



康樂及文化事務署

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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24 July 2019

Clerk to the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn.: Miss Maggie CHUNG)

Dear Miss CHUNG,

**Legislative Council Panel on Public Service  
Meeting on 18 February 2019  
Agenda Item III “Issues relating to the lifeguards of the Leisure and  
Cultural Services Department”**

I refer to your letter dated 25 March 2019. With regard to the views put forward by deputations attending the meeting, our response is set out at **Annex**.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs. Doris FOK)

for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Encl.

**Legislative Council Panel on Public Service  
Meeting on 18 February 2019**

**Response to views put forward by deputations  
attending the meeting**

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently provides lifeguard services at 44 public swimming pools, 38 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres. The lifeguards employed by LCSD include civil service lifeguards and non-civil service contract (NCSC) seasonal lifeguards employed during the swimming season.

2. Regarding the views put forward by the attending deputations on the issues relating to the lifeguards of LCSD at the meeting of the Panel on Public Service of the Legislative Council on 18 February 2019, our response is as follows:

**Responsibilities and areas of work of lifeguards**

*(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union)*

3. The major responsibilities of civil service lifeguards include lifesaving and first aid, assisting in law enforcement and maintaining order and assisting in cleansing work, while the major responsibilities of full-time NCSC seasonal lifeguards include ensuring swimmers' safety, lifesaving, maintaining order and assisting in cleansing work. Major responsibilities of lifeguards are clearly spelt out in recruitment advertisements and annual performance appraisals of lifeguards. Besides, supervisory staff at LCSD venues will explain to newly posted lifeguards in detail the responsibilities and areas of work.

**Manpower of lifeguards**

*(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

4. The safety of swimmers and users of water sports centres has all along been LCSD's prime concern when considering the manpower requirements

of lifeguards. LCSD has from time to time reviewed the lifeguard manpower arrangements for pools, beaches as well as water sports centres, taking into account the actual operational needs. When justified, LCSD will propose the creation of additional civil service lifeguard posts in accordance with the established procedures. In fact, the total number of civil service lifeguards has steadily increased by 35% from 893 in 2011 to 1 209 in 2018.

5. In addition, LCSD has been provided with additional resources for creation of 80 civil service lifeguard posts in 2019-20 in place of 80 seasonal lifeguard posts in an effort to improve the stability of the life-saving workforce. At the same time, the department has also allocated additional resources to launch a pilot scheme in 2019-20, under which 40 NCSC full-year full-time lifeguards will be recruited to form a regional-based “special support team” to allow flexible deployment of manpower at swimming pools and beaches in the region so as to respond to unforeseen manpower shortages and alleviate the work pressure faced by lifeguards on duty.

### **Recruitment and assessment for civil service lifeguards and NCSC seasonal lifeguards**

*(Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)*

6. For ordinary government posts, the department will determine the basic entry requirements for the grades/ranks concerned in terms of academic and professional qualifications, skills, working experience, etc., having regard to factors such as job nature, duties and responsibilities, with a view to recruiting persons with the necessary capabilities/qualifications for the posts concerned. With regard to the entry requirements for lifeguards, as they are mainly responsible for performing rescue and related duties, it is LCSD's requirement that applicants for the posts (whether civil service lifeguards or NCSC seasonal lifeguards) shall possess a valid Beach Lifeguard Award and/or Pool Lifeguard Award issued by the Hong Kong Life Saving Society (HKLSS) to prove that they possess the skills and competence to perform lifesaving and lifeguard duties. Applicants are also required to attend a selection interview and trade test to be conducted by LCSD to ensure that the persons recruited possess the appropriate qualifications. Besides, LCSD also provides induction training to newly appointed lifeguards and opportunities for serving lifeguards to refresh and enhance their skills continuously through various trainings arranged every winter (i.e. non-peak swimming season). LCSD will review the entry

requirements and selection process (including the assessment contents of the interview and trade test) for civil service lifeguards and NCSC seasonal lifeguards from time to time to meet the actual operational and development needs of the grade.

### **Contents of recruitment test**

*(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

7. The contents of recruitment exercise for civil service lifeguards conducted by LCSD consist of an interview and trade test, which aim to assess the physical competence and lifesaving and first aid skills of applicants and select the suitable candidates for the posts having regard to the applicants' abilities and performance.

8. Before the launching of a new round of recruitment exercise for civil service lifeguards, LCSD will review the contents of the selection interview and trade test, with particular regard to the actual operational needs of lifeguards and consider whether it is necessary to make appropriate changes to ensure that the test is effective. For instance, while candidates were only required to perform cross chest tow in previous rescue tests, candidates will be required, in the new round of recruitment exercise, to skin dive to the pool bottom at a depth of approximately two metres to search for a drowning manikin and then save it using cross chest tow for a more effective testing of the candidate's skills and ability to carry out rescue operation in reality.

### **Five-day work**

*(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

9. LCSD has been exploring feasible options for wider implementation of five-day week (FDW) under the premise of conformity with the four basic principles: (i) no additional staffing resources; (ii) no reduction in conditioned hours of service of individual staff; (iii) no reduction in emergency services; and (iv) continued provision of essential counter services on Saturdays/Sundays. For those leisure venues where FDW cannot be implemented, including public swimming pools and gazetted beaches, LCSD will arrange the staff, including lifeguards, to work five days a week as far as practicable during annual overhaul of the venues or seasonal suspension of service.

## **Handling of oil pollution**

*(Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)*

10. One of the major responsibilities of lifeguards has been to assist in cleansing work. To be specific, when LCSD is notified by the Marine Department of any oil spill incident near beach area or when venue staff find signs of oil contamination of beaches, officers-in-charge of beaches will lead lifeguards and venue staff to assist in handling the incident, including monitoring whether beaches will be contaminated with oil spills, assisting and advising swimmers to go back to the shore, preventing dispersion of oil to beaches and assisting to clean up the contaminated sand, etc., in accordance with LCSD's emergency response plan for handling oil pollution. LCSD has all along provided appropriate personal protective equipment for lifeguards to carry out these tasks. Besides, guidelines have been drawn up for the tasks concerned with suitable training provided for lifeguards.

## **Guidelines on scuba diving duties**

*(Senior Lifeguard General Union)(Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union)*

11. Skin diving forms one of the basic skills and responsibilities of lifeguards' daily lifesaving work. Lifeguards deploy skills taught and assessed in the training associated with the lifeguard qualifications (including underwater search by skin diving, etc.) in drowning incidents. Upon receiving a report of missing swimmer in beach water, lifeguards will carry out rescue operation and call the Police for assistance in the light of the circumstances. In addition to skin diving used in underwater search operations, trained and qualified lifeguards may carry out emergency underwater search for drowning victim(s) using scuba diving equipment under the supervision of senior lifeguards and continue assisting in the rescue operation upon arrival of the diving personnel of the Fire Services Department where necessary.

12. LCSD has put in place various measures to ensure that lifeguards understand and know well their duties, and has all along provided related support, including:

- (a) to provide guidelines on the management of swimming pools and beaches, which require officers-in-charge of venue to brief newly

- posted lifeguards on their duties in detail to ensure that all lifeguards are familiar with the use of lifesaving facilities and equipment of the venue and that they know well the accident-prone areas and the safety rules for swimmers, etc. Senior lifeguards are also required to give instructions to newly posted lifeguards on the correct use of lifesaving equipment;
- (b) to issue guidelines requiring all lifeguards to participate in regular rescue drills (including skin diving training) and drills for rescue plans at their workplace to ensure that they are familiar with the corresponding rescue operation under different circumstances;
  - (c) to require officers-in-charge of swimming pools and beaches to maintain and arrange for maintenance of diving equipment and gear at their venues; and
  - (d) to ensure that the courses on skin diving and scuba diving provided by LCSD have already covered areas on the relevant safety rules, points to note, maintenance and repair requirements for equipment concerned, etc.
13. Having regard to the concerns expressed by some lifeguards about diving duties, LCSD is conducting further review and drawing up more detailed guidelines on scuba diving duties for compliance by staff.

### **Introducing a new type of Job-related Allowances (JRAs)**

*(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

14. The granting of JRAs of civil servants is governed by the relevant principles of the Civil Service Regulations (“The Regulations”). Departments are required to take into account the operational needs, inherent duties of individual grade and working conditions of staff, etc. in considering the justifications of the suggestions in relation to JRAs. The Regulations stipulate the relevant governing principles, such as when the staff are required to perform extra or unusual duties in light of service need and operational efficiency; when the pay structure of the grade or rank concerned is such that the inherent duties cannot be fully reflected in the pay scale; or when officers are subject to work environment which would render them

liable to bodily harm or physical impairment of a degree not normally expected by staff in the same grade or rank.

15. The duties of lifeguards include rescuing drowning swimmers, ensuring the safety of swimmers, maintaining order and keeping beaches and swimming pools clean. In performing their daily cleansing work, lifeguards may be required to clean up vomitus or faeces found in swimming pools or assist in cleaning up oil spill or marine refuse occasionally found at beaches. Such work is not extra or unusual duties. Hence, having considered the inherent duties and working conditions of lifeguards in accordance with the principles mentioned above, it is considered that there are not sufficient justifications to support the granting of JRAs to lifeguards. LCSD will continue providing suitable equipment and operational guidelines to ensure the safety of its staff working at beaches or swimming pools.

16. LCSD will consider the suggestion on the granting of JRAs to civil service lifeguards who possess qualification of scuba diving pursuant to the established policy and mechanism.

### **Induction training**

*(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union) (Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

17. LCSD reviewed the design and arrangements of the induction programme for lifeguards with a view to enabling newly recruited lifeguards to complete the induction training programme as soon as possible upon employment. Starting from 2019, newly appointed civil service lifeguards and NCSC lifeguards on long-term employment will be arranged to complete part of the induction programme before assuming duties, which include, introductory practical training, general training and courses on advanced skills of skin diving rescue.

### **Creation of more training related posts**

*(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union)*

18. LCSD has always attached great importance on staff training and has its own dedicated Training Section to provide suitable training to staff of various grades. This is to ensure that they are provided with continuous training and skills upgrading opportunities upon employment and are able to

meet the changing work requirements and circumstances as well as expectations of the community. LCSD allocates substantial resources to provide civil service lifeguards with a wide array of training opportunities every year and conducts reviews of the training arrangement in order to help improve their lifesaving skills and professionalism so as to meet the operational needs of the department. The Training Section plans and provides lifeguard training courses of different types, including specific vocational training for lifeguards (e.g. induction course, compulsory refresher courses on lifesaving and first aid skills and other skills upgrading programmes), and general training courses for staff of all grades (including lifeguards) (e.g. courses on spoken English, customer service skills, occupational safety and health workshop, etc.).

19. LCSD has all along been working in co-operation with relevant specialised departments and institutions, including the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Auxiliary Medical Service and the Hong Kong Life Saving Society, etc., in designing and providing lifeguard training. Their professional expertise, skills, equipment, apparatus and recognised status, etc. are conducive to the provision of suitable training to the lifeguards. LCSD will work on the well-established and sound foundation to enhance collaboration and communication with the partners to ensure that the contents, design and standards of lifeguard training courses can keep abreast of time. The dedicated Training Section of LCSD has been effective in promoting and planning training for lifeguards with regard to actual operational needs. Advice will also be sought from the above-mentioned professional departments/institutions if necessary to further enhance the training standard. LCSD will continue allocating additional resources to provide enhanced vocational training for lifeguards to improve their lifesaving skills and professionalism. For instance, the training places on scuba diving have been increased in 2018-19 to provide training for more lifeguards.

### **Lifeguard equipment**

*(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union)*

20. LCSD has all along provided lifeguards with the necessary equipment in the performance of their responsibilities, including vests, shorts, windbreakers, caps, sunglasses to be put on while on duty and other necessary items, such as whistles, sunscreen, etc. Besides, officers-in-charge



of venues will also provide lifeguards with personal protective equipment/items, such as gloves, face masks, plastic gloves, high boots, non-slip safety shoes, etc., having regard to the job requirements.

21. LCSD also provides other job-related assistance to lifeguards. Please refer to paragraph 12 above for details.

## **Other matters**

### **Opening of more beaches in winter**

*(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

22. At present, four LCSD's beaches are open all year round for the public, namely Deep Water Bay Beach in Southern District, Clear Water Bay Second Beach and Silverstrand Beach in Sai Kung District and Golden Beach in Tuen Mun District. LCSD is opening Silver Mine Bay Beach, Lantau Island in more months (November and March) through a pilot scheme so as to assess the public demand for beach provision in winter.

### **Manpower requirements of beaches**

*(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)*

23. Given that the beaches vary in terms of geographical environment, size, facilities and patronage, etc., there is no standard lifeguard staffing establishment applicable to all beaches. The department will assess the minimum manpower requirements for lifeguards on duty at individual beaches having regard to the above-mentioned factors. The review and study on the minimum manpower requirement for maintaining normal lifesaving service at beaches has commenced.

### **Catamaran**

*(Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)*

24. Though "catamaran" is not one of lifeboat types included in the assessment for beach lifeguard award, it will continue to be used at beaches managed by LCSD as it is considered an effective tool in helping beach lifeguards to conduct patrols inside swimming zones, keep a vigilant watch over swimmers and rescue drowning swimmers.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department  
July 2019