

► EDITOR'S LETTER



Dear Readers

This is a very eventful year for Singapore. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence. Singapore has also gone to the polls this year for the 17th time to elect a new government. This year also marks the 10th anniversary of when Singapore started the process of allowing casinos onshore. In March of this year, we saw the passing of the founding father of Singapore, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew who was a fierce anti-gambling proponent. He was once asked whether casinos will be allowed in Singapore. His then reply was "over my dead body"! He did not want to undermine Singapore's work ethic and breed the belief that people can get rich by gambling. However, his view changed exactly 10 years ago in 2005 when he spoke in the Singapore Parliament in support of the integrated resorts with casinos. He saw the economic benefit of having the integrated resorts but stressed the need for a clean, attractive, well-policed, safe city, a financial centre with no money laundering, no muggings, no thieves and no drugs.

During his lifetime, the two integrated resorts were constructed and became operational. These two casinos were given a 10-year exclusivity to operate in Singapore. The laws in Singapore were changed to allow casinos and gambling debts incurred at the licensed casinos were made enforceable. Singapore adopted what is probably considered one of the toughest gambling licensing regimes in the world, combining a strenuous probity clearance programme plus licensing requirements for gaming equipment manufacturers and suppliers and even junket operators as well. This includes probably the

world's first local residence levy system where Singapore residents have to pay an entrance levy as a means of curtailing local gambling consumption. Despite all these high compliance programmes, the economic benefit flowed and true to predictions, the casinos in Singapore became one of the world's most profitable ones.

The pent up demand has fuelled the gaming industry in Singapore and with the terrestrial casinos, we have also seen increased online gambling activities. Last year, the Singapore government passed the Remote Gambling Act which prohibits all forms of internet gambling activities in Singapore. This Act came into force and operation in February of this year.

Casino operators will continue to see increased regulations that may affect their business. This is despite the recent slowdown in gambling revenue as reported by casinos in Macau and in Singapore. The sustained anti-corruption drive of President Xi Jinping has in part contributed to the declining Chinese tourists visiting casinos overseas. Casinos will see increased challenges ahead.

In this issue of Asian Gaming Lawyer, we will be examining proposals in Macau on the smoking ban, an assessment of political risk in Taiwan, Singapore online gaming licensing exemptions and the recent AUSTRAC investigations in Australia.

We hope you will enjoy our articles.

Warmest regards

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