

Bid to lick problem of '97 stamp issue

By KARIN BISHOP

AS July 1997 moves closer a new problem has emerged that cannot be resolved by the Joint Liaison Group - what does Hong Kong put on its stamps when it no longer has the Queen?

Opinion is divided on the subject - some favour Hong Kong's bauhinia flower, others say keep the basic design and simply remove the Queen's head.

The Postmaster-General, Michael Pagliari, said discussions were under way with the Stamp Advisory Board about the new design.

"The Queen's head will come off, and the royal cipher - these symbols of sovereignty will disappear and be replaced by something else," he said.

"We have a few ideas - some people want the bauhinia, which I think would be twice as boring [as the Queen's head]," he said.

Mr Pagliari said other options under consideration include local landmarks, wildlife, and themes applicable to tourism.

"I want the advisers to consider all the alternatives and not rush blindly into it," he said. "This is our opportunity to design definitive



stamps less boring than they currently are and I wouldn't like to miss this opportunity."

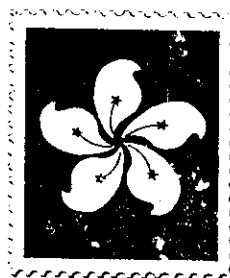
He said there would also be a series of stamps commemorating the handover, possibly issued in conjunction with China.

Members of the Stamp Advisory Committee contacted by the *South China Morning Post* had a wide variety of ideas for the new stamp.

The head of the Fine Arts Department at Hong Kong University, Caroline Muir, said views of Hong Kong might be appropriate.

"We could do street scenes or rural scenes," she said. "I certainly can't think of an individual person that would be suitable to put on it and the flower is not as interesting as some kind of view."

Ms Muir said it would be



important to ensure that the design worked well in miniature.

"Large designs don't always look good on a small stamp," she said.

The president of the Hong Kong Philatelic Society, William Kwan Cheukwin, who is also a member of the advisory committee, said he favoured a plain design, and suggested the letters "HK".

"It would be distinguished enough," he said. "I can't see that anything would be drastically changed - on some stamps you can hardly see the Queen's head as it is now."

"I don't think the stamps will change except the Queen's head will not be appearing," Mr Kwan said. "And since I don't suppose we can put Martin Lee on it, I don't think there will be anything varying."