

**Representation by the Hong Kong Christian Council
to the Legislative Council's
Bill Committee on the Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 2003**

1. Hong Kong Christian Council opposes the Introduction of Soccer Betting

The Hong Kong Christian Council (HKCC) opposes the introduction of betting on football matches based on the church's concern for the weaker parts of society. The church is called to "look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong" (Ez. 34,15).

The HKCC opposes betting on football matches out of concern for young people. We fear that large numbers of them will be attracted to this form of betting and that gambling activities in our society will increase.

We are also acutely aware that gambling wrecks the careers and the families of many of our fellow citizens. We object to widening the scope of available forms of gambling by adding one more form of gambling.

For this reason we call on members of the Legislative Council to reject the Betting Duty (Amendment) Bill 2003.

2. Committee on Social Problems related to Gambling

Taking into account that the Bill may turn into law, we support many of the proposals made today by other groups such as those presented by the Hong Kong Christian Service. We want to make however one proposal for your consideration, which would eliminate what we consider an important flaw in the proposed Bill.

Section 6G, Subsection (3)(g) and Section 6S, Subsection (3)(g) of the Bill provide that the conditions of the licenses authorizing soccer betting or lotteries may include "the adoption of preventive measures against problems relating to gambling".

The HKCC is of the opinion that asking the licensees who organize soccer betting or lotteries to carry out preventive measures is tantamount to appointing the goat as the gardener. To avoid the conflict of interest set out in the Bill, the

HKCC proposes to amend the Bill to provide for the setting up of a **“Committee on Social Problems related to Gambling”**.

Composition

The members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Chief Executive from the academic, educational, social work and religious sector..

Function

The function of the Committee is to

- (a) initiate and support research on the effects of gambling in society
- (b) support educational activities related to gambling
- (c) support counseling services to problem gamblers and their families
- (d) receive and allocate funds from government and other sources for the activities mentioned in (a)-(c)
- (e) receive complaints related to betting activities
- (f) make recommendations to the Gaming Commission

The establishment of such a Committee would be proof of the authorities’ determination to deal with the negative consequences of gambling and provide the necessary expertise to do so. We urge you to intervene in favour of the establishment of this Committee.

26th May 2003