

Subcommittee on Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage)
Regulation and Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage)
Regulation (Repeal) Regulation

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Submission from Living Islands Movement

Living Islands Movement welcomes the Subcommittee's initiative in seeking an active and vigilant approach to preventing and reducing the accumulation of marine refuse on Hong Kong's beaches.

The measures currently in place – such as the refuse collection service for vessels at anchorages and typhoon shelters; marine scavenging and current publicity and education measures do not appear to be adequate.

The refuse accumulation on our beaches is part of the wider waste management crisis facing Hong Kong, which needs to be addressed at source through radical waste separation, reduction and recycling measures.

The Marine Department's primary interest in marine littering is to ensure safe navigation for vessels in Hong Kong waters. Protecting and preserving our beaches is a much wider issue, and one of the challenges is the number of different government departments that plays a role in tackling the problem, including EPD, FEHD, LCSD, Lands Department, DSD, District Office. A more holistic approach is required, rather than allocating responsibility for different parts of the shoreline to different departments, depending on whether it is above or below the high tide line, and whether the refuse is found in the water or on the land.

It doesn't help to tackle or solve the problem to be more concerned about labels and classifications, such as 'land waste' or 'marine derived'.

The establishment of the Government's Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines was a welcome step in the right direction, but perhaps this group needs to be given wider ranging responsibilities and accountabilities.

For example, implementing the Coastal Protection Zone, and systematic cleaning of non-gazetted beaches.

At present, the reports and studies commissioned by the Government such as that by Mott McDonald tell a different story from what we are seeing on our local beaches with our own eyes. So there is a gap between the Government's perception of the problem and the reality that we see on the beaches every day.

While the current situation of over-lapping department responsibilities is not addressing the problem, any truly determined effort to solve marine pollution in Hong Kong's water and beaches also requires close cooperation with Macau SAR and the People's Republic of China in looking at overall sources of pollution in the Pearl River Delta as a single entity.

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