

To: panel_dev@legco.gov.hk

From: Adam Wang [REDACTED]

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Subject: Submission on studies related to artificial islands in the central waters

To whom this may concern,

I am writing to you to express my opinion on the current controversy of the artificial islands. As a high school student, I worry for the future of our environment. I wish for future generations to continue to appreciate the natural biodiversity of Hong Kong's oceans.

I am an avid diver and a hobbyist in marine biology. Over the course of my lifetime, I have developed a love for the ocean and its inhabitants. In 2017, I began to work under the esteemed Dr. David Baker at the University of Hong Kong, researching corals and other marine critters. My experiences at his lab led me to appreciate the uniqueness of Hong Kong's marine ecosystems, especially towards the intersection between the estuary and ocean. At Lantau Island, an understudied and endemic species of sea rabbit, *Elysia leucolegnote*, makes itself home in the mangroves. This lesser known species belongs to a lesser known group of animals, the sacoglossans, with the special property of being able to harbour chloroplasts. Understanding how they do this will have far reaching impacts from gene therapy to immunology. However, due to climate change, these organisms are becoming rarer and rarer globally. This land reclamation project may be the final strike for this species.

Not only would this project drastically deteriorate the ecosystem of Lantau, the effects of sedimentation would reach nearby coral reefs. Lantau island, Peng Chau and other nearby islands are all hosts to coral reefs. I myself have seen an undescribed species of sea slugs on these reefs, and an increasing amount of evidence is pointing towards the fact that we have undescribed species of octocorals in these waters, living only within Hong Kong's distinctive ecological landscape. This project would smother these extraordinary and exclusive species, obscuring them from us forever. How could somebody ever discover something that doesn't exist anymore?

The development of brownfield land sites should be highly considered as an alternative. Money will be saved in resources and having to redevelop Hong Kong's infrastructure. Current price estimates for the project should not be relied on, as the effects of inflation are unpredictable. Prices of fill

material such as marine sand have seen a rapid increase in recent years, as worldwide resources become scarce. As seen in other major projects in Hong Kong such as the recent Hong Kong-Macau-Zhuhai bridge and the High Speed Rail link have similarly seen massive overruns in budget, due to unforeseen increased labour costs and increased resources.

Understandably, there is a large proportion of citizens in Hong Kong desperately seeking better housing, however, pouring billions of dollars on reclaiming land from the sea is not going to solve the underlying issue of Hong Kong's exceedingly high cost of land. Previous major developments in areas such as Tseung Kwan O, Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung have not proven to be effective against alleviating the housing crisis. If the housing crisis can be considered as a leaky pipe, the "new towns" and mass developments are nothing more than a bucket to catch the dripping water. There is no surefire solution to resolve Hong Kong's housing crisis, and while it is true it can be ameliorated with such developments, the estimated \$600 billion price tag, and irreversible ecological and environmental damage highly outweigh the potential benefits of this project.

Thank you for your time. I hope that you will consider my arguments and re-evaluate your decisions.

Sincerely,
Adam Chen