

**Welcome Address by Ms Long Chey May,
President of Singapore Association of Social Workers
at the President's Tea Reception for Social Workers and
Award Presentation Ceremony for Outstanding Social Worker Award
and Promising Social Worker Award 2019
15 November 2019**



President Madam Halimah Yacob

Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development

Ms Geraldine Chin, Director, ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Private Limited

Good afternoon, distinguished guests, colleagues and friends

Galvanizing the Fraternity: A Force to be reckoned with, a legacy for The Future

Today, we celebrate the 20th year of the Outstanding Social Worker Award, and the 11th year of the Promising Social Worker Award. We would like to express our deepest appreciation to President Madam Halimah Yacob for welcoming us to the Istana this afternoon. More importantly, we are grateful for the President's continued support to the social work profession and to social workers in Singapore. As we celebrate OSWA's 20th anniversary today, we are very honoured to have Mdm President give a special address to us later. This is a first in OSWA history! Thank you, Mdm. President.

Every year, this Award Ceremony recognises the exceptional work of social workers who have set excellent standards in their contributions to the social service, healthcare and community sectors in Singapore. It is the highest honour and recognition given to social workers. The winners today, like previous years, are exemplary social workers who have gone beyond the call of duty. Their work has impressed and touched the Selection Panel as we read through the nominations and got to know them during the interviews. To date, we have recognised 56 individuals. This excludes the three winners today. A review of past winners shows 75% are female and 40% are from family services while 30% are from the health sectors. I believe there are many practitioners who are doing very good work in the other sub sectors. I look forward to having them recognised at this platform in the coming years.

While OSWA is going into 'adulthood', what can a middle-aged SASW offer? SASW will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in two years' time. SASW is akin to a parent who would always want the best for his/her child. SASW is committed to support the social work child across all seasons and tribulations of his/her life. Even before they join the profession, as students, we offer the Social Work Induction Camp. For newer workers, we offer solid foundational training

such as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and Understanding and Applying Social Work Ethics through our training academy, FRTC. For the senior social workers, we offer training in supervision and platforms such as Communities of Practice and Work Groups to allow them to consolidate and launch practice guides and to harmonise practice. For the seasoned practitioners, we offer platforms such as leadership posts in chapters to chart directions for specific sub-sectors. Last year the Disability Chapter was formed and they have had several meetings/events and is progressing well, supporting and contributing to the vision of the enabling master plan. We also have a pro-tem committee on Criminal Justice Social Work and the team is very active and enthusiastic to create synergy in their work with offenders. They aspire to form a chapter to advance criminal justice social work practice, emulating overseas best practice models with a local flavour. I am personally engaged with a team of social workers who have interest in supporting rough sleepers and those with housing issues. We have met on four occasions with a clear output and outcome to serve this clientele better. The possibilities are infinite and we hope with all the support and opportunities offered through SASW, more social work leadership potential can be harnessed and more people can be recognised at OSWA!

I am heartened to know that many of the past winners have made it a point to attend the ceremony today in celebration of OSWA's 20th anniversary. With their presence, we now have a community of winners seated amongst us, whom I see as advocates and leaders from diverse background and interest areas for our social work mission. SASW would like to activate and mobilize this group, to go beyond mentoring and supervision. There are definitely many more areas that social workers can contribute to. We now have 13 social workers who are Professional Deputies and Donees and this is a new role for social workers. We are also active in the arena of social health integration efforts and I urge all social workers to stay relevant and be adaptive so that we can unlearn or relearn and even transfer knowledge and skills to lay persons who can be a good resource and are partners in care for community. We need a pool of social workers as resource persons to work hand in hand with volunteers, board members and other stakeholders to do this in a sustainable manner. How can we attract the young with the right qualities to choose a career in social work, retain competent and experienced ones and elevate the professional standards and practice where compassion and competence are essential elements in all that we do? Collectively, we need to align our approach to reach our vision and learn to manage our talents from a life course perspective.

I launched the mentoring scheme at last year's OSWA and the preliminary feedback has been very positive. I am happy to report that 12 mentees have benefitted from five of the past winners and the mentees felt the sessions have helped them understand the sector better,

reflect on their career progression and also recognised that networking and having sufficient resources are important. Mentoring is also a safe platform to share openly and was thought provoking and many have expanded their horizon through open discussions. One of the mentees, Yong Hao from National Cancer Centre Singapore shared that it is good to have someone who is more experienced to guide him through processes and career progression systematically. Peter Mao, from Life Point mentioned that he is clearer with his own direction in the social service sector. Julia Lee (OSWA 2014) the mentor said the sessions have provided her an opportunity to guide newer workers in the sector through the use of the competency framework. Do look out for our detailed evaluation report of this mentoring initiative.

Next week, a core group of supervisors both local and overseas will lead a team of 25 supervisors and leaders to co-create a Supervision Competency Framework and I am very excited and hopeful as the core team has put in their precious time to see through this as the outcome of the past year's efforts.

Since my last speech here, we have formed new chapters and network, driven by various champions for specific causes, all aiming to strengthen the social compact and cohesion of our citizens and to serve our clients better. Social workers as a group can help to ensure we continue the legacy of giants like Anthony Yeo and Dr Myrna Blake in our pursuit towards compassionate practice in this fast paced and KPI focused society and economy.

Appreciation for the Community

The SASW Executive Committee and I are heartened by the continued support for social workers and the work that we do. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Social and Family Development for the kind sponsorship of Professional and Leadership Development Training valued at \$30,000 and \$14,000 for each OSWA and PSWA winner, on top of the \$1,000 cash award. Thank you very much for the support, Minister Desmond Lee.

I would like to thank our other long-term partner, ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Limited, which has provided solid support for each OSWA and PSWA winner with a personal development grant of \$10,000 and \$8,000 respectively. Thank you very much Ms Geraldine Chin, Director ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, for your support all these 20 years.

Our Winners

Before we proceed to reveal the winners of this year's award, I would like to introduce the members of the Selection Panel. They have worked hard together to review the nominations

and shortlist the award winners. The panel is chaired by Associate Professor Esther Goh, Head of Social Work Department from the National University of Singapore. Members are Ms Nancy Ng, Director (Professional Practice Development), Professional and Corporate Development Group, Office of Director of Social Welfare, Ministry of Social and Family Development; Mr. Chan Whee Peng, Director, Service Planning and Service Standards from the National Council of Social Service; Mr Alvin Foo from ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Private Limited; as well as our past year's OSWA winner Ms. Melissa Chew, Head of Department, Medical Social Services, Woodlands Health Campus. Melissa is also a Principal Medical Social Worker at Tan Tock Seng Hospital

This year, we have two OSWA winners with diverse backgrounds and they both deserve commendation for their exemplary work and influence in various settings serving different client groups. Alongside the two who won the Outstanding Social Worker Award, a special young social worker will be taking home the Promising Social Worker Award. You will hear more about the award winners in a few moments. They excel in different fields carrying with them that same professionalism, commitment and passion. Their work raises the bar of social work, and I hope you would be inspired by their commitment, dedication and tenacity.

It is with great pleasure that I announce the winners of this year's Awards. I will first introduce our Promising Social Worker Award Winner, and he is

- Mr Lim Shen Yong, Senior Social Worker, AMKFSC Community Services Ltd

For the Outstanding Social Worker Award, our recipients are:

- Mr Lee Seng Meng, Director, Targeted Interventions, SHINE Children and Youth Services
- Ms. Tan Ching Yee, Head, Psychosocial Services, HCA Hospice Care

My heartiest congratulations to all winners! Thank you for touching the hearts and minds of not just the selection panel, but also for making a difference to the community and the social work fraternity. I welcome you to join a community of winners and look forward to your continuous commitment and contribution in the years ahead. I will personally engage and come to you to tap on your expertise moving forward.

Finally, to commemorate this important milestone, we have prepared a video which will provide you with the history, impact and value of the award and its meaning to some of the winners. I hope this video will change social workers' mind and not reject the chance to be nominated

when someone wishes to nominate you in the future. Going through the process of being nominated, being shortlisted and the interviews itself can be transformational. The 56 past winners plus many others have shared that the selection panel asked good questions and many new insights were gained during and post interview.

We have chosen to create a video that is more light-hearted by using caricatures. So for the past winners and fellow social work colleagues, I hope you would put on a smile even as you do not recognise yourselves. I welcome your reactions, thoughts and views on how we can make OSWA and PSWA even better in the next decade as we continue to give recognition to outstanding and promising social workers from various sub sectors.

But for now, please sit back and enjoy the video. Thank you.