

By post and by email at [rdpt@epd.gov.hk](mailto:rdpt@epd.gov.hk)

17 September 2021

Waste Reduction and Recycling Group  
Environmental Protection Department  
2/F, East Wing  
Island West Transfer Station  
88 Victoria Road  
Kennedy Town, Hong Kong

Dear Sir/Madam

**Views from The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers  
Regarding the Scheme on Regulation of Disposable Plastic Tableware**

On behalf of the Institution, I am pleased to present to you our views and suggestions as set out in the enclosure for your consideration on the captioned subject.

The Institution welcomes the opportunity to work with the Government and offer our expertise and experience on the area of concern if and when it is needed.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully



Ir Eva KONG  
Director

CKH/EK/SS

**Enclosure**

**Views from The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers  
Regarding the Scheme on Regulation of Disposable Plastic Tableware**

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) would like to provide the following views and suggestions regarding the scheme on regulation of disposable plastic tableware for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD)'s consideration:

2. Environmental studies continue to discover microplastics which are broken down from plastic products and packaging and displeasingly flushed into sea finding their way into the body of marine life, and eventually, our food chain. Hong Kong is a coastal city affected by plastic waste and therefore the pressing issue of disposable plastic tableware ought to be tackled head-on. It is imperative that the problem of plastic pollution and its impact on the environment be deliberately looked into. The Institution supports the proposed scheme and urges the regulation of disposable plastic tableware.
3. The Institution opines that the approach to manage and deal with disposable plastic tableware should be implemented in line with the "5R" waste management hierarchy adopted for other waste types, i.e. Rethink ► Refuse ► Reduce ► Reuse ► Recycle. By following this principle, it is hoped that a more sustainable development can be achieved and the impacts of disposable plastic tableware can be mitigated.
4. In conjunction with the implementation of the scheme, the Government is suggested to take an educational approach over compliance in the first instance, and provide support to the catering sector to cope with the new regulations. The Government should bring to the awareness of the catering sector the changes, the effects on the sector and the support/resources available in order to make a successful transition.
5. Waste avoidance is the way to address the problem at source. While some types of catering services can switch the plastic tableware to washable and reusable

alternatives more conveniently, the public should be educated and encouraged to reduce the generation of waste as much as possible. Reuse systems for plastic containers and cups are already operating in some countries, such as Australia, Singapore, France and Germany, based on a deposit-return arrangement to ensure that tableware is kept in the system. The Government could consider offering subsidies for the development of such reuse systems, which could also drive business transformation towards green economic recovery.

6. With reference to environmental levy on plastic bags, the Government is suggested to consider charging consumers an environmental levy for each disposable plastic box or cup taken during the implementation of Phase One of the proposed scheme. It aims to generate direct economic disincentives, encourage consumers to refrain from using plastic boxes or cups indiscriminately, educate the public to “Bring Your Own Box (BYOBx)”, and strengthen the sustainability culture in the society.

7. Despite the vast variety of environmentally friendly tableware, their durability and cost are sometimes questionable. As the market mass-produces environmentally friendly tableware, the supply will become more diversified and the price is expected to be more affordable by then. Manufacturers should be allowed to compete fairly. Paper or wood cutlery can also serve as a substitute for the disposable plastic cutlery, nevertheless, it is more favourable to reduce the usage of single-use items in order to save resources and keep waste out of the landfill.

8. During the implementation of Phase One of the proposed scheme, the Government can also promote a culture of proper disposal of plastic food containers and cups after use to ensure the disposed tableware are collected and sent for recycling. Used plastic containers or food boxes and cups after cleaning can also be reused over and over to avoid wastage.

9. Further to the EPD’s two-year pilot scheme on waste plastics collection and recycling in three districts launched in January 2020 and its planned progressive extension to nine districts, the Institution urges the Government to expand the coverage to the entire city on time for effective clean recycling by the public.