

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)172

(Question Serial No. 1173)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Programme: (4) Public Education and Community Involvement

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Diane WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Regarding “promoting green burial as a more sustainable form of disposal of cremated human ashes”,

1. please set out as per the table below the number of cases handled by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department) and the expenditure involved in each of the past 3 years (i.e. from 2018 to 2020); and

Year	Number of deaths	Number of coffin burials	Number of cremations	Number of ashes interment in public niches	Number of cases of scattering of ashes		Expenditure involved
					In the designated areas in Hong Kong waters	In Gardens of Remembrance	
2018							
2019							
2020							

2. please set out the number of users and the utilisation rate of the ferry service provided by the Department for scattering cremated ashes at sea, as well as the expenditure involved in each of the past 3 years (i.e. from 2018 to 2020).

Year	Number of applications handled	Service capacity	Utilisation rate	Expenditure involved
2018				
2019				
2020				

Asked by: Hon WONG Kwok-kin (LegCo internal reference no.: 59)

Reply:

1. The information sought is provided as follows :

Year	Number of deaths	Number of coffin burials	Number of cremations	Number of ashes interment in public niches [^]	Number of cases of scattering of ashes	
					At sea	In Gardens of Remembrance*
2018	47 479	919	43 803	3 657	972	6 074
2019	48 706	819	45 543	4 196	899	7 010
2020	50 653	948	46 465	39 598	854	6 822

* Including cases handled by private cemeteries.

[^] The year of ashes interment does not necessarily be the year of death or fall within the same year of which the application for a niche is submitted.

The expenditure incurred by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in providing cemeteries and crematoria services in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 was \$355.4 million, \$419.7 million and \$438.0 million (revised estimate) respectively. There is no breakdown by type of services.

2. The number of users and the utilisation rate of the free ferry service provided by the Department to the designated areas in Hong Kong waters for scattering cremated ashes in the past 3 years are as follows :

Year	Number of applications handled	Service capacity	Utilisation rate
2018	878	1 225	72%
2019	810	1 250	65%
2020	798	810*	99%

* Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, the Department has reduced the service capacity of each ferry by half since 15 February 2020.

The expenditure incurred by the Department for contracting out the free ferry service in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21 was \$2.40 million, \$2.40 million and \$2.70 million (revised estimate) respectively.

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