

LCQ5: Gambling policy

Following is a question by the Hon Wong Sing-chi and an oral reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 14):

Question:

At the meeting of this Council on April 26, 2006, the former Secretary for Home Affairs pointed out that the spirit of the Government's gambling policy was not to encourage gambling. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it has assessed if its gambling-related measures implemented in the past three years were consistent with the policy spirit of "not to encourage gambling"; if the assessment result is in the affirmative, of the details of the relevant measures, and whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such measures in realising the above policy spirit; if so, of the results of the assessment?

Reply:

President,

The Government does not encourage the public to gamble. Our long-standing policy is to restrict gambling opportunities to a limited number of authorised and regulated outlets. At present, the regulated gambling outlets are mainly horse race betting, football betting and the Mark Six Lottery operated by the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC).

At present, the licences of horse race betting, football betting and lotteries issued to the HKJC have imposed a number of conditions requiring the licensee to adopt measures to minimise the negative impact of gambling on the public, especially young people, including the licensee shall not permit juveniles to enter its betting premises, shall not accept bets from juveniles or pay dividends to juveniles, shall not target juveniles in its advertising or promotional activities, shall not accept bets on credit or accept credit cards as a means of payment for placing bets, shall not advertise on television or radio in specific time slots, and shall display notices in its betting premises and on its betting websites warning against the serious problems caused by excessive gambling and providing information on the services and facilities

available for problem or pathological gamblers.

On the other hand, we have made use of the Ping Wo Fund to organise a series of publicity and public education programmes to prevent problems caused by excessive gambling and to deter gambling. The Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee has also launched a sponsorship scheme in December 2008 to encourage community organisations to organise activities to prevent and alleviate problems related to gambling.

In 2007, the Home Affairs Bureau commissioned the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (the HKPU) to conduct a study on Hong Kong people's participation in gambling activities and their gambling behaviours, and to assess the effectiveness of our work in respect of the prevention of problem gambling as well as the future development. The Committee is studying the HKPU's report and will make recommendations to the Secretary for Home Affairs on the development of support and preventive measures for pathological gamblers. The Government will report to the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs after receiving the recommendations of the Committee.

Ends/Wednesday, January 14, 2009

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