

**SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD**  
**Notes of the 139th Meeting of the Committee on Administration**

Date: 25 February 2019  
Time: 7:00 p.m.  
Venue: Conference Room, 26/F Eastern Commercial Centre, 83 Nam On Street, Shau Kei Wan, Hong Kong.  
Present: Dr. TING Wai-fong (Convenor)  
Ms. CHEUNG Lai-yi  
Mr. LO Wa-kei, Roy  
Ms. LUI Siu-ying  
Mr. LUN Chi-wai  
Secretary: Mr. LEE Wing-po, Eric, Registrar and  
Ms. FAN Lai-yee, Veronica, Assistant Registrar

Dr. TING, Convenor of the Committee, presided the meeting.

**Matters arising from last meeting**

*Matters  
Arising*

1. The Committee took note of the notes of last meeting.

Review of the inspection of the Register

*Para.12-13  
of last  
meeting  
notes*

2. The Committee of the last term discussed whether it was necessary to discard the registration form for inspection of the Register or to keep the current practice unchanged. In the form, enquirer's name and employing agency were requested. As no conclusion was reached, the matter was brought forward to the new term of office for further discussion.
3. The Secretary highlighted that the Data Protection Principles under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486) required that any collection of personal data should be legitimately and for a purpose but our current practice might not comply with such legal requirement. The then Committee members worried that the disclosure of RSW's full address with no tracing might expose RSW to risk or danger; and the collection of personal data from the enquirer might help the police's follow up.

*(Mr. Roy LO joined the meeting at the juncture.)*

4. The Committee noted that before the government agreed to amend the Social Workers Registration Ordinance, appropriate actions should be taken to protect the RSW whose personal data is being inquired. Members suggested to remind RSW that it is a statutory requirement to disclose the full address in the Register for public inspection, however, this address needs not be the

residential. Such reminder should be highlighted in the new application form for registration, the “Important Points to Note for Renewal” and the newsletter.

5. The Committee agreed to discard the registration form for inspection of the Register if the CCTV over the Board’s reception area would record the process of inspection. The Committee asked the Board office to check the retention period of such recording.

*(Post meeting notes: the revised “Important Notes to RSW” was circulated to the Committee on 26 February 2019 and the proposed revision of the application forms were sent on 11 March 2019, pending members’ further comments. In response to the Committee’s instruction in paragraph 5, the current CCTV system was installed in 2010 with analogue cameras and 1TB surveillance harddisk storage at maximum capacity of recording 24 hours x 14 days. When the harddisk was full, the earliest day of recording would be deleted and replaced by the new one automatically.)*

#### Revised registration form, renewal form and notification of changes

6. The Secretary proposed to delete section of “History of Employment” and “Reasons of not Applying for Renewal” from the registration form, because such information was not required by the Ordinance nor for the purpose of registration. For persons who apply for registration or renewal under category 2, they would still be required to provide information of social work posts occupied and the employing agency for sake of registration requirement. The Committee noted that after such changes, it was expected to have a decreasing number of suspected cases in contravening with section 34 of SWRO.
7. The Committee agreed that it was necessary to put a remark in the new forms to alert them of the statutory requirement in disclosure of full registered address and to add the note that the registered address needs not be the residential address of the RSW in the Register for public inspection.
8. The revised forms would be put forward to the Board for endorsement. Both application form and renewal form would be launched when the integrated computer system was in place whilst the form of notification of changes would be put in use with immediate effect.
9. When the Board considered any application for registration, “fit and proper” was one of the statutory requirements as specified in section 17 of SWRO but the Board had never provided any definition nor required the applicants to make declaration at the time of application. In the last term, the Board office had submitted a discussion paper to the Committee of Qualification Registration and Assessment which resolved not to proceed with the matter

until the revised Code of Practice was finalized.

10. The Committee exchanged views on the issue of “fit and proper” criteria which might be in relation to physical health, mental health, or financial conditions etc. Alternatively, it was suggested to build a list of criteria which were not fit and proper. The Convenor asked the Secretary to circulate the previous meeting paper for members’ perusal. The Committee would then decide whether to take up the task.

*(Post meeting note: the Board paper in relation to fit and proper was circulated to the Committee on 26 February 2019.)*

#### A complaint against the Registrar

11. The Committee took note of a complaint against the Registrar which was received in December 2018. The complainant was the Respondent’s legal representative of a disciplinary complaint case being processed and in the stage of disciplinary hearing. The matter was being handled separately by the respective disciplinary committee. The complaint was acknowledged and the case would be brought up to the Committee after the disciplinary case was concluded.

#### **Administration**

##### Progress of developing an integrated database and information system

*Para. 4-6  
of last  
meeting  
notes*

12. The Secretary reported that the system requirements were sent to prospective service vendors for quotations before the close of 28 February 2019. To date, only one quotation was received. After the deadline, the Board office would provide a recommendation for the Committee’s consideration. The Convenor asked the Secretary to circulate the system requirements to the Committee as well as the Chairperson who would be able to give valuable advice on the documents.

*(Post meeting note: the paper on system requirements was circulated to the Committee on 26 February 2019.)*

##### Review of the refund of renewal fee

13. The Committee was invited to review and evaluate the scheme which had been launched for more than one year with effect from 1 January 2018. The purpose of the scheme was to encourage RSW to renew within the renewal window i.e. not earlier than three months and not later than 28 days prior to the expiry of registration and hence to save postage cost. The Secretary reported the number of registered mails served to RSWs who did not successfully complete the renewal within the renewal window in years of

2017 and 2018. The findings showed that the effectiveness of the scheme was not obvious. The Committee shared views that maybe it was the lack of attractive incentive to drive RSWs to renew earlier and the new measure brought about inconvenience to RSWs to cash the \$20 cheques.

14. The Committee brainstormed other initiatives such as imposing surcharge, increasing the renewal fee as well as the incentive. The Committee agreed that it was not the right timing to make any changes, in light of the intervening factor of sending earlier the invitation. It should be brought up for evaluation next year when the new practice would be launched for a longer period and with more data available.

#### Appointments to disciplinary committee panel

15. The Committee was invited to consider if any guidelines are to be given such as the format, number of members in each sub-group, composition, criteria of nomination, timeline of the nomination exercise before the work plan was drafted for the Board's endorsement.
16. The Secretary explained the past practice of nominating disciplinary committee panel members and the legal requirements under SWRO. The Board had adopted an additional 5-year social work experience as requirement on the nominations from RSWs. The nominations were made open to RSWs and there were also individual invitations made by the Board to beef up the two sub-groups i.e. diploma-holder RSWs and non-RSWs. The current appointments to the disciplinary committee panel would be due to expire by 15 January 2020.
17. The Committee shared the views as follows:
  - (a) The size of sub-group of degree-holder RSWs was too large and it was difficult to accumulate experience.
  - (b) At time of appointment to Disciplinary Committee, the Board was uncertain about the expertise of RSWs.
  - (c) It was required to beef up the talent pool from legal practitioners in sub-group of non-RSWs.
18. The Committee had the following suggestions:
  - (a) The appointment would be made through open nomination.
  - (b) The nominees from RSWs should be asked to specify their expertise in terms of social work practice settings.
  - (c) Wherever possible, the nominees from RSWs would be sub-divided by social work settings, each with a cap of panelists. In case of excessive nominees, the Board was to draw lots for the appointment.
  - (d) Except those who had failed consistently responding to conflict and

availability check as well as those the Committee would have concern over their appropriateness to remain, current panelists were to be invited to offer themselves for nomination.

- (e) Besides open nomination, invitations were to be sent to the Law Society and the Bar Association for their nominations of 3-5 each to beef up panelists with legal background.
- (f) The invitation of nominations of RSWs could also be disseminated through tertiary institutions or their social work alumni.

19. The Board office would prepare a proposal for the Board's endorsement.

#### Discussion on the provision of bilingual documents for dissemination of information

20. At the Board meeting held on 23 January 2019, some members had concerns on the language being used in communications, meeting agenda and minutes in dealing with the Board's matters. The Board therefore asked the Committee on Administration to revisit the language policy.

21. The Secretary briefed the Committee about the related discussions in the last term. Currently, only newsletter was bilingual, whilst the meeting agenda and minutes of the Board and Committees were prepared and published (only the redacted version) in English only.

22. The Committee discussed the reasons brought up at the last Board meeting and it concluded that it would be impossible to apply the across-the-board bilingual policy, because some internal documents have to be solely in either English or Chinese such as the legal advice, qualification assessment/review reports, recommendations of disciplinary complaint cases. The constraints in terms of time and finances were also taken into account.

23. After ensuring discussion, the Committee came to a consensus that:

- (a) No specific languages would be required for internal documents, hence no translation is needed, i.e. the source of such documents would dictate them to be in Chinese or English or both;
- (b) Agendas and minutes of the Board meetings would be prepared in Chinese, so be the redacted version to be posted onto website, whilst English translation would be prepared upon request;
- (c) Agendas and minutes at committee or task force level would remain to be written in English.

## **Finance**

### Budget for the financial year ended 31 March 2020

24. For the budget in 2019/20, the income from application fee and renewal fee would be stable with an increase by 4%. The Secretary highlighted that a budget of business information deleted for system revamp had already been marked. If the quoted price exceeded the budget, the amount in contingency should be sufficient to cover the extra cost. In addition, it was expected to conduct public consultation on the revised “Principles, Criteria and Standards for Recognizing Qualifications in Social Work” as well as the “Code of Practice”. Budget of HK\$1 million was reserved for legal vetting. The Honorary Treasurer advised that the financial condition of the Board as projected was healthy and prudent. The Committee endorsed the budget for submission to the Board.

## **Promotions**

### Outline of the 43rd eNewsletter

25. The Committee had no comment on the proposed outline but suggested to add the following items:
- (a) It was to remind RSWs that the registered address was not necessary to be residential address. As stipulated in the Ordinance, the registered address provided would be shown in the Register for public inspection.
  - (b) The Board should show concerns to the mutual recognition of social work qualification as proposed in the “Outline Development Plan for Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area” (粵港澳大灣區發展規劃綱要) despite no detailed arrangements were provided in the document. It was suggested to include it in the Chairperson’s message. The suggestion would be put forward to the Board.

### Progress report on promotion of the Board

26. The Committee took note of the progress report.

### Second International meeting Social Workers Regulators

27. The Committee took note of the report on the first international meeting with Social Workers Regulators. The second international meeting would be held in Vancouver in late June 2019. The detailed information would be submitted to the Committee for consideration when it was available.

## **Any other business**

### Opinions from a RSW

*(The Convenor declared that she knew the complainant and abstained from the discussion. Mr. Lun convened the meeting for this agenda item.)*

28. On 13 February 2019, the Board office received a fax from a RSW together with her application form for renewal expressing opinions on the renewal form and suggested the Board to make better use of the renewal fee in continuing professional development for social workers.
29. The Committee took note of her comments on the renewal form as the renewal form was under review.
30. The Committee took the view that the statutory duties of the Board were related to registration and disciplinary control matters but not including training or continuing professional development, that provision of similar of the latter might be ultra virus. A few years ago, the Board had proposed to set up a voluntary enrolment scheme for specialization in social work, however, it was opposed by many social workers. The scheme was then shelved as the legal adviser commented that the scheme was ultra vires. At present, the Board had provided a platform for the activity organizers to share their activity information on a designated website and RSWs could also record their training hours through this website.
31. The Board office was instructed to draft the reply along this line.

*(Post meeting note: the draft reply was endorsed by the Committee and issued to the RSW concerned on 8 March 2019.)*

#### Social Work Day 2019

32. The Secretary reported that the long run of Social Work Day 2019 was held on 24 February 2019.

#### **Date of next meeting**

33. The next meeting would be scheduled at 7:00pm on 6 May 2019.
34. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30pm.

13 March 2019