

# **CLOSING SPEECH BY MR TAN CHUAN-JIN, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT, AT COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY 2016**

## ***ENABLING CARING COMMUNITIES***

### **Introduction**

1 Madam Chair, I'd like to start if I may, with a continuation about my earlier ideas about the Singaporean. In the first part of my speech, I spoke about Singaporeans, the strengths of our beliefs in key values of equal opportunities, strong families, united country, and how we design policies around these key ideas. Of the last, we believe unity exists when we have a people that care for each other. Caring communities are characterised by people with:

- Firstly, awareness – recognising that there are those among us who are disadvantaged or vulnerable.
- Secondly, empathy, or heart – tying ourselves to our countrymen, recognising where they are in life, and what they may need.
- And lastly, action – contributing, in practical ways, to make their lives better, easier. Lending them a helping hand to live their lives well and with dignity.

2 Many members in this debate have spoken on the need for the community to be involved.

3 When a Singaporean in need receives help from a fellow citizen, he knows that someone else out there cares for him. In the process of helping others, those who lend a hand are themselves transformed. So in the act of mutual help, we become more than ourselves and our immediate families. We become better people, we become a closer community.

### **Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) and Social Service Professionals**

4 Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) and social service professionals are at the forefront of this. The social service sector is a vehicle of change. VWOs and social service professionals will continue to be key in helping people overcome their difficulties. They work with and complement the role of the Government. They are also indispensable for generating awareness, fostering empathy and channelling the contributions of other Singaporeans. So I expect many, and encourage volunteers to continue to come through the VWOs.

### **Community Mobilisers and Groups**

5 But the reality is that each of us can also put these values into action in our own ways - as concerned neighbours or friends; as volunteers and participants in schools and informal groups; as socially responsible companies or inclusive employers, or simply as an individual. These are things we can do, and we do not need legislations, or policies to make it happen.

6 In the coming year, MSF will have three priorities:

- First, support VWOs to raise their capability and provide better volunteering opportunities and experiences;

- Second, help social service professionals develop themselves through SkillsFuture; and
- Third, work with the wider community towards these ends. We will find more ways to encourage companies and other groups to form meaningful and complementary partnerships with VWOs.

### **Supporting VWOs to become more capable**

7 Mdm Chair, our VWOs need to be strong and healthy. Against the landscape of an ageing population and slowing labour growth, our VWOs need to be adept and nimble to be able to do more; to attract, to develop and retain good people; and to marshal and mobilise resources well.

8 Mr Seah Kian Peng and Ms Chia Yong Yong asked about support for VWOs as they build up their corporate functions and operational capabilities. We are making significant investments in these areas. In addition to the VWOs-Charities Capability Fund, the Government and Tote Board have set aside half a billion in matching grants under the Care & Share movement. ComChest and VWOs can draw on this half a billion dollars to build capabilities and better prepare themselves for the future. For VWOs that can scale up services, the Government has also provided additional funding for them to hire senior corporate staff under the Corporate Development Funding Scheme.

#### *New \$350 mil Tranche of Tote Board Social Service Fund*

9 In addition, MSF has also secured the Tote Board's support for an injection of \$350 million into the Tote Board Social Service Fund over the next three years. This funding will support more than 300 programmes, including essential flagship programmes that benefit families, children and persons with disabilities.

10 So funding is available through various sources and grant schemes. But I agree with Ms Chia Yong Yong that we should also regularly review scheme criteria and improve the grant application process. Later this year, NCSS will also centralise information on grants and schemes for VWOs on their website. They will make it easier for VWOs to understand and navigate the range of grants available. In fact, it is a happy problem that we have many grants that VWOs cannot figure out. Grant administrators will continue to advise and guide VWOs on their application, and streamline the processes.

#### *VWO Capability Building Projects*

11 Besides providing resources, we will also help VWOs tap on external experts and consultants. NCSS will soon launch a 3-year HR consultancy project that will support up to 100 VWOs. This will help the VWOs diagnose needs and improve their HR capabilities in recruitment, compensation and benefits, performance management and career planning.

12 Assoc. Prof. Randolph Tan also asked about the manpower supply outlook. The Government and NCSS will continue to plan the supply pipelines and training places, and NCSS's career centre will continue to help VWOs source for suitable

candidates. But how well VWOs cope with tight manpower also depends on how they strengthen their organisational capabilities, how they innovate and how they deploy resources. I hope VWOs will make full use of some of the schemes I have just mentioned.

### **Developing our Professionals through SkillsFuture**

13 Mr Seah Kian Peng asked about how we are investing in and supporting the professionals in the social service and early childhood sectors. Assoc. Prof. Randolph Tan also asked about how we will help the sector cope with competition for manpower.

14 We intend to make a strong push in tapping on SkillsFuture. The Social Service and Early Childhood sectors will be priority sectors under SkillsFuture. We will be developing SkillsFuture Sectoral Manpower Plans for both sectors in the coming year.

15 These plans will map out ways in which professionals and organisations can acquire skills and capabilities to meet evolving social challenges in a manpower-lean future. The plans will also look at how our sectors can:

- Firstly, close existing skills gaps and develop new skills that professionals will need in the future.
- How we utilise manpower better and work in a manpower-efficient way, similar to what is needed in the private sector; and
- Map out career progression and professional development opportunities for professionals.

16 To spearhead this effort, we have set up two separate tripartite committees – one for the social service sector, and another for the early childhood sector. Members include professionals, VWOs and pre-school operators and unions. They will be our key partners in bringing the plans to fruition.

### **Working with the Wider Community**

17 Mdm Chair, a strong social service sector needs the support of the wider community and the public. It needs organisations and individuals to volunteer and contribute their time, skills and resources.

18 To expand volunteering opportunities and experiences, NCSS will provide more support to VWOs in building up volunteer management capabilities. Recently, for example, NCSS started a pilot with Care Corner and Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities to redesign jobs in a youth centre and a Senior Activity Centre respectively to better tap on volunteers to complement the centres' staff. I have asked NCSS to expand such efforts and make a stronger push in this important area.

### **Boosting the SHARE Programme**

19 The Minister for Finance spoke about boosting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and making it easier for employees to contribute through their workplaces. Let me elaborate on the SHARE as One programme, which aims to increase regular giving through the ComChest SHARE programme.

20 There are a few reasons why SHARE is so significant and impactful. First, every Singaporean and every organisation can contribute regularly, even in modest amounts, through SHARE. The donations go to a pool that supports a big group of 80 VWOs, including smaller VWOs that lack the scale to fund-raise efficiently. They also support lesser-known programmes that may not attract sizeable donations.

21 A large part of SHARE contributions come through payroll deductions at the workplace. One SHARE donor, Mr Abraham Tan started donating a dollar from his monthly pay 20 years ago, when he was earning \$500. As his pay increased, so did his monthly contribution. Today, he donates \$30. Mr Tan told us that: “everyone should play a part if we want to live in a caring society. The little that we contribute may help another to achieve their dream”. Every additional dollar, if all of us participate, will make a tremendous amount of difference if it is regular.

22 We want to encourage more Singaporeans like Mr Abraham Tan, and more employers like those Mr Tan works for. So the Government will match additional donations made through SHARE from 1 April 2016. Donations above levels in financial year 2015 will be matched dollar-for-dollar for the next three years, until end March 2019.

23 We will allow half of the matching grant, up to a cap of \$10,000 per year, to support SHARE-participating companies with their CSR efforts. The rest will be used to help VWOs improve their volunteer management.

## **Closing**

24 Chairman, I would like to end off by reiterating that MSF’s efforts contribute toward our goal of building the society that we aspire to be; a land of opportunity where citizens can realise their dreams, with. Equal opportunity. Strong families. United country.

25 Members of the House, what I have presented to you today started a decade ago – to improve the way we provide help to the weaker among us – to provide this help with respect for the dignity of those who need it. Not to treat them with suspicion, that they may be free riding, not make it hard to get help, with bureaucratic hoops and hurdles. Even as we promote a strong work ethic and social mobility, we have in this time recognised that all of us have the same place in society - weak or strong, fast or slow, we are all sons and daughters of Singapore. And together, we are only as strong as the values we hold dear.

26 Our Government will continue to make help systems more comprehensive and effective, but it is not about the number of programmes we churn out, or the amount of money we spend, or even the number of people helped. It is not about what the Government can do, or what the community can get the Government to do.

27 It is about how we, as a small country, can make us count for more as a nation, than all of us as individuals. The sum of our resources, our time, our skills and energy – that sum must count enough to make sure that vulnerable groups are taken care of, and that no Singaporean is left behind. That is the measure of us all.

28 This is the true Spirit of Partnership, the spirit that the Minister for Finance mentioned in his budget speech. The spirit that will show us how we can together create the society that we wish to see 50 years from now, for SG100.

Thank you.

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