The Honourable Chief Justice appointed a Working Party in February 2000 to review the rules and procedures of the High Court in civil proceedings and to recommend changes with a view to ensuring and improving access to justice at reasonable cost and speed. Having deliberated on the matter, the Working Party published an Interim Report and Consultative Paper on Civil Justice Reform in November 2001, for extensive consultation. Members of the legal profession, court users, interested parties and organisations, and the general public were invited to give views on the 80 reform proposals contained in the Consultative Paper.

The Consultation Exercise

Following the official launch of the consultation exercise in November 2001, a seven-month consultation period ensued ending on 30 June 2002. The Working Party received a total of 96 responses from various sectors of the community, including the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Law Society of Hong Kong, legal professionals, interested organisations like the Consumer Council, the Hospital Authority, the Hong Kong Mediation Centre, the Hong Kong Institute of Arbitrators, and members of the public.

Preparation of the Final Report

It is clear from the responses received during the consultation exercise that reforms need to be introduced to our civil justice system. Having studied the feedback and comments gathered during the consultation in detail, the Working Party held a series of meetings in 2003 to deliberate on the specific recommendations to be made to the Chief Justice. The Working Party is now finalizing a comprehensive Final Report, setting out its deliberations and specific recommendations for reform, for submission to the Chief Justice. It is expected that the Working Party’s Final Report will be published in early 2004.