



康樂及文化事務署

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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31 May 2019

Mr Anthony CHU
Clerk to the Panel on Public Service
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road, Central
Hong Kong

Dear Mr CHU,

**Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
Follow-up to meeting on 18 February 2019**

I refer to your letter dated 20 February 2019. With regard to the two motions passed under agenda item III "Issues relating to the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department", our responses are set out at Annex I and Annex II.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs Doris FOK)

for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

Encl.

Wording of the motion

“To improve the remuneration packages and promotion pathways of civil service lifeguards and the effectiveness of the management of water sports centres, swimming pools and beaches under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, this Panel requests the Government to study whether Senior Artisans (Swimming Pool and Beach) can be promoted to Amenities Assistants III with responsibility for managing water sports centres, swimming pools or beaches. Furthermore, staff responsible for managing public swimming venues should have experience as lifeguards.”

Response from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently provides lifeguard services at 44 public swimming pools, 38 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres. As at 1 August 2018, there were 1 959 lifeguards comprising 174 senior lifeguards and 1 785 lifeguards in LCSD. Of those 1 785 lifeguards, 687 non-civil service contract seasonal lifeguards were employed on a seasonal basis to augment the lifeguard manpower during the swimming season. 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 will also allocate additional resources to launch a pilot scheme in 2019-20, under which 40 non-civil service contract (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.

2. The management of public swimming pools, beaches and water sports centres of LCSD is mainly undertaken by Leisure Services Manager grade officers and Amenities Assistant grade officers. As the environment and facilities vary in each public swimming pool, beach and water sports centres, day-to-day management of aquatic venues and support is provided by Leisure Services Manager grade officers and Amenities Assistant grade officers (including Amenities Assistant IIIs) across different ranks through a team approach depending on different operational needs.

3. As Senior Artisan grade to which senior civil service lifeguard belong and Amenities Assistant grade are two different grades, serving senior

lifeguard cannot be directly promoted to become Amenities Assistant III (i.e. entry rank of Amenities Assistant grade). Nonetheless, serving civil service lifeguards and senior lifeguards who seek career development and meet the relevant entry requirements may apply for the post of Amenities Assistant III through the in-service transfer mechanism or open recruitment. At present, serving civil servants (including lifeguards and senior lifeguards) having served in the civil service for three years or more with satisfactory performance and meeting the relevant requirements of transfer (including possession of valid and recognised lifesaving qualification) may apply for the post of Amenities Assistant III through the in-service transfer mechanism. A total of 27 senior civil service lifeguards/lifeguards were appointed as Amenities Assistant IIIs through in-service transfer in the past five years.

4. Amenities Assistant grade officers will be deployed to work at different LCSD's aquatic and land-based venues (including public swimming pools, beaches and water sports centres, zoos and gardens, parks and playgrounds, stadiums, sports grounds, sports centres and tree teams etc.) to accumulate working and management experience in different types of leisure venues, regardless of whether they possess the working experience as a lifeguard before joining the service. The Training Section of LCSD has all along been providing course on management of aquatic venues for Leisure Services Managers and Amenities Assistants, including courses on management of swimming pools and beaches, basic courses on first aid and integrated course on lifesaving skills, etc. so as to enhance their skills in the management of aquatic venues. Guidelines on the management of swimming pools and beaches have been drawn up by LCSD for officers-in-charge and management officers concerned, so as to enable them to effectively manage venue facilities and meet daily operational needs.

Wording of the Motion

“To ensure the safety of beach users and lifeguards on duty, this Panel requests the Government to (1) include “scuba diving rescue” in the induction training courses of lifeguards and provide “scuba diving rescue” training for in-service lifeguards; and (2) formulate detailed standards and guidelines for carrying out skin diving and scuba diving rescue duties, including standard procedures for carrying out such duties and guidelines on the use, replacement and maintenance of relevant equipment. ”

Response from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

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 major responsibilities of civil service lifeguards include performing lifesaving and first aid duties, assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order and assisting in cleansing work at the above-mentioned venues.

2. 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 (FSD) where necessary.

Inclusion of “rescue skills with scuba diving” in the induction training programmes for lifeguards

3. All civil service lifeguards of LCSD possess the Pool Lifeguard Award and Beach Lifeguard Award. The Pool Lifeguard Award/Beach Lifeguard Award issued by the Hong Kong Life Saving Society are internationally recognized lifesaving qualifications by the International Life Saving Federation. As underwater rescue by skin diving is already an item assessed for the relevant Lifeguard Awards, all lifeguards have already

possessed the skills. Besides, LCSD has been providing course on advanced skills of skin diving rescue to all newly recruited lifeguards and serving civil service lifeguards, and familiarise them with the relevant safety rules and the use of skin diving gear. The course on advanced skills of skin diving rescue is one of the induction training programmes for lifeguards. Starting from 2019, LCSD has arranged for all newly appointed civil service lifeguards and non-civil service contract (NCSC) full-year full-time lifeguards to complete part of the induction training programme before reporting duties, including the course on advanced skills of skin diving rescue. Given the requirement that lifeguards have to pass relevant diving test upon completion of the course on advanced skills of skin diving rescue, coupled with regular drills, they should possess sufficient skin diving skills and be physically competent to work as a team to carry out search and rescue operation in deep water at swimming pools/beaches. As scuba diving is not one of the major responsibilities of lifeguards, LCSD has no plan to include rescue skills with scuba diving in the induction training programmes for lifeguards.

Provision of course on rescue skills with scuba diving for serving lifeguards

4. Although lifeguards are not required to possess any qualification on scuba diving, LCSD has been providing adequate training places for courses on scuba diving rescue for serving civil service lifeguards in order to enhance their relevant knowledge and skills. The course aims at teaching lifeguards scuba diving skills and skills in underwater search and rescue using scuba diving equipment. It also covers the relevant safety rules and contingency measures, etc. Priority will be given to civil service lifeguards posted to beaches and water sports centres for joining the course concerned.

Drawing up of detailed standards and guidelines on duties involving skin diving and scuba diving

5. LCSD has put in place various measures to ensure that lifeguards understand and know well their roles and duties, and provides related support, including:

- (a) to provide guidelines on the management of swimming pools and beaches, which require officers-in-charge 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 safety rules for swimmers as well as the accident-prone areas. Moreover, senior lifeguards are required to give instructions to newly posted lifeguards on the use of lifesaving equipment;

- (b) to issue departmental 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) officers-in-charge of swimming pools and beaches are required to maintain and arrange for maintenance of diving equipment and gears at their venues; and
- (d) to ensure that the courses on skin diving and scuba diving provided by the Department have already covered areas on the relevant safety rules, points to note, maintenance and repair requirements for equipment concerned, etc.

6. Having regard to the concerns expressed by lifeguards about diving duties, LCSD will conduct further review and draw up more detailed guidelines on scuba diving duties for compliance by staff.