

# ICOMOS

## International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

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International committee for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

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17 August 2012

Mr Tony Li

Development Secretary

Hong Kong SAR Government

Office of the Chief Executive

Central Government Offices

Tamar, Hong Kong

By Email: ceo@ceo.gov.hk

Ref: Reply re redevelopment Central Government Offices West Wing

Dear Mr Li

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the West Wing of the Central Government Offices (CGO). We appreciate the opportunity to continue the professional dialogue about this important heritage site.

We fully respect that Hong Kong has its own set of heritage rules and guidelines in the way it determines how culturally significant properties should be preserved and protected. The members of ICOMOS ISC20C, the International Union of Architects and Docomomo are professionals who assess and advise on such projects in their daily work all over the world, and we appreciate the diversity of processes and cultural practice that are applied. We have carefully reviewed your letter and the assessment reports prepared for the property and we must respectfully disagree with the conclusions that are presented.

Our analysis of the relevant documentation and our research confirms that the West Wing of the CGO is a vital and integral part of the whole CGO complex. Designed as one entity, the CGO is a demonstration of the concept of providing centralised government services and administration in a single accessible location, and it has proved to be adaptable and functionally relevant to date. The adaptive re-use proposals demonstrate the sustainability for further functionality of this type of building form and fabric for future generations.

The AAB assessment that rated the whole site Grade 1, Main Wing Grade 1, East Wing Grade 1, and West Wing Grade 2, also indicated that the site as a whole is the entity to be considered as heritage. The reasoning for a lesser grade 2 evaluation for the West Wing is not clearly reasoned, but, the Grade 2 evaluation in conjunction with the rest of the complex being all Grade 1 makes it clear that the West Wing building is vital to understanding the whole.

Using the definitions given related to the gradings: "Grade 2 status refers to buildings of special merit, efforts should be made to selectively preserve", and especially when viewed in conjunction with the rest of the complex which is all Grade 1, we respectfully suggest that such "efforts" should be strongly pursued. The CGO was conceived as a whole, designed as a whole and indeed built as a whole, though it was done in phases and with numerous people involved. The CGO has also functioned as a

significant government complex for more than fifty years, serving the people of Hong Kong. Differentiating between the parts therefore is philosophically contradictory and ethically troubling.

The removal of the West Wing would not only be a great loss in its own right but it would also significantly diminish the cultural value and meaning of the remaining buildings and site that make up the CGO complex. We acknowledge with enthusiastic support your government's plans to save and rehabilitate the Central Wing and East Wings. However, we strongly believe that just as the government has demonstrated that those two buildings can be successfully rehabilitated and given new life, a similar opportunity should be offered to ensure that the West Wing can continue to serve the people of Hong Kong. In that way the entire CGO complex can retain its cultural value and meaning, its heritage values appreciated and celebrated by future generations.

We ask you once more to re-consider further the opportunity before you to conserve and celebrate the heritage significance of the entirety of the Central Government Office complex.



**Sheridan Burke**  
**President**, International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage



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**President**, International Union of Architects, UIA



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