

7 November 2017

Factsheet

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED REVISED ADVISORY GUIDELINES ON NRIC NUMBERS

The Personal Data Protection Commission (PDPC) is seeking feedback on the proposed revisions to the chapter on NRIC numbers in the Advisory Guidelines on the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) for Selected Topics, which was first issued in September 2013. The chapter illustrates how the PDPA applies to the collection, use and disclosure of NRIC numbers, and encourages organisations to avoid collecting personal data, including NRIC numbers, where it is not required for business or legal purposes.

BACKGROUND

2 In revising the guidelines, the PDPC had taken into consideration existing industry practices, as well as past public feedback on NRIC number collection, use and disclosure.

3 The proposed revised advisory guidelines will clarify how the PDPA applies to the collection, use, or disclosure of an individual's NRIC number, copy of NRIC or physical NRIC by organisations, as well as other data protection obligations required.

4 At the same time, the PDPC has also released for public consultation a proposed technical guide to accompany the revised advisory guidelines. The proposed technical guide provides guidance on the alternatives that can be considered in place of the NRIC number as a unique identifier used in websites and other public facing computer systems.

5 The public consultation is open from 7 November 2017 to 18 December 2017 to solicit views and comments on the proposed revisions and whether there are additional issues or common scenarios that these proposed advisory guidelines should address.



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PROPOSED ADVISORY GUIDELINES

6 In general, organisations should not collect, use or disclose an individual's NRIC number, except when the collection, use or disclosure is required under the law or is necessary to accurately establish and verify the identity of the individual.

7 Under the law, organisations may collect, use or disclose individuals' NRIC numbers for purposes such as verifying a patient's identity who is seeking medical treatment or obtaining the photocopy of an individual's NRIC who is signing up for mobile phone subscription.

8 The PDPC would also consider it necessary to establish and verify the identity of individuals to prevent a risk of significant harm or impact to the individual and/or the organisation. Examples include entering into high value contracts such as property transactions, or applications for healthcare or travel insurance to prevent fraudulent claims.

9 Under the proposed revised guidelines, some of the common organisational practices involving the collection, use or disclosure of NRIC numbers would have to change. Some examples include:

- Collection of NRIC numbers from shoppers to track the number of redemptions for free parking
- Collection of NRIC numbers to verify the identity of customers who purchased movie tickets online
- Using customers' NRIC numbers to create retail membership accounts
- Collection of individuals' physical NRIC as a form of collateral in exchange for a rented product, item or equipment

10 The PDPC recognises that organisations may require some time to review existing business practices and implement operational changes to use other identifiers in place of NRIC numbers or other forms of collateral in place of the physical NRIC. The PDPC is thus also seeking feedback on the proposal to allow organisations a period of up to 12 months from the issuance of the advisory guidelines to review and implement the necessary changes to their NRIC-related policies and processes.

Full details of the public consultation can be found on www.pdpc.gov.sg/consultations.



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ISSUED BY THE PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION COMMISSION

About Personal Data Protection Commission

The PDPC administers the Personal Data Protection Act 2012 (PDPA) in Singapore, which aims to safeguard individuals' personal data against misuse and promote proper management of personal data in organisations. The PDPA enhances Singapore's competitiveness and strengthens our position as a trusted business hub, putting Singapore on par with the growing list of countries with data protection laws. For more information, please visit www.pdpc.gov.sg.

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