

Embargoed till 23 September 2016

**SPEECH BY MS LOW YEN LING,
MAYOR OF SOUTH WEST DISTRICT
SIGNING OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
CEREMONY BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS AND CONSUMERS
ASSOCIATION OF SINGAPORE ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2016
AT JURONG SPRING COMMUNITY CLUB**

Mayor Teo Ser Luck, Chairman of Mayors' Committee and Mayor of
North East District,

Ms Denise Phua, Mayor of Central Singapore District

Dr Teo Ho Pin, Mayor of North West District

Dr Mohamad Maliki, Mayor of South East District

Mr Lim Biow Chuan, PBM, President, Consumers Association of
Singapore

Grassroots Advisers;

Mr Seah Seng Choon, Executive Director, Consumers Association of
Singapore

Friends and Fellow Residents

Welcome

A very good morning to all of you here today and welcome to the MOU signing ceremony between the Community Development Councils, CDCs in short, and the Consumers Association of Singapore, CASE.

Purpose of MOU

2 The signing of this MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) to promote greater Consumers' Rights awareness in Singapore will better equip consumers with the knowledge they need to make good and informed choices in their purchases. It is also a firm defence against errant retailers. By arming the public with greater awareness of their consumer rights, we are sending a strong signal for fair trade and business practices. It is also a timely move as the Government has just taken steps to strengthen civil measures that may be taken against errant retailers who persist in unfair trading practices.

3 I am sure every one has come across a bad product or encountered poor service, and have left it as was because we did not know what to do or felt that it was just not worth the while quibbling over it. There are also situations where it was totally frustrating, and even financially painful. When faced with such situations, what can we do? Who can we turn to for advice and for help? How can we prevent ourselves from falling prey to errant retailers?

4 This is why CASE and the CDCs are working closely together to improve consumer awareness and education. The launch of Consumers' Rights Awareness talks across the five CDCs will reach out to the heartlands and help residents better understand what are the rights of a consumer, the responsibilities of retailers, as well as the avenues of recourse or mediation. It will also cover useful topics such as unfair trading practices and areas like home renovations and buying SPA packages. The talks will also highlight the presence of businesses accredited by CASE Trust. These retailers could offer consumers better peace of mind as they would have been screened according to standards set by CASE.

Prevention is Better than Cure

5 As the saying goes, **prevention is better than cure**. With greater awareness and education, the consumer will be better placed to make informed decisions for his or her purchases. This could in turn, lower the incidents of dissatisfaction. For instance, in sectors where prepayments are common, consumers are taught what to look out for and the possible risks, before deciding to make a purchase.

CDCs and CASE Partnership – Doing More for the Residents

6 Through the partnership between the CDCs and CASE, we hope to **firstly**, reach out to into the heartlands and to as many residents as possible through the network of the five Districts. Many of our elderly, housewives and young students would benefit from getting more savvy about consumer rights and fair practices. They are very often the soft targets of errant retailers.

7 **Secondly**, we want to, as much as possible, customise the talks to cater to the various interests of our residents. Each District has different resident profiles. With the help of the grassroots and community partners, and residents' feedback, the CDCs will identify topics that are **close to the heart of the residents**. For example, in our South West District, we have many young families who are likely to spend on home renovations. We will be arranging for talks specifically to address consumer concerns with regards to renovation works and to educate our residents on what to look out for when engaging a contractor, and their rights if the service rendered is below the mark.

8 Thirdly, the talks will not only **educate** our resident, it will also **empower** them to make better choices and decisions in their purchases. Most importantly, when faced with faced with unfair or unscrupulous merchants, they will be well placed to stand their ground because they know their rights, the action they can take, the room for redress and where the avenues of help are.

Conclusion

9 On behalf of my fellow Mayors and CDCs, I wish to thank CASE and all our partners for your support in this programme.
