deaths in the infamous fire at the Continental Mansion in North Point.

It is hoped that the long overdue amendments will address these concerns with the following:

- 1) Strengthen safety provisions such as compulsory requirements for dedicated sprinklers inside as well as house reels, smoke detectors, and other safety provisions.
- 2) Limits the extent of alteration - barring the alteration and modifications structures and drainage systems ie ensuite.
- 3) Approval will need to be compliant to the DMC (AKA the BMO) and require the written consent of IOC before approval
- 4) Provide greater power to the relevant government department HAD, Licensing Authority. BD the Police on entry to premises suspect of operating unlicensed guesthouses.
- 5) Provide support and guidance to IOC on enforcement (as opposed to just let the IOC sort it out themselves)

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