

Access to personal data bill opposed

Wing Kay Po

The independent legislator Christine Loh has challenged the Liberal Party to provide a "logical" and "consistent" argument in opposing her private member's bill to give the public access to government-held information.

The Liberal Party has come out against Loh's Access to Information Bill, saying that it is up to the Government to introduce legislative changes to safeguard individuals' rights to have access to the personal information the government keeps on them.

The Liberal Party legislator Selina Chow said her party supports the principle of individual access and thinks the Government should also give access to information collected in public consultation "prior to deliberation in the policy-making process"; subsequent policy decisions made by the Government and reasons for such decisions.

But Chow said that for such an important policy, legislative changes should be initiated by the Government, not an individual legislator.

Chow said private member's bills should be used only as a "last resort" if and when the Government fails to discharge its responsibilities.

Chow said her party is also opposed to the suggestion in Loh's bill to create an Office of Information Commissioner to handle complaints, saying that is an "unnecessary duplication of resources", as the court should rule.

But Chow declined to say if the Liberal Party would support Loh's bill if the Government refused to act. "Let's wait and see. It's too early to say," she said.

In reply, Loh asked whether the Liberal Party is also opposed to another private member's bill, sponsored by Anna Wu, on equal opportunities. "If they support Anna Wu's bill but not mine, I don't think they are being consistent," she said.

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