

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**FHB(FE)251****(Question Serial No. 4147)**

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 number of new niches available for interment of ashes of the deceased in the columbaria under the Department in 2020-21, with a breakdown by columbarium;
- the number of cases currently on the waiting list for niches managed by the Department;
- the average waiting time for interment of ashes in niches managed by the Department after cremation of the deceased in each of the past 3 years; and
- 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.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Tanya (LegCo internal reference no.: 110)

Reply:

- The number of new public niches available for allocation from 2020 to 2021 is provided as follows:

Location	Number of niches	Year of completion
Tsang Tsui, Tuen Mun	22 900* (all 163 320 niches to be allocated by 8 phases)	2020
Wo Hop Shek Cemetery, Fanling	22 050 (all 44 100 niches to be allocated by 2 phases)	2020
Cheung Chau Columbarium Extension	580	2020
Lai Chi Yuen Cemetery Extension	790	2020

* Not including a small quantity of niches not yet allocated in the first phase of niche allocation for Tsang Tsui Columbarium in Tuen Mun.

- (b) At present, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department allocates new extendable niches to eligible applicants by open drawing of lots and computer balloting rather than on a first-come, first-served basis. In late 2019, the Department completed a niche allocation exercise for 2 new public columbaria, namely Tsang Tsui Columbarium (first phase) in Tuen Mun (providing around 20 000 niches) and Wong Nai Chung Road Columbarium (providing 855 niches). In the next few years, with new columbarium projects being completed one after another, it is estimated that at least 20 000 niches will be available for allocation each year.
- (c) The Department does not keep statistics on the average waiting time for interment of ashes in public niches after cremation of the remains.
- (d) The Department has removed the cap on the number of sets of cremated ashes that may be interred in a public niche since January 2014. The information sought is provided as follows:

Year	Number of niches returned
2014	8
2015	12
2016	4
2017	1
2018	3
2019	3

- End -