

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

總幹事的話



The year under review has probably been the most eventful and challenging in the Consumer Council's 45-year history. Affected by months of social unrest and then the COVID-19 pandemic, our daily lives and a large part of the economy had to shut down. With the uncertainty in the pandemic situation, consumers are facing new challenges to maintain life as usual while protecting one's health. This will also be one of the Consumer Council's key focus in the coming future.

The pandemic has certainly weighed in on our work. We responded by switching to crisis mode in the fourth week of January and moving with great urgency to ensure that the Council was able to maintain most of its normal services to the public – while also making sure our staff were given appropriate protection. This was facilitated by the use of IT and mobile technology such as video and audio conferencing, as well as setting-up a VPN and FTP server to aid home working.

Although all five Consumer Advice Centres were closed temporarily, hotline staff continued to handle public enquiries and complaints whilst staying at home using mobile office apps. Once we resumed normal business operations in early March,

過去1年可說是消費者委員會成立45年來最富挑戰性的一年。持續數月的社會動盪事件，以及緊接著的新型冠狀病毒疫情，我們的日常生活和大部分經濟活動都陷入停擺狀態。疫情反覆，如何在新常態下好好守護健康，如常生活，是每一位消費者面對的考驗，亦是消委會在未來的重點工程。

在疫情的打擊下，消委會的工作也受到了影響。我們在1月的第4個星期，立即緊急切換至危機處理模式，通過資訊科技和移動技術（例如視頻和音頻會議），並以設置VPN和FTP伺服器來輔助在家工作的安排，盡力維持向公眾提供的常規服務，同時確保本會職員得到適當的保護。

Ms Gilly WONG Fung-han
Chief Executive

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總幹事

staff were allowed to report to work on “flexi hours”, and we arranged frequent sanitisation of office areas and the distribution of face masks, wet wipes and gloves for their use. Some public events planned and many education talks scheduled by the Consumer Education department were inevitably affected, resulting in postponement if not cancellation.

As regards helping the public to fight the virus, we proactively disseminated information to quell online rumours about product shortages, as well as tips and alerts to help consumers make rational decisions before rushing to make unnecessary purchases. We reposted our earlier test reports on hand washing products, wipes and sanitisers for free download on our eCHOICE website in early January, resulting in half a million downloads.

The cost of masks spiked before the Lunar New Year with some pharmacies doubling or tripling the price. The Council inspected dozens of pharmacies and found vast variations in price. We strongly urged traders to fulfil their social responsibility amid the virus outbreak, and not raise prices exorbitantly in the face of supply shortage.

The Council has received many enquiries and complaint cases directly or indirectly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Complaints related to travel services rose to the top of the list, recording an unprecedented 3,810 cases in 2019/20, mainly due to disruption of travel plans. The bulk of the complaints involved air tickets, hotel bookings and outbound tours. While some airlines or travel agents refused to cancel or refund the bookings, others imposed administration charges for any variation or termination of an itinerary, causing consumer dissatisfaction.

During the year under review the Council received 68,815 enquiries and 26,545 complaints, representing a 10% decrease and 5% increase year-on-year respectively. Following travel services, the next four top categories of complaints were related to medical services, telecommunications services, electrical appliances and food and entertainment services.

Complaints related to medical services shot up by 27% this year reaching 3,088 cases, stemming mainly from the closure of a number of medical centres that failed to provide HPV follow-up vaccination services.

Even worse, there was a large number of shop closures totalling 3,078 cases, ten times more than the number in 2018/19. Understandably, a large number of dispute and complaint cases became unpursuable or unresolved once the traders ceased their business; and even for those that struggled to stay afloat, conciliation was difficult as the traders were less co-operative in offering settlements.

While fighting the virus on the one hand, the Council has maintained business as usual on the other. During the year, no fewer than 52 reports on various product tests, surveys and research work were released. The most popular issue of CHOICE Magazine for this year was one featuring a test report on air-conditioners, which revealed that the cooling capacity and energy efficiency figures for certain models have recorded

儘管 5 個消費者諮詢中心曾短暫全部關閉，接聽熱線的職員在家中緊守崗位，使用流動辦公應用程式繼續處理公共查詢和投訴。在 3 月初恢復正常的營運後，我們推行彈性上班時間，並且經常清潔和消毒辦公室，確保衛生，並為員工分發口罩、濕巾和手套。疫情影響下，部份公眾活動及許多由消費者教育部計劃了的教育講座，無可避免受影響，紛紛延期或取消。

在協助公眾對抗疫情方面，我們積極傳播訊息，發出提示和警報，以遏止產品短缺的虛假資訊在網絡蔓延，並幫助消費者理性判斷，避免在情急下作不必要的消費。早在 1 月初，本會馬上將以往發表過有關防疫產品的測試報告文章，包括洗手液、濕巾、消毒搓手液，在 eCHOICE 網站免費開放予公眾瀏覽，下載量達到了 50 萬次。

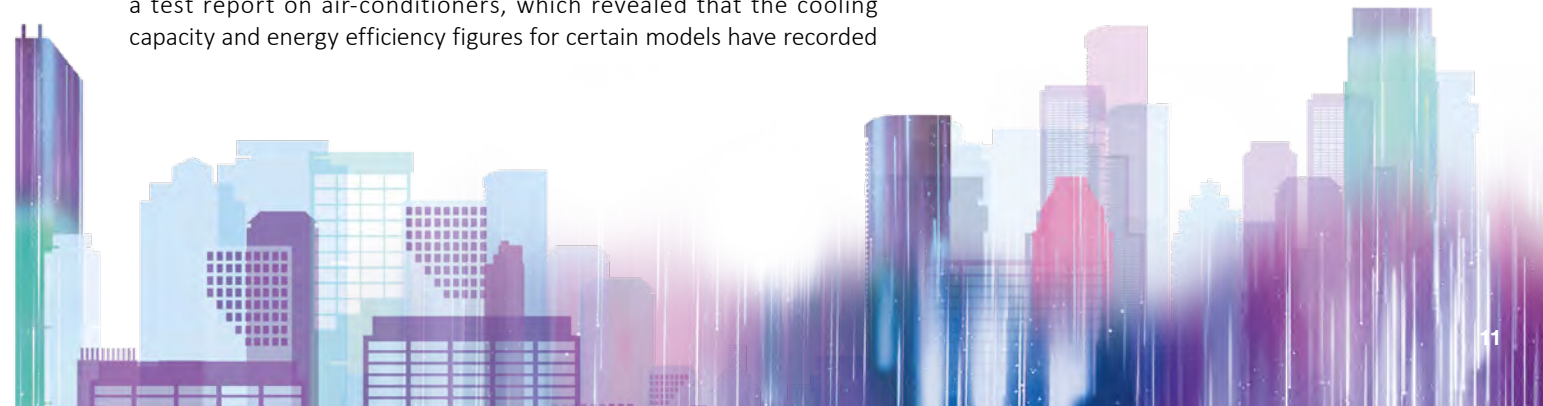
口罩的價格在農曆新年之前飆升，部分藥房將價格提高了 1 倍或 3 倍。本會馬上派員檢視了數十家藥房的口罩價格，發現差異頗大。我們強烈敦促商戶在疫情期間履行社會責任，在供應短缺的情況下不要趁機抬價。

消委會期間亦接獲許多直接或間接與疫情相關的查詢和投訴。旅行服務相關的投訴躍升至榜首，在 2019/20 年度共收到破紀錄的 3,810 宗個案，主要是由於旅行計劃的中斷。大部分投訴涉及機票，酒店預訂和出境旅行。一些航空公司或旅行社拒絕取消預訂或退款，或對行程的任何變更或終止收取行政費用，因而引起消費者不滿。

年內，消委會接獲 68,815 宗查詢及 26,545 宗投訴，按年分別減少 10% 及增加 5%。除旅行服務外，接下來的四類主要投訴涉及醫療服務，電訊服務，電器用品，以及食品和娛樂服務。

與醫療服務有關的投訴今年上升了 27%，達到 3,088 宗，主要是一些醫療機構倒閉，未能提供 HPV 後續疫苗接種服務。

更不幸的是年內有大量商戶倒閉，引致總計 3,078 宗投訴，按年大增 10 倍。可以想像，一旦商戶停止營業，大量爭拗和投訴個案就變得不可追究或無法解決。即使是那些苦苦掙扎、務求繼續經營下去的商戶，一改過往合作態度，令本會調解工作變得困難。



deviation. The topic that drew the most concerns was food safety, with ten reports on the subject issued last year touching on such products as sashimi, baked food, vegetarian meat, dried spices and lozenges.

Looking at our work from a longer-term strategic perspective, “Sustainable Consumption” has been a key initiative of the Council in recent years. In particular, nurturing a responsible consumer culture has become increasingly important. A wise consumer in the 21st century is someone who is not only looking out for good-value purchases, but is also a responsible citizen who consumes rationally and not wastefully, showing care and concern for the environment and the well-being of the community as a whole.

“Earth 2038” is a consumer education project targeted at primary school students. After a year of trials, the project went into full operation this year. We use “experiential learning” to instil in the minds of children the values and attitudes of a responsible consumer. So far more than 1,000 participants from 31 schools have found the activities helpful in enhancing their awareness of sustainable consumption.

Environmental elements were incorporated into 24 of our product tests and market survey reports this year, representing around a third of the total – for instance, tests on dishwashers, LED light bulbs, wireless chargers and the durability of domestic electrical products. Consumers were advised to choose products with better durability to minimise unnecessary waste. In the 16 March issue of CHOICE Magazine, an editorial entitled “Be a Sustainable Consumer”, was published to urge the public to take solid actions to preserve the environment. It was accompanied by a downloadable “Mini-Game Challenge”, allowing readers to self-assess whether they were a “qualified” or “superbly” environmentally conscious consumer.

Internally, the Council has adopted a Green Procurement Practice and is on track to achieve its five-year target of a 10% reduction in energy consumption by 2022. Other environmental initiatives have become part of our daily habits in the office such as cutting down on water and paper usage, minimising the use of disposable items and making sufficient stainless steel utensils available in the pantry.

The Council enters its 46th year as I write. Management is acutely aware of the need to stay relevant to younger and tech-savvy consumers. Hence, consumer protection for digital or e-commerce transactions has been our focus, while online and social media platforms have been our tools. We have also revamped the CHOICE subscription portal to deliver a better subscription experience and we are in progress to rebuild the Council's website to broaden our commitment to the public. On top of our current presence on Facebook and YouTube, we are exploring the launch of new platforms such as WeChat and Instagram, to expand the Council's virtual exposure and add strength

在抗疫的同時，本會堅守日常運作。年內，消委會共發表了 52 份有關各種產品測試，調查和研究工作的報告。今年《選擇》月刊最受歡迎的一期是有關冷氣機的測試報告，顯示某些型號的製冷量和能源效率與聲稱有差異。至於引起人們最大關注的話題是食品安全，去年消委會發布了 10 份相關報告，涉及魚生，烘焙食品，素肉，乾香料和喉糖等產品。

從長期策略角度來闡述我們的工作，推動「可持續消費」及培養負責任的消費文化，是近年本會的一項越趨重要的倡議。在 21 世紀，明智的消費者不僅是追求物有所值的商品，同時亦是負責任的公民，他們理性地消費而不浪費，表現出對環境和整體社會福祉的關懷和關注。

「2038 地球人計劃」是針對小學生的一項消費者教育項目。經過一年的試驗，該項目於今年正式全面推行。我們透過「體驗式學習」，向孩子灌輸負責任的消費者價值觀和態度。到目前為止，來自 31 所學校的 1,000 多名參與者均表示這些活動有助於提高他們對可持續消費的認識。

年內，本會的 24 項產品測試和市場調查報告都納入了關注環境因素，約佔總數的三分之一。例如，對洗碗機，LED 燈泡，無線充電器和家用電氣產品的耐用程度進行測試，為消費者提供實用資訊，選擇耐用性更好的產品，減少浪費。本會在 3 月 16 日出版的《選擇》月刊，發表了一篇題為「成為可持續消費者」的編者的話，敦促公眾身體力行來保護環境。文章伴隨著一個可下載的「環保消費達人小挑戰」，使讀者可以自我評估是否能成為「合格」或「超級」環保消費達人。

在消委會內部，已採用了「綠色採購制度」，可望實現其五年目標，即到 2022 年將能源消耗降低 10%。其他環保措施已成為我們辦公室日常習慣的一部分，例如減少用水和紙張使用量，並在茶水間提供足夠的不銹鋼餐具，將使用即棄物品的次數儘量減至最低。

在我撰寫本文時，消委會已邁進第 46 周年。管理層敏銳地意識到要預視年輕且精通科技的消費者的需要，因此，數碼或電子交易的消費保護，一直是我們關注的重點，而網上和社交媒體平台一直



to our social media presence. Consumers have also found our “Online Price Watch” mobile tool useful: launched in July 2019, it makes it more convenient for consumers to compare supermarket prices of a chosen item anytime, anywhere.

Looking ahead, the Council will continue to increase resources to enhance digital consumer protection. The difficulties in tracking and tracing a trader online pose challenges to the consumer and even the regulator. One of the Council’s surveys this year found that the success rate for consumers obtaining refunds of goods or services purchased online was less than 50%, despite the vendors’ claims of “guaranteed goods return/refund”. The survey revealed that online shopping, albeit convenient, is potentially risky. We reminded traders that providing goods that fail to match their descriptions could amount to violation of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance. We also advised consumers to exercise extra care in making online purchases from overseas, given the impact of foreign exchange rate changes and the shipping or administrative costs involved in product returns.

Technology is also the backbone for the Council’s “back of the house” infrastructure, we have enhanced our human resources and financial management systems. The upgraded human resources management system went live in mid-2019 and now offers many employee self-service features.

As a consumer watchdog, we have established close collaboration with our counterparts in other jurisdictions over recent years to strengthen consumer protection and dispute resolution. In 2019, an informal IT Expert Advisory Group was established by the Council, inviting experts to share their views on the state of digital development in the region on timely issues such as virtual banking, e-payment and artificial intelligence. Besides its collaboration with the Mainland and the signing of Memoranda of Understanding with neighbouring countries, the Council is an Executive and Council Member of Consumers International (CI), a global federation of over 200 organisations from close to 100 countries and regions. I was honoured to be appointed as Vice President of CI’s Board of Trustees for the second time in a row this year, and my team and I were actively involved in the CI’s World Summit to present the work and views of the Council on different issues to our global counterparts.

Finally, for maintaining our resilience and achievements in the year, I have to thank all staff members of the Council; without their dedication and perseverance, we could not have been able to achieve so much. I am also indebted to Members of the Council for their trust, and the leadership of our Chairman who has always been the source of inspiration.



Gilly WONG Fung-han
Chief Executive

是我們的溝通工具。《選擇》月刊訂閱平台已革新，而本會官方網站亦正密鑼緊鼓地更新，以提供更好的訂閱體驗，擴大我們對公眾的承諾。除了目前的 Facebook 專頁和 YouTube 頻道外，我們還在探索新的平台，例如微信和 Instagram，以增加網上曝光率，及提升我們透過社交媒體發放訊息的能力。消費者還發現我們於 2019 年 7 月推出的「網上價格一覽通」手機版非常有用，該工具使消費者可以隨時隨地比較選定商品的超市價格。

展望未來，消委會將繼續增加資源，以加強在數碼世界中的消費保護。在線跟踪和追踪商戶的困難給消費者乃至監管者帶來了挑戰。消委會今年的一項調查發現，儘管賣家聲稱「保證退貨/退款」，但消費者在網上購買的商品或服務，退款的成功率不到 50%。調查顯示，雖然網上購物很方便，但仍有潛在風險。我們提醒商戶提供與描述不符的貨物可能違反《商品說明條例》。本會亦建議消費者在海外網購平台購物時，須考慮到匯率變化以及產品退貨產生的運輸或行政費用，所以要格外小心。

科技也是消委會後勤支援及基礎設施的強大支柱，今年我們提升人力資源和財務管理系統。升級的人力資源管理系統於 2019 年中期投入使用，提供許多員工自助服務功能。作為消費者權益監察機構，我們近年來與其他司法管轄區的組織建立緊密的合作，以加強消費者保護和解決糾紛。消委會於 2019 年成立了一個非正式的資訊科技專家諮詢小組，邀請專家就虛擬銀行，電子支付和人工智能等問題分享看法。除與內地合作，並與鄰近國家簽署消費爭議合作協議書外，消委會亦是國際消費者協會（國際消協）的執行委員會及理事會成員，該協會連結接近 100 個國家及地區，超過 200 多個消費者組織。我很榮幸今年連續第二次獲任為國際消協的董事會副主席，我和我的團隊積極參與國際消協的世界峰會，向全球的消保組織介紹消委會在不同問題上的工作和看法。

最後，為了消委會在這一年來堅強的適應力和成就，我要感謝消委會所有員工，沒有他們的奉獻和毅力，我們不可能取得如此豐碩的成果。此外，我還要感謝消委會成員的信任，最重要是主席的領導，對消委會的工作具有重要的啟發意義。



黃鳳嫻女士
總幹事

MANAGEMENT TEAM OF THE CONSUMER COUNCIL

消費者委員會管理層 (2019.04.01 – 2020.03.31)

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
總幹事

Ms Gilly WONG Fung-han
黃鳳嫻女士



DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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Principal Complaints & Advice Officer
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