

28 September 2020

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

PROVIDING BETTER ACCESSIBILITY TO LAW THROUGH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (CDCs)

~Community Legal Clinics (CLCs) and Law Awareness Weeks @ CDC (LAW@CDC) made possible through CDCs' network of Partners~

The Community Development Councils (CDCs) will continue to work with partners to provide residents with better accessibility to legal resources (including greater awareness of the law) to meet the evolving needs of the community. Since 2014, the CDCs partnered Law Society Pro Bono Services (LSPBS) to establish the Community Legal Pro Bono Services Network and the annual Law Awareness Weeks @ CDC event had been held since 2015.

2 The Guest-of-Honour, Mr Edwin Tong, SC, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Second Minister for Law was invited to this online event. The event involved the CDCs, LSPBS, National University of Singapore (NUS), Singapore Management University (SMU), Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) and Singapore Corporate Counsel Association (a new partner) and 160 of their guests – lawyers, law students, District Councillors, and Grassroots Leaders. They attended the online event on Monday 28 September 2020, from 12.30pm to 2pm.

3 As part of the commencement of LAW@CDC 2020 – themed **The Law and Me: Stronger Together**, a live chit-chat session will be held to discuss about how to enhance residents' awareness and understanding on basic and essential legal knowledge. The CDCs and LSPBS have also added six new topics to address topical needs and challenges faced by the community.

S/No	List of Topics
1	Employment
2	Divorce and You (Civic)
3	Divorce and You (Syariah)
4	Advance Legal Planning
5	Family Violence (<i>new</i>)
6	Small Businesses in A Crisis (<i>new</i>)
7	Dealing with Creditors (<i>new</i>)
8	Freelancing in a Crisis (<i>new</i>)
9	Working from Home (<i>new</i>) (<i>PDPA considerations for Employees/Small Businesses</i>)
10	Landlord and Tenancy Matters (<i>new</i>)

4 For the first time, there was no ceremony for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing. Instead, Minister Edwin Tong announced the following:

- (a) Renewal of two different MOUs – one between CDCs and LSPBS on Community Legal Pro Bono Services Network; the other between CDCs, LSPBS, NUS, SMU, SUSS and new partner SCCA on LAW@CDC and providing pro bono services to the community. The signatories of the 2 MOU are:
 - (i) Ms Low Yen Ling, Chairman of Mayors’ Committee and Mayor of South West District
 - (ii) Mr Gregory Vijayendran SC, Chairman of Law Society Pro bono Services (LSPBS)
 - (iii) Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean (Faculty of Law), NUS
 - (iv) Professor Goh Yihan, Dean (School of Law), SMU
 - (v) Professor Leslie Chew, Dean (School of Law), SUSS
 - (vi) Mr Wan Kwong Weng, Vice-President of Singapore Corporate Counsel Association
- (b) Launch of Law Awareness Weeks @ CDC (LAW@CDC) this year.
- (c) An initiative run by youths (young lawyers and law students) for youth (in need of legal and social assistance). The CDCs will initiate a pilot online project **Youth Community & Legal Clinic (YCLC)** with LSPBS, NUS, SMU and SUSS to help youths seeking legal and social assistance. The legal clinics will be helmed by young lawyers and law students, administered by LSPBS and supported by the five CDCs and three universities. The CDCs hope that through the

collaboration, law students will be able to build capabilities, learn from the young lawyers during the skills-based volunteerism and better support youths in navigating and understanding their basic legal rights. Youths attending the legal clinics can also tap on CDCs' wide network and resources, if they need social assistance beyond legal advice.

Quotes by Mayors

Ms Low Yen Ling, Chairman of Mayors' Committee and Mayor of South West District

The CDCs' five-year long partnership with the Law Society Pro Bono Services and the Institutes of Higher Learning has helped to expand residents' access and understanding of the law. We're delighted to widen our cooperation with the addition of the Singapore Corporate Counsel Association as they join us to contribute their expertise to the community. This year, our efforts to broaden legal awareness among the public will include youths for the first time. We look forward to seeing more of our young people being assisted by their peer volunteers and being better informed on matters of the law. The extension and continuation of pro bono services from lawyers to the community augurs well for our shared aspirations of a more caring and inclusive society, especially in such challenging times, when no one should be left behind.

Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng, Mayor of Central Singapore District

"Understanding the law has always been important for everyone. This is even more essential during times such as now when new regulations seek to keep up with developments concerning the pandemic, new media and vulnerable groups.

Our Community Legal Clinics have also added digital access as a way to continue to assist our residents.

I am grateful that the CDCs continue to build a strong partnership with the Law Society Pro Bono Services, and brought in a new partner, Singapore Corporate Counsel Association, to further empower our community. I encourage even more members of the legal profession to do good and join our meaningful cause. I also urge Singaporeans to make use of these legal awareness talks to equip themselves with the knowledge of basic laws for their benefit. We will all emerge stronger together."

Mr Desmond Choo, Mayor of North East District

Where legal issues are concerned, there is a general fear among residents that consulting lawyers will be an expensive affair. This is why community legal clinics are set up to bring advisory services closer to residents at no cost. Every year, the Law Awareness Weeks @ CDC serves the purpose of mitigating such phobia by empowering our community with useful legal knowledge concerning their daily lives through a series of community talks. This year's edition of Law Awareness Weeks @ CDC will be refreshed with topics relevant to the current hot-button concerns such as your employment

rights in the event of a termination, understanding the COVID-19 rental relief from landlords and more. North East CDC hopes that residents will find the series of talks beneficial in understanding legal protection that will safeguard their interests.

Mr Alex Yam, Mayor of North West District

Law Awareness @ CDC 2020 consolidates key legal topics to address residents' legal concerns. In this current climate, it is even more important to empower our residents by helping them gain access to and understand basic legal issues that impact their lives. Since 2014, the CDCs have collaborated with Law Society to grow the pro bono community legal service network on the ground. We hope that more law student volunteers and law firms will come on board this initiative to help more residents.

Mr Mohd Fahmi Aliman, Mayor of South East District

“Since 2014, Law Society and the five CDCs have worked together to provide Community Pro Bono Legal Clinic in all five districts. All these years, we have been very grateful for the strong support of pro bono lawyers and student volunteers who have been around to enhance our residents' basic legal literacy so that they are more aware of their legal rights and when to exercise them. This year has been special in that we are all ready to reach out via virtual platforms. The topics tie closely to what are useful for residents' daily lives and we look forward to continuous engagement of our South East residents via this partnership with Law Society Pro Bono Services.”

Quotes by Law Society Pro Bono Services

Mr Josephus Tan, Chairman, Law Awareness Committee

“This MOU signifies a highly valued partnership for LSPBS with the People's Association (PA), the 5 Community Development Councils (CDCs), NUS, SMU and SUSS (the Institutes of Higher Learning or IHLs) and the Singapore Corporate Council Association (SCCA) who join us this year, to reach out to the public on an unprecedented scale. Law affects the way we order our lives, communities and businesses. A basic knowledge of the law is essential to ensure protection of one's interests. LSPBS works towards educating and empowering those in our community, regardless of their station in life, on the common legal issues relevant to their lives. Since the law is always developing and changing to meet the needs of society, we believe that creating legal awareness must be a continuous and sustained effort and our partnership with PA, the CDCs, IHLs and SCCA will without a doubt boost our efforts in reaching a wider community.”

Quotes by Institutes of Higher Learning

Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean (Faculty of Law), National University of Singapore

“Access to justice starts with knowing your rights. My colleagues and I are thrilled to continue our work in this project, helping to make the law – which can sometimes seem arcane – understandable to a wider audience. Since its inception, several hundred of our students have contributed to, and benefited from, this important initiative. Under the aegis of the NUS Law Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education, these students have volunteered and played their part, observing and assisting with clinics, workshops and talks. In the process, they see what a difference a lawyer can make – and that law offers a career that is measured not only in dollars earned but people helped.”

Ms Eleanor Wong, Vice Dean at NUS Law and Director of the Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education

“Learning by helping others is a powerful pedagogy. Thus we are especially pleased by the launch of the Youth Community and Legal Clinic, where younger lawyers (assisted by our students) can address the specific legal concerns of a young generation of Singaporeans. In these uncertain times, fairness and justice are arguably even more important than ever. NUS Law has stepped up with initiatives such as [COV-AID](#) and this is yet another way in which we are proud to contribute.”

Professor Goh Yihan, Dean, School of Law, Singapore Management University

SMU School of Law advocates a pro bono culture among students through various pro bono programmes since our inception in 2007. We are delighted to be part of the Community Legal Pro Bono Services Network, and our students have benefited immensely from their participation. More than learning about how law is applied in real-life, students gain the more important lesson of how the law ultimately affects people, and how they should always do their utmost to use their knowledge and skills to help those in need. I am confident that together, our work will go a long way in nurturing law graduates with a strong sense of empathy and service.

Professor Lesile Chew, Dean, School of Law, Singapore University of Social Sciences

One of the Singapore University of Social Sciences’ core values is Passion for Community. The SUSS School of Law, shares and promote this core value by training our law students to become high-quality practitioners in community law (Criminal and Family Law). The signing of the MOU with Law Society Pro Bono Services, five Community Development Councils, and now the Singapore Corporate Counsel Association, in support of the LAW@CDC

initiative is in line with this aim. It gives the School the opportunity to encourage our students to serve the community by helping to facilitate greater awareness of the law. In turn, these efforts help our students to personally experience the good they can do while learning first hand, how the law works. The signing of the original MOU three years ago opened the door for our students to be actively involved in volunteering at numerous community legal clinics around the island, alongside fellow students from the other law schools. With SCCA now on board, we look forward to even more opportunities for our law students to learn, while contributing to the community's efforts to increase awareness about the law.

Quotes by Singapore Corporate Counsel Association

Mr Wan Kwong Weng, Vice President, Singapore Corporate Counsel Association

SCCA views LAW@CDC as a good pro bono platform where we can contribute and deploy our members who wish to go the extra mile for the community. As corporate counsel, we are very much involved in the thick of our respective businesses and industry sectors. This pro bono initiative is a natural extension of us giving quality advice to help charitable organisations, least-advantaged in the society as well as to provide any mentoring or workshop to aspiring law students. Recently, we had organised Singapore's first in-house counsel competition for law students to grow the next generation of thinkers to innovatively solve problems where law meets business. More than 160 law students donned the hat of a general counsel of a fictional charity to advise its "board of directors" on Covid-19's impact on the charity's operations. This competition not only gave students the opportunity to hone essential skills of legal, business acumen, innovation and communication which would put them in better stead when they enter the work force, but also raised awareness and funds for our charity partner Child at Street 11.

Ms Serene Gan, Co-Chair Pro Bono Committee, Singapore Corporate Counsel Association

"Volunteering for the law awareness talks is a fulfilling experience and an opportunity for personal growth. It allowed me, an in-house lawyer, to contribute to the community and to share expertise and insights from the commercial sector to the public. I am impressed by the teamwork behind the scenes between the law students, in-house lawyers, law firm lawyers and various organisations to work towards a common good and produce these webinars to raise awareness about the law."

About the CDCs

Since 1997, the CDCs have been bridging communities by strengthening social infrastructure, building social resilience and social capital, and promoting a culture of giving back, through the following ways:

- (a) Aggregator of Needs and Resources
- (b) Builder of Capability / Capacity in Partners and Networks
- (c) Connector of Communities

There are five Community Development Councils (CDCs), namely, Central Singapore, North East, North West, South East and South West CDCs. Mayors of the Districts are Chairman of the respective CDCs. The Office of the
the
Mayors
comprises:

- (a) Ms Low Yen Ling Chairman of Mayors' Committee & Mayor of South West District
- (b) Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng Mayor of Central Singapore District
- (c) Mr Desmond Choo Mayor of North East District
- (d) Mr Alex Yam Mayor of North West District
- (e) Mr Mohd Fahmi Aliman Mayor of South East District

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov.sg and www.pa.gov.sg

About the Law Society Pro Bono Services

Law Society Pro Bono Services (LSPBS) is a registered charity and Institution of a Public Character (UEN: 201700430E).

LSPBS is an initiative by the Law Society of Singapore to help bring free legal assistance to those in need in our community as part of the Law Society's stated mission to ensure access to justice for all. LSPBS runs various programmes to (a) serve the community (b) support its volunteers and (c) assist or collaborate on pro bono initiatives with other agencies.

For more information, please visit www.lawsocprobono.org

For more information on Law Awareness Weeks @CDC 2020, please visit <https://www.lawawarenessweeks2020.com>

About National University of Singapore (NUS) Faculty of Law

NUS Law is Asia's Global Law School. Widely regarded as the region's leading law school, it sees itself as part of a global conversation about the study and practice of law. Its diverse faculty includes 60 full-time academics together with many adjuncts and visiting professors; its 1,200 undergraduate and postgraduate students include Singapore's top school leavers as well as outstanding scholars from around the globe. The faculty is a major source of research on legal issues affecting Singapore, the region and beyond. NUS Law's alumni are a who's who of Singapore's legal community and include leaders in the profession, government ministers, Supreme Court judges, ambassadors, CEOs and many other alumni go on to careers that take them to the heights of the profession around the world.

For more information, please visit <http://law.nus.edu.sg>

About Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Law

Singapore Management University (SMU) School of Law proudly welcomed its first cohort of 116 students in August 2007. Taught by a dynamic faculty with postgraduate degrees from renowned universities, the School aims to nurture its students to become excellent lawyers who will contribute significantly to society. Trained with the ability to contextualise legal expertise and to think across disciplines and geographical borders coupled with SMU's interactive pedagogy, SMU's law graduates are confident articulate and analytically agile.

The SMU School of Law offers a four-year full-time Bachelor of Laws programme, a five-year double-degree programme which combines law with Accountancy, Business, Economics, Information Systems or Social Sciences, and a Master of Laws programme. The School has also launched a full-time graduate programme, the Juris Doctor Programme which can be completed within three years, and in some cases, accelerated for completion within two years.

For more information, please visit www.law.smu.edu.sg

About Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) School of Law

SUSS's School of Law trains and produces highly motivated lawyers specialising in the areas of criminal law and family law. Our programmes adopt a pedagogy that emphasises applied learning and a multi-disciplinary approach to problem-solving. The School of Law offers both the Juris Doctor (JD) and Bachelor of Laws (LL B) programmes.

For more information, please visit www.suss.edu.sg

About the Singapore Corporate Counsel Association (SCCA)

The Singapore Corporate Counsel Association Limited, is the national association serving the in-house community in Singapore since 2002. As connectivity is imperative to in-house lawyers in their day to day projects and tasks, to make sensible and important resolutions to the organization they serve, the SCCA aims to serve the needs of just that.

Currently, the SCCA reaches out to over 3000 in-house counsel in Singapore representing a wide spectrum of lawyers in different industries. It continues to grow its network and connections in the region and around the world with counsel ranging from 10,000 in APAC to 100,000 around the world.

It prides in building reputable training programs, toolkits, competency frameworks and skills required by domestic and regional corporate lawyers and will continue to be committed in this endeavour.

For more information, please visit www.scca.org.sg
