

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)304

(Question Serial No. 5611)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

With regard to the columbaria services of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, please advise this Committee of the following:

- (a) the number of new niches available for interment of ashes of the deceased in the columbaria under the Department in 2018-19, with a breakdown by columbarium;
- (b) the number of cases currently on the waiting list for niches managed by the Department; the number of new applications for niches managed by the Department and the number of niches allocated by the Department in each of the past 3 years;
- (c) the average waiting time for interment of ashes in niches managed by the Department after cremations of the deceased in each of the past 3 years;
- (d) the number of niches vacated for re-allocation each year after the relaxation of the cap on the number of sets of ashes that may be stored in a niche; and
- (e) whether a work plan will be formulated to promote the placing of additional sets of ashes in a niche in 2018-19; if yes, the details and estimated expenditure of the plan concerned; if not, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (Member Question No. (LegCo use): 142)

Reply:

- (a) The number of new niches in public columbaria available for allocation in 2018 and 2019 is provided below –

Location	Number of niches
Peng Chau Columbarium Extension	360
Hong Kong Cemeteries and Crematoria Office (Part) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department at Wong Nai Chung Road, Wan Chai	855
Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun*	20 000
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension	1 400

* The project at Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun will be completed in the latter half of 2019, providing about 160 000 new niches which will be allocated by phases over a number of years. Plans are being made to advance the allocation schedule of the first 20 000 niches to end 2018.

- (b) New niches are allocated by computer balloting. Waiting list applies only to the allocation of niches returned to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department).

The information sought on allocation of new niches is as follows –

Year	New niches	
	No. of applications	No. of niches allocated
2015	11 627	14 573
2016	178	5 239
2017	199	197

Note: The year in which new niches are allocated may not be the same as that in which the applications are made.

In the past 3 years, on average about 315 niches were returned annually to the Department. These niches were re-allocated according to the priority in the waiting list of the respective columbarium. The information sought is provided as follows –

Year	Re-allocated niches		
	No. of new applications	Cumulative total no. of applications on the waiting list	No. of niches re-allocated
2015	7 164	21 048	394
2016	6 923	24 280	271
2017	7 931	29 168	346

- (c) There is no statistics on the average time from cremation to the deposition of cremated ashes into public niches.
- (d) The Department has since January 2014 removed the cap on the number of sets of cremated ashes that may be placed in a public niche. The number of niches vacated due to co-location of ashes in other public niches and returned to the Department for re-allocation in the past 3 years is as follows –

Year	No. of niches returned
2015	12
2016	4
2017	1

- (e) In 2018-19, the Department will continue to promote co-location of cremated ashes in public niches through broadcasting of Announcements in Public Interest, distribution of posters, booklets, leaflets and collaboration with the funeral trade by posting up promotional posters and distributing educational leaflets at the premises of licensed funeral parlours and undertakers of burials. The estimated expenditure is about \$2.53 million.

- End -