

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Women's Foundation Calls for Hong Kong Law Reform Commission's Recommendations around Sexual Offences to be Urgently Passed into Law

Hong Kong, December 11, 2019 – The Women's Foundation (TWF) welcomes the recommendations from the Hong Kong Law Reform Commission's (HKLRC) "Review of Substantive Sexual Offences" report released last Thursday, December 5. We urge the Government to implement these changes as soon as possible.

After a review process of over 13 years, the nearly 70 proposed recommendations are critical to ensuring stronger protections for all people against sexual violence and cover a wide range of areas including greater protections for minors, people with mental impairments, and other vulnerable individuals in addition to the general public. In line with our submissions and the submissions of like-minded organisations, we particularly appreciate the inclusion of a statutory definition of consent and the expanded definition of what acts constitute statutory 'sexual penetration without consent', which is recommended to replace the current, limited definition of 'rape'.

It is particularly encouraging to see updates around gender neutral language so that all persons, including sexual minorities, are protected. We also are pleased to see the addition of non-consensual upskirt photography as an offence. We strongly recommend this be expanded to include 'image based sexual abuse' which poses grave harm to victims and has been incorporated into law in many other jurisdictions.

"We welcome these long awaited reforms by the HKLRC and believe immediate implementation is necessary. Sexual violence is a critical, under-discussed issue in our city and victims face many barriers in seeking help and support they need. Of these, legal protection is paramount in ensuring that victims have the right to seek recourse, that perpetrators are accountable for their actions, and that all residents understand Hong Kong's position when it comes to sexual offences," says TWF CEO, Fiona Nott.

The safety, dignity, and human rights of all of our residents – particularly women and girls, who comprise the majority of sexual violence victims – need to be respected. Updating our laws in accordance with the HKLRC's recommendations is a good next step to better achieving this goal. It is vital the Government take speedy action accordingly and draft a bill to be voted into law.

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About TWF

The Women's Foundation (TWF) is a Hong Kong registered non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in Hong Kong. TWF is focused on challenging gender stereotypes, increasing the number of women in decision-making and leadership roles, and empowering women in poverty through ground-breaking research, innovative and impactful community programmes, and education and advocacy. For more information on TWF, please visit www.twfhk.org.

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