



30/09/2010 16:32

To <ccc@fhb.gov.hk>

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Subject Review of Columbarium Policy Public Consultation Document - Comments

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Dear Sirs/Madams,

I appreciate the above consultation which is very important for Hong Kong. Due to time limitations, I would like to give only some of my key thoughts:

1. It is important for Government to respect the traditions of paying respect to ancestors, and this philosophy is reflected in the document. However it is equally important for Government to adopt far more humanistic policies in the detailed handling of all related issues. This is illustrated in the following examples:

(i) public mortuaries and cremation centres are often sad places and in part this is aggravated by the general setting and consideration that it is (only) a public service. Similarly this is the case for life and death registration.

(ii) columbarium is managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. That creates a feeling that ancestors are more of an environmental hygiene issue, rather than an issue related to the meaning and respect for life.

The government (and in fact the society) cares a lot for life e.g. our hospital, emergency services. Once somebody is dead, however, it seems that everything is just empty and all related "services" are just for the sake of procedures.

In brief, much greater Government's sensitiveness in these issues in all aspects could win more citizens's support in any new policies e.g. those related to columbariums. I hear about the innovative design of the Diamond Hill facility which is undoubtedly an excellent move.

2. I am supportive of using industrial buildings for columbarium purpose as the capacity appears to be a merit but again a respectful setting is a prerequisite. Technical problems such as fire services and elevator usage should be resolvable. It may be necessary to have a quota/pre-registration system for visits.

Best regards,  
TH Kwong