

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ISSUES FOR CONSULTATION

1.1 The long-established Government policy is to restrict commercial gambling opportunities (other than social gambling) to a **limited** number of authorized outlets only. The rationale is that while limited gambling outlets may be allowed to meet public demand, they should be authorized and regulated so that gambling opportunities would not become excessive as to be detrimental to the community. There are thus relatively few authorized outlets in Hong Kong, as compared to many other jurisdictions. This policy has been well accepted by the public.

1.2 In recent years, however, there have been mounting challenges to our gambling regime. Most notably, **soccer betting** has become increasingly popular and widespread, both in terms of the number of people participating in it and the betting money involved. The problems needs to be addressed through a review of the gambling policy.

1.3 Against this background, the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) has conducted a review of a range of gambling-related issues, to identify problems in the existing practices and to recommend solutions. Research has been conducted into the relevant practices and developments in other jurisdictions. We have also been closely monitoring public opinions and have from time to time received representations from concern groups and individuals on various gambling issues.

1.4 We recognize that gambling is a contentious subject. We believe that a thorough public consultation exercise will help focus the community on the key issues. Accordingly, this Consultation Paper invites public views on the following issues:

- (a) whether the Government should, as a matter of principle, adhere to its **existing policy** of restricting gambling opportunities to a limited number of authorized outlets only (Chapter 2, paragraphs 2.2 - 2.7);
- (b) whether, as one of the possible ways to tackle the growing problem of illegal soccer betting (Chapter 3), the Government should put soccer betting under control and

supervision by providing **limited authorized outlets for soccer betting** in Hong Kong and, if yes, whether the possible **operational framework** should be further considered (Chapter 4 and Annex); and

- (c) whether the Government should, in the light of the findings of gambling researches, implement preventive measures and provide services to address the negative impact of gambling, including:
 - (i) launching and coordinating **preventive and educational measures** against the negative impact of gambling;
 - (ii) working with the relevant Government and non-Government agencies to strengthen **treatment/services** provided to those affected by pathological gambling; and
 - (iii) conducting and supporting **gambling-related researches** on a regular basis (Chapter 5).

1.5 We are fully aware that gambling is a controversial subject on which the public may have divergent views. We will take full account of the views received during the consultation exercise in finalizing our recommendations on the above issues.

1.6 Please send your comments on this Consultation Paper to HAB by **21 September 2001** by any of the following means:

By Post: Home Affairs Bureau
(Attn.: Division V)
31/F, Southorn Centre
130 Hennessy Road
Wan Chai

By Fax: 2591 6002 (Attn.: Division V)

By E-mail: greview@hab.gcn.gov.hk

1.7 We shall assume that all the submissions made in response to this Consultation Paper is **not** intended to be confidential and may be inspected by the public on request, unless there is a specific request to treat all or part of a response in confidence. For any enquiry related to the Consultation Paper, please contact HAB at 2835 1369.