

本處檔號 OUR REF. : L/M (1) to Glab GR/11-10/3
來函檔號 YOUR REF. : CB4/PAC/R63
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23 December 2014

[Urgent By Fax 2543 9197]

Clerk to the Legislative Council
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr. CHU,

Public Accounts Committee
Consideration of Chapter 10 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 63
Services provided by the Government Laboratory

I refer to your letter of 16 December 2014 under reference CB4/PAC/R63 on the captioned subject and append below our responses to the corresponding paragraphs for your consideration please –

Part 1 : Introduction

- (a) In the financial years from 2010-11 to 2014-15, the wastage (including retirement and resignation) of the Chemist grade in the Government Laboratory is 14, i.e. on average less than 3 per year, which is considered normal. There is no recruitment difficulty for the grade.
- (b) GL has strived best effort to provide efficient and effective testing services, including those in response to food incidents, to the client departments. When necessary, temporary staff redeployment would be arranged to cope with sudden surge in service demand. GL would regularly review its resources to ensure its responsibilities are competently discharged.

Part 2 : Provision of laboratory services to user bureaux and departments

- (c) The Extended Sample Information Management System (ESIMS) employed in the Forensic Science Division serving as a centralized database for storing the relevant sample information was launched in January 2009. Prior to the launch, a comprehensive 3-month User Acceptance Test (UAT) involving a series of functional tests was conducted by different levels of end users using wide variety of test cases. The system's applicability, functionality and compatibility to the work flow of the Division were well tested during the UAT with over 360 incidents of test bugs being reported and fixed. After the production of the ESIMS, continuous technical supports and enhancement to the system are being provided by IT professional with a view to maintaining its effectiveness and keeping pace with the development and operation of the Division.

Audit Commission had checked 127,523 records captured in the ESIMS, only a few cases (less than 0.01%) were found to be doubtful / illogical with sample-in date later than the sample-out date. These are probably slips in data entry and not a systematic error that affect the data accuracy. These slips did not affect the operation of the division and casework.

- (d) A total of six "Areas worth improvement" (AWIs) under test and examination methods, and method validation as referred to in Table 6 of the Audit Report were made during the annual internal quality audit conducted in December 2012 by internal audit teams comprised professional staff of the Forensic Science Division. The AWIs were related to the documentation, formats of documents or records. In all cases, the method and validation itself complied with the quality system. To follow up, where necessary Sections concerned have already revised the documents or updated the records according to the recommendations.

The AWIs observed in the previous internal quality audits were not critical or a fault in the quality system, and more importantly, these did not invalidate a test report or compromise its quality. Such observations were invariably random clerical slips or occasional overlook in minor quality requirements but were not systematic errors, in most cases these were simply suggestions on enhancement of the quality system. All internal audit reports were subject to audit by assessors and technical experts during external assessments and all issues were already acknowledged and accepted.

Part 3 : Outsourcing of laboratory services

- (e) GL adopted the Government's Stores and Procurement Regulations in outsourcing its testing services and made reference to "A General Guide to Outsourcing".
- (f) GL does not outsource its services to overseas contractors.

Part 4 : Management of chemicals samples, exhibits and equipment

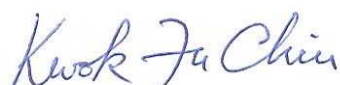
- (g) Many general chemicals are stable under normal storage conditions and no expiry dates are provided by the manufacturers or suppliers. The expired stocks, if any, are very small proportions of the whole storage and some of them are kept for backup purpose and environmental reason. When required, these chemicals will be checked or re-validated before use. Hence, the accuracy will not be affected.

Part 5 : Way Forward

- (h) GL, in consultation with FHB, has already commenced a review of its organizational structure with a view to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of its services and better preparing for future challenges. It is now in the process of soliciting the views of relevant bureaux and departments. The review is currently ongoing and more details of the way forward will be formulated duly.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned if you have any question on the above.

Yours faithfully,



(KWOK Fu-chiu)
Government Chemist (Acting)

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Fax No. 2147 5239)
Director of Audit (Fax No. 2583 9063)