

疾病預防及控制部  
香港灣仔皇后大道東 213 號  
胡忠大廈 18 樓



Disease Prevention and Control Division  
18<sup>th</sup> Floor, Wu Chung House  
213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai  
Hong Kong

本署檔號 OUR REF.:  
來函檔號 YOUR REF.:  
電話 TEL.: 2961 8918  
圖文傳真 FAX.: 2574 2113

14 May 2004

Clerk to Select Committee  
(Attn : Ms. Hayley Wan)

**BY FAX**  
2248 2011

Dear Ms. Wan,

I refer to the hearing on 10 January 2004 whereby the Select Committee has requested me to provide further information regarding the exact date when the Department of Health (DH) started contact tracing on social contacts.

The PWH outbreak first came to notice on 11 March 2003. Right from the beginning of the outbreak, DH conducted contact tracing within 24 hours of receiving notifications from hospitals on cases which fulfilled a surveillance case definition agreed with the PWH at the time. Contact tracing covered persons who might have been exposed to a SARS patient or suspected SARS patient. At that time there was no such term or category of people as 'social contacts' although the tracing covered people who might have been exposed to the patient at workplace or school whom literally constituted 'social contacts'. Subsequently the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition for close contact of SARS has been adopted by DH since 31 March 2003. By the WHO's definition, close contacts, for the purpose of contact tracing, include those who have lived with, cared for, or handled respiratory secretions of the SARS patients; whereas persons who have had contact with a person with SARS but do not satisfy this definition are defined as social contacts. Contact tracing hence covered both 'close contacts' and 'social contacts' as defined by the WHO since adoption of the WHO's definition.

Yours sincerely,

(Dr. L Y TSE)  
Department of Health