



電話 TEL: 2601 8966
圖文傳真 FAX NO: 2602 1480
本署檔號 OUR REF: (36) to LCS1/HQ 802/15 (6)
來函檔號 YOUR REF: CB4/PL/PS

19 October 2021

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 23 August 2021
Agenda Item IV “Manpower situation of the lifeguards of
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department”**

I refer to your letter dated 24 August 2021. With regard to the views raised by unions/deputations, our responses are set out at the Annex.

(CHAN Ming-cheong, Horman)
for Director of Leisure and Cultural Services

**Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
Meeting on 23 August 2021**

Responses to Views Raised by Unions/Deputations

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (“LCSD”) currently provides lifeguard services at 44 public swimming pools, 39 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres. Lifeguards employed by LCSD include civil service lifeguards, seasonal lifeguards employed during the swimming season on non-civil service contract (“NCSC”) terms, etc.

2. Regarding the written submissions on issues relating to the lifeguards of LCSD made by unions and deputations at the Legislative Council Panel on Public Service meeting on 23 August 2021, our responses are as below.

Manpower of Lifeguards

(Government Employees Association) (Union of Government Amenities Assistants) (HKSARG Senior Lifeguard General Union) (Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union)

3. The safety of swimmers and users of aquatic venues 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 swimming pools, beaches as well as water sports centres, taking into account the actual operational needs. The department all along provides lifeguard services at aquatic venues through civil service lifeguards/lifeguards on long-term employment and additional seasonal lifeguards recruited during swimming season.

4. In fact, LCSD has continuously increased the total number of civil service lifeguards during the past decade by almost 60% from 893 in 2011 to 1 411 in 2021. Over the past three financial years between 2018-19 and 2020-21, 196 senior civil service lifeguard/lifeguard posts were created and significantly raised the ratio of beach/swimming pool civil service lifeguards to help improve the stability of the lifeguard workforce.

Recruitment of Seasonal Lifeguards on NCSC Terms

(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union) (Assistant Leisure Services Manager II Association) (Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union) (Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)

5. The recruitment of seasonal lifeguards is more challenging this year than the past. Owing to the closure of public swimming pools under the pandemic, selection interviews and trade tests for seasonal lifeguards are not conducted as originally scheduled, which has undermined the effectiveness of the recruitment plan. In addition, people who aspire for a career in lifesaving are unable to undergo lifesaving training and related assessments due to the suspension of such training and activities under the pandemic. The suspension also has a bearing not only on the revalidation training and assessments conducted every three years for qualified lifeguards with valid lifeguard certificates, but also on the arrangements as to the qualification assessment and awarding of lifeguard certificates by The Hong Kong Life Saving Society (“HKLSS”), the only organisation in Hong Kong issuing such certificates. All these have further tightened the manpower supply of qualified lifeguards. LCSD will work closely with HKLSS to provide more lifesaving training programmes and training places to augment the supply of lifeguards.

6. Additionally, the growing number of private swimming pools in Hong Kong in recent years has resulted in a corresponding increase in the market demand for lifeguards. With the opening of Water World Ocean Park this year, operational staff would need to be recruited and related training and assessments would also be required, leading to even keener market competition for lifeguards. Moreover, beaches and water sports centres under LCSD in general are located at remote areas which call for longer commuting time and higher transport fare, indirectly affecting the readiness of qualified individuals to apply for the post of seasonal lifeguards.

7. To meet the manpower needs for seasonal lifeguards, while continuing to recruit full-time NCSC seasonal lifeguards, part-time hourly-rated seasonal lifeguards, full-year full-time lifeguards and full-time seasonal lifeguards under Post-retirement Service Contracts, LCSD will adopt a multi-pronged approach to attract more eligible persons to apply for the post. Relevant measures include (i) examining the enhancement of remuneration package of seasonal

lifeguards by, among others, offering competitive salaries and end-of-contract gratuities with reference to the local private employment market in terms of pay level of lifeguards and other important relevant factors with a view to attracting more qualified persons to apply for the post; (ii) actively publicising the recruitment exercise of seasonal lifeguards and promoting lifeguarding as a career among young people through different channels, including placing recruitment advertisements on social media websites and public transport, holding recruitment days for seasonal lifeguards in various districts to attract members of the local community to apply for the post, and liaising with schools and relevant organisations to step up publicity; (iii) continuing to launch lifesaving training programmes (Bronze Medallion); (iv) working closely with HKLSS to provide more lifesaving training programmes and training places so as to increase the supply of lifeguards; and (v) continuing to launch training programmes for beach and swimming pool seasonal lifeguards so that qualified persons can apply for the post of swimming pool or beach seasonal lifeguard trainees, and adjusting upward the allowances given to them during training and internship so as to enhance the competitiveness of the programmes. LCSD will continue to implement a wide variety of measures in order to attract more qualified persons to apply for the post of seasonal lifeguards.

Promotion Prospects

(Government Employees Association) (Leisure Services Managers Association) (HKSARG Senior Lifeguard General Union) (Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union) (Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)

8. 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 centre, day-to-day management of aquatic venues and support are 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.

9. As Senior Artisan grade to which senior civil service lifeguards 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 26 senior civil service lifeguards/lifeguards were appointed as Amenities Assistant IIIs through in-service transfer in the past five years.

Scuba Diving Duties

(HKSARG Senior Lifeguard General Union) (Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union) (Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)

10. In general, civil service lifeguards deploy skills taught and assessed in the training associated with the lifeguard qualifications (including underwater search by skin diving) in drowning incidents. Although scuba diving is not one of the major responsibilities of lifeguards, upon receiving a report of missing swimmer in beach water, trained and qualified lifeguards will, in addition to skin diving used in underwater search operations, carry out emergency underwater search for drowning victims using scuba diving equipment under the supervision and guidance of senior lifeguards in urgent circumstances, say before the arrival of diving personnel of the Fire Services Department. The Guideline on the Use of Scuba Diving Equipment at Aquatic Venues was published by LCSD in September 2019, covering the use, storage and maintenance of scuba diving equipment, operational procedures of scuba diving, code of safety for scuba diving, list of scuba diving equipment, etc. It clearly states that scuba diving equipment can only be used for mock searches for drowning swimmers within the shark prevention net areas of beaches and urgent searches for suspected drowning/missing swimmers when the use of scuba diving equipment is required under urgent circumstances (e.g. the search for suspected drowning/missing swimmers), with the consent of the venue in-charge (not limited to the venue manager). To learn about the arrangements for lifeguards overseas, LCSD is seeking information and advice on issues such as the duties and qualification requirements of swimming pool and beach lifeguards from the management

authorities of swimming pools and beaches as well as lifesaving bodies in overseas countries. According to the preliminary information gathered, overseas lifeguards are not required to possess any qualifications of scuba diving which is not the duty of lifeguards. Reference has also been made to the qualification requirements of lifeguards in the Mainland. According to the national occupational skill standard of lifeguards lately published by the General Administration of Sport of China in 2020, lifeguards at swimming pools and natural waters are not required to obtain any qualifications of scuba diving. LCSD will critically examine such information and review the related arrangements.

Enforcement Actions

(Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union) (Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)

11. The responsibilities of civil service lifeguards include performing lifesaving and first aid duties, assisting supervisors to carry out law enforcement work and maintain order. Lifeguards are required to issue advice to user where there is any offence discovered in a venue inspection. Lifeguards can report to supervisor/venue-in-charge/venue manager if the advice is ignored and enforcement action may be taken by venue-in-charge/venue manager as appropriate. The existing division of work for enforcement action should continue as it is appropriate and effective. LCSD will review it from time to time to meet operational needs.

Grade Structure Review

(Hong Kong Civil Servants General Union) (Government Employees Association) (Assistant Leisure Services Manager II Association) (Union of Government Amenities Assistants) (Government Amenity Management Supervisors General Union) (Hong Kong Government Lifeguards General Union) (Hong Kong and Kowloon Life Guards' Union)

12. The lifeguards employed for providing lifesaving services at LCSD's aquatic venues include lifeguards employed on a long-term basis and seasonal lifeguards employed during the swimming season. The former are mainly civil servants from the Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool) grade. In accordance with

the prevailing policy, the Government will only consider conducting a grade structure review for individual non-directorate civilian civil service grades when the following two criteria are met:

- (1) the grades have proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties which cannot be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism; or
- (2) there are fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades.

13. LCSD has been explaining to the lifeguard unions the purpose, nature and criteria of grade structure review at a number of meetings and through different channels. The department considers that the grade of civil service lifeguard does not meet the two above-mentioned criteria for conducting a grade structure review in the meantime.

14. LCSD will continue monitoring closely the supply of persons with recognised lifesaving qualifications in the human resources market and the recruitment situation of lifeguards, and take follow-up actions in a timely manner. Besides, LCSD will also consider further enhancing the remuneration package of seasonal lifeguards to increase the attractiveness of the post.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department
October 2021