

**HONG KONG ARTS ADMINISTRATORS' ASSOCIATION**  
**SUBMISSION TO LEGCO HOME AFFAIRS PANEL**  
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**Education**

Any plans for cultural software development must include a revision of education, particularly in the inclusion of arts content in the core primary and secondary school curricula. Exposing children to the arts throughout their school years inspires creativity and the capacity for original thought in all students, whatever their chosen future profession. It inspires career choices among the next generation of arts and creative industries practitioners. Gaining an appreciation for the arts at school also serves an important audience development function. Unfortunately Hong Kong lags decades behind developed countries in this respect.

At present, secondary students who wish to pursue a career in the arts in Hong Kong need to undertake extra-curricular training because there are no preparatory courses available within the school system. Preparation for tertiary education in non-arts professions is routinely accepted as a central role of secondary education, but the arts and creative industries are lumped together under the umbrella of "career oriented curricula" alongside hairdressing and cookery classes.

The Education Department has yet to establish a specialist arts secondary school which are commonplace elsewhere in the world, not only in developed countries elsewhere but also in mainland China, the former Soviet-bloc countries in eastern Europe, and even in Vietnam. While international schools in Hong Kong generally have greater arts provision than those operated by the Government, the fees are beyond the reach of most ordinary families, and history has shown that the rich do not have a monopoly on creativity or artistic ability.

**Cultural software development**

Some 45% of applications for bookings at LCSD venues last year were unsuccessful. In the time taken to construct WKCD this problem is likely to increase. Accordingly, the provision of centrally located venues is lagging behind demand, and development of sufficient performing content to fill the venues, considering the existing unsatisfied demand for spaces from both local and international producers, will not be a significant issue.

**Audience Development**

Setting aside for a moment the Mega performing venue, which really ought to be seen as re-provisioning the acoustically and aesthetically unsuitable Coliseum, the other performing venues proposed for Phase 1 of WKCD represent less than 10% of the existing seating capacity across Hong Kong. As there has not been any major addition to theatre facilities in recent years, a

10% growth in audience numbers over a 15 year period is both realistic and achievable.

### **Human Resources Development**

The development of arts management expertise is an integral part of the growth of Hong Kong's creative industries, in which WCKD will be an important landmark.

The Arts Administrators' Association welcomes and endorses the Home Affairs Bureau's proposal to undertake a manpower mapping exercise, and the Association stands ready to play an active role in carrying out the study, given the necessary financial assistance to do so. The manpower review is a necessary first step to ascertain the extent of the challenges ahead in preparing for WKCD, not least arising from the brain-drain of management and technical talent to the new casino-based performing venues in Macau which, in the fullness of time, will exceed the combined seating capacity of the entire WKCD development.

Fortunately, there are a number of options available through which Government can facilitate the development of new management talent in the short and medium term:

- a. By funding and facilitating management trainee internships, both locally and internationally;
- b. By providing, through the Arts Development Council, support for smaller arts companies to employ administrative staff, for example in cases where the artistic personnel also cover management matters due to financial constraints;
- c. By providing our flagship arts organisations with additional resources to take on and train junior and middle managers, as well as encouraging them to accept interns;
- d. By encouraging the establishment of training programmes to attract experienced managers from other professions who are passionate about the arts, to become arts managers; and
- e. By extending the LCSD Venue Partnership Scheme to provide training in, and exposure to, venue management for the partnering arts companies. This will require a more meaningful involvement by the programming partners in management and marketing of the venues than is currently contemplated.

Due to the long-standing virtual Government monopoly in provision of performance venues, there is only a handful of experienced venue managers outside of the civil service. In time, the logical conclusion (and, historically, the original intention) of the LCSD Venue Partnership Scheme is to corporatize the venues and transfer the management of the existing 400 seat LCSD civic centres into the hands of resident performing companies. This would not only provide additional training for venue managers during the transition phase, it would also unlock the considerable depth of experience among the current managers of LCSD facilities to work beyond the Government sector.

Flagship companies should be financially encouraged to prepare management talent for WKCD by drawing up succession plans, training senior management and capable middle managers (from both public and private sectors) through study tours, attending short courses both locally and overseas, arranging short overseas attachments and so on. Schemes should be set up to enable such managers to learn about arts administration in Mainland China through short attachments and /or exchange schemes.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club's proposal to create additional performance venues and exhibition spaces in the Central Police Station can be realised a lot sooner than WKCD, and will provide a training ground for additional management and technical staff in anticipation of WKCD's opening.

### **The Bigger Picture**

There is still a lot of work to do in improving existing performing venues and museums. The LCSD venue partnership scheme falls short of solving the problems these venues currently face and is at best a stop-gap measure. In the fullness of time and with WKCD venues acting as a major hub, it is possible to envisage a revision of the role of the present LCSD venues, including the transfer of management of the existing 400 seat LCSD civic centres into the hands of resident performing companies who would subsidize their operating costs from theatre rental income. This dual funding mechanism could provide checks and balances against the resident company monopolizing the venue for their own use.

In the meantime, the Government's proposed manpower mapping exercise will provide a starting point for preparation of training programmes and this Association stands ready to assist in that process.