

**Press release**

## **IPCC Observers ensuring impartiality in police complaints investigations**

### *Jointly produced a new TV drama series “IPCC Files” with RTHK*

(HONG KONG – 27 November 2014) The Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) today released its fourteenth issue of the *IPCC Newsletter*. The cover story recapitulates an interview with Observers who shared their experiences of observing police complaints investigations and the new TV drama series “IPCC Files” jointly produced by the IPCC and RTHK. Other contents include the Council’s recent activities and an article contributed by Observer Mrs Virginia Ma Lo Kam-wah. A real complaint case about the IPCC’s function in advising improvements in police measures is also disclosed.

The Observers Scheme was introduced in 1996 to strengthen the IPCC’s monitoring function and assist the IPCC in observing CAPO’s handling and investigation of Reportable Complaints. Mr Larry Kwok, Chairman of the IPCC said, “According to the Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance (IPCCO), Observers may observe the collection of evidence and any interviews that the Police arrange with complainants, complainees, or witnesses in the course of their investigations into complaints. Observers have had the statutory right to attend and observe investigations into police complaints since the IPCC became a statutory body in 2009. Likewise, IPCC Members can also conduct such observations.”

108 Observers represent a diverse profile whose experiences enhance the objectiveness and impartiality in observing complaint investigations. Mr Larry Kwok continued, “Mr Edwin Cheng Shing-lung was appointed as Observer and Member in 2011 and 2012, and he actively participates in and attends observations. In the past months since the commencement of the Occupy Movement, CAPO has already begun investigations into complaints arising from this movement. Leading by example, Edwin himself has observed over half of the investigation work. Dr Lawrence Lam Chi-kit, who served as an IPCC Member from 2007 to 2012, continues his contribution to the IPCC by serving as an Observer. Principal Leung Sau-chi has also been an Observer since the pre-statutory body days of the IPCC for more than 13 years. Mrs Virginia Ma Lo Kam-wah and Mr Charles Cheung Cheuk-yiu from the commercial sector also bring a multi-faceted view into the investigation observations.”

Mr Edwin Cheng Shing-lung stated, "Since the complaints arising from the Occupy Movement have attracted a lot of public concern, the IPCC hopes that all investigation interviews and collection of evidence by CAPO will be attended by IPCC Observers, in response to the public's expectations. And I hope that Observers will continue to actively participate in and attend observations for ensuring impartiality in police complaints investigations."

In addition, the IPCC has planned to organise a series of activities to help Observers better discharge their duties. Three seminars were held in June and July last year to provide a platform for Observers to share their experiences and knowledge; a large-scale Observers symposium will also be held on 23 January 2015 to strengthen connections between IPCC Members and Observers. To better facilitate Observers in making observation appointments, an encrypted Observers' e-portal was rolled out, which also helps the IPCC Secretariat in monitoring and allocating the Observers' attendance and increase the attendance rate. The IPCC is also producing short educational videos which Observers can use as a reference. Newly appointed Observers will be provided with an introduction to the IPCC and the Observers Scheme, an introduction to the functions of the e-portal, and simulation videos of on-site observations.

To discharge its functions under IPCCO S8(1)(e) of enhancing public awareness of the role of the Council, the IPCC is currently producing a new series of "IPCC Files" in collaboration with RTHK subsequent to the success of the TV series "IPCC Files" produced in 2012. The new "IPCC Files" comprises eight 30-minute episodes based on real complaint cases. The theme of each episode is specifically selected to depict real-life situations where complaints against the Police commonly arise, which enables the audience to better understand the situations that give rise to such complaints. The aim of the new series is to increase awareness of the IPCC's work and the police complaints system, and improve public confidence in the police complaints system."

Mr Daniel Mui, Deputy Secretary-General of the IPCC, shared a real complaint case that highlighted the IPCC's function in advising improvements in police measures. The complainant called 999 to report a noise complaint to the Police. A Police Communications Officer, having undertaken to deploy police officers to the scene for enquiry, failed to handle the complainant's report properly. CAPO classified the allegation as "Not Pursuable" because they have been attempting to contact the complainant to investigate her complaint but to no avail. The IPCC was of the view that a definite finding on the classification of the allegation could be reached based on the available information even though the complainant was not forthcoming. CAPO agreed with the IPCC's view and considered that the Police Communications Officer, having undertaken to deploy police officers to the scene for enquiry, failed to handle the

complainant's report properly. CAPO thus reclassified the allegation as "Substantiated" and recommended advising the PCO without a Divisional Record File entry. Additionally, the IPCC requested the Police to remind officers of the 999 Centres that police officers should normally be deployed to the scene as long as the nature of the report warrants a police enquiry, and they should refer the matter to the supervisor if they are doubtful about the caller's intent in the report.

The fourteenth issue of the *IPCC Newsletter* is now available on the IPCC's website at:  
[http://www.ipcc.gov.hk/en/reports\\_newsletter.html](http://www.ipcc.gov.hk/en/reports_newsletter.html)

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**Notes to editor:**

#### **About the Independent Police Complaints Council**

The Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) is an independent body established under the Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance (IPCCO) (Cap. 604) to observe, monitor and review the handling and investigation of reportable complaints (RCs) against the Police by the Commissioner of Police (CP). The IPCC has become a statutory body since the commencement of IPCCO on 1 June 2009.