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MEDIA RELEASE

**NCPG CONSULTATION INDICATES SUPPORT
FOR REGULATION OF REMOTE GAMBLING IN SINGAPORE**

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) reports strong stakeholder support for regulating remote gambling in Singapore.

2. NCPG held two stakeholder consultation sessions on 6 and 7 Jan 2014 with representatives from ethnic, religious, community, social service and grassroots organisations to obtain feedback on the Government's proposed approach to regulating remote gambling in Singapore.

3. Stakeholders expressed unanimous support for some form of regulation on remote gambling.

4. Some favoured a complete ban to prevent easy access to remote gambling, especially among youth who tended to be more tech-savvy and potentially at higher risk. Others were of the view that a complete ban on remote gambling would exacerbate problems as remote gambling activities might be driven underground. There were suggestions to allow a limited form of remote gambling through a strictly controlled/regulated system which allowed only not-for-profit entities to operate, with proceeds channeled towards charitable and community causes.

5. On blocking measures, the general consensus was that they were necessary to minimise illegal access and deter casual and non-gamblers from remote gambling. However, many were skeptical about the effectiveness of these measures, which could be easily circumvented by determined, tech-savvy gamblers.

6. Stakeholders called for more upstream and pro-active public education efforts, with emphasis on educating the young on the dangers of remote gambling. Many felt that public awareness messages should also promote self-responsibility among the adult population, and focus on the harm and consequences of problem gambling.

7. NCPG Chairman Mr Lim Hock San said: "NCPG remains committed to minimising the potential and actual harm of problem gambling. We are concerned about gambling products that may potentially increase the accessibility and/or availability of gambling opportunities in Singapore. On our part, NCPG will continue to be pro-active in

strengthening its public education efforts to educate the public on the risks associated with active remote gambling, and the danger of social games which simulate gambling.

8. NCPG would like to thank all stakeholders for their participation. Their candid views and insights will help NCPG to better address problem gambling in Singapore.”

9. A summary of the feedback is at Annex, which can also be found at the NCPG website: www.ncpg.org.sg.

About the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG)

The NCPG was appointed in August 2005 as part of Singapore’s national framework to address problem gambling. The Council comprises 15 members with expertise in law, psychiatry, psychology, social work, religious services and research. The Council is committed to addressing problem gambling in Singapore, across all forms of gambling, through public education and outreach programmes and the provision of help services. NCPG also administers Casino Exclusions and Casino Visit Limits for those affected by or vulnerable to problem gambling.

Protect Your Family. Stop Problem Gambling. Call 1800-6-668-668 or visit www.ncpg.org.sg for more information.

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS ON THE PROPOSED APPROACH TO REGULATE REMOTE GAMBLING

Introduction

The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) regularly holds consultation sessions to gather feedback from the public and community on pertinent issues related to problem gambling across all forms of gambling.

2. NCPG held two closed-door stakeholder consultation sessions on 6 and 7 Jan to garner feedback on the Government's proposed approach to regulating remote gambling. Participants included key representatives from community, grassroots, ethnic, religious, and social service organisations. While the feedback received was by no means exhaustive, it enabled NCPG to obtain a good sense of the overall public sentiments towards remote gambling.

Summary of Feedback

3. Feedback and suggestions received from stakeholders across both the consultation sessions are summarised below.

A. Regulations for Remote Gambling

4. Stakeholders unanimously agreed that regulating remote gambling would send a strong signal on the negative impact of remote gambling on individuals, families and the larger community.

Complete Ban on Remote Gambling

5. Some stakeholders favoured a complete ban on remote gambling. The consensus was that easy access to remote gambling should be prevented, and that youth, in particular, should be banned from engaging in remote gambling. Some stakeholders commented that introducing new forms of gambling were unnecessary as the existing suite of gambling products available in Singapore was sufficient. Others highlighted that the Government's regulative approach towards remote gambling should be consistent with that applied to existing gambling products and modes of gambling.

Effectiveness of Blocking Measures

6. Stakeholders agreed that blocking measures - blocking access to gambling websites, blocking payments to remote gambling operators, and prohibiting advertising of remote gambling - were necessary to minimise access to illegal sites and deter the casual gambler and non-gambler from venturing into remote gambling. However, many stakeholders were skeptical over the effectiveness of these measures, which could be easily circumvented by determined, tech-savvy gamblers. Some called for banks to be more pro-active in blocking

illegal payments. Others suggested that legal provisions be made to penalise third parties who provided direct or indirect access to remote gambling.

Allowing a Limited Form of Remote Gambling

7. Some stakeholders expressed concern that a total ban on remote gambling might lead to remote gambling activities being driven underground, where problem gambling and illegal gambling would be left to exacerbate without any form of control. Some suggested that a controlled/regulated system would be more effective as it would allow for the implementation of stringent social safeguards, such as setting a minimum age and/or allowing users or family members to set limits on betting amounts. However, any controlled/regulated remote gambling products should be offered by not-for-profit entities, with the proceeds going towards charitable and community causes.

B. Strengthening Public Education & Research

8. Stakeholders agreed that public education and outreach was necessary and should be strengthened. The primary concern was the potential negative effect of remote gambling on our youth and our elderly. Stakeholders called for programmes which would instill the right values in children from young, and raise awareness among parents of the potential dangers of remote gambling.

9. Key messages to the public should promote self-responsibility, and focus on the harm and consequences of problem gambling. Messages to youth and parents should focus on the dangers of social games which simulated gambling, and the potential for these games to lead to future gambling addiction.

10. Some stakeholders called for the Government to commission more local research on remote gambling to study the nature and extent of remote gambling in Singapore.

11. NCPG acknowledges stakeholders' concerns on the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing a total ban on remote gambling and/or blocking measures, and that any approach to the issue would require careful consideration of its pros and cons. NCPG notes the feedback from stakeholders on the need to provide more upstream, pro-active programmes, especially for public awareness and outreach on the dangers of remote gambling. NCPG has already started working with its community partners to expand public education and outreach programmes, especially with regard to youth and the elderly.

12. NCPG would like to thank all stakeholders for their participation and contributions during the consultation exercise.
