



# Foreword

I am pleased to present my sixth Annual Report for the Legal Aid Department. 2018 was a fruitful and exciting year as we were faced with many new changes and challenges. Again, with the support from our stakeholders and the hard work of our staff, we were able to surf through the year with accomplishments.



*Thomas Edward Kwong*  
Director of Legal Aid

## Serving the Community

We continued to make use of every opportunity to engage different sectors of the community in order to promote legal aid services. We delivered talks, organised visits and attended quite a number of sharing sessions and meetings with NGOs, youth and students as well as other government departments on a wide range of topics, from specific categories of legal aid services to the working life of being a civil servant working in the Legal Aid Department. We are delighted that such activities were well-received by the general public and will continue to strive to the best of our ability to serve the community.

## Quality Service to the Public

As highlighted in our 2017 Annual Report, efforts and resources were invested by the Department to explore means to further enhance the delivery of our service through the use of advanced technology. In January 2018, we implemented an electronic appointment system by which intended legal aid applicants could make appointment and obtain different types of application-related forms and documents through the Legal Aid Electronic Services Portal on our website. The launching of its mobile version is expected to take place in the coming year. In parallel, we began the feasibility study on our Case Management and Case Accounting System in 2018. With the benefit of the feasibility study, we will be able to identify the possible technical options for future enhancement. This objective is to raise the efficiency in our future delivery of legal aid services.



We always attach great importance to the feedback from aided persons on our service. In this connection, throughout the year, as a token of appreciation, an environmentally-friendly bag designed by a colleague of the Department is presented as a souvenir to those aided persons who had returned the completed customer service survey forms to us upon conclusion of their cases.

## Synergy with Stakeholders

Throughout the year, we continued to build upon a close working relationship with our stakeholders. The results from such collaboration are very encouraging.

In April 2018, we were given the opportunity to participate in the “Access to Justice InnoTech Law Hackathon” competition organised by the Law Society of Hong Kong. We provided support in setting the questions for the Hackathon and gave guidance to the participating teams during training sessions and at the competition. This invaluable experience gave us insight on how to work out technology-enable solutions to address issues on access to legal aid services. It was also conducive to promoting our services to the public and the importance of legal aid in ensuring access to justice.

In October 2018, we participated in the international event of “2018 Asia Pro Bono Conference Hong Kong”. One of our colleagues delivered a talk on legal aid services and shared with the audience how our services facilitate access to justice for people in need. We deeply treasure the positive feedback we received from the organisers and stakeholders and look forward to further cooperation with pro bono lawyers in the near future.

With the support from the Legal Aid Services Council (LASC), we kick-started the Winter Internship Programme in December 2018. The programme, on top of the one which took place during Summer, provided training opportunities and experience sharing with our younger generation who is interested to join the legal profession.

In order to shorten the waiting time for legal aid appeal hearings, we worked closely with the Judiciary on how to streamline the process and expedite the work flow. We thank the Judiciary for their understanding and support which made the enhancement a smooth and successful one.



## Commendations and Awards

2018 was also a rewarding year to our colleagues for their commendable performance and service to the public. One of our colleagues was awarded the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award 2018 in recognition of her commitment and dedication to her duties as well as unfailing support to the Department. Two other colleagues were awarded The Ombudsman's Awards 2018 for Officers of Public Organisations for the efforts they made in handling enquiries and complaints in an expeditious, highly effective and professional manner. I was privileged to be able to attend the presentation ceremonies to share their joy and I am so glad to see that our colleagues' dedication and commitment to their work have earned the respect and recognition of others.

## Looking Ahead

The responsibilities for formulating legal aid policy and housekeeping the Legal Aid Department have been transferred from the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) to the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office (CS' Office) since July 2018. I am grateful to HAB for their invaluable support over the past ten years. I also trust that this cohesive and understanding working relationship would continue with the CS' Office. In this connection, CS has already paid a visit to our Department in July 2018 to learn more about our work and had a fruitful exchange of views and experience with our staff.

Finally, I would also like to express my gratitude to the LASC, the legal profession and our stakeholders for their trust and unfaltering support over the years. We will no doubt continue to strive for the best in our delivery of legal aid services. Last but not least, I would like to pay tribute to my colleagues who have worked so diligently and professionally with perseverance to meet all the challenges in achieving our common goal in upholding legal aid as a cornerstone of the rule of law in Hong Kong.

**Thomas Edward Kwong**  
**Director of Legal Aid**

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