

From Newly Elected SASW President Long Chey May's Desk

On 28 July 2017 (Friday) at about 10pm (SASW AGM), after a long evening of discussing the new vision and mission statement, voting to pass the new Code of Professional Ethics, getting updates from various office bearers and chapter chairs; I finally stood in front of a passionate group of about 60 SASW members who waited patiently to listen to my platform statement on why I should be elected to serve as President. Most of the other office bearers came prepared and spoke with confidence and passion. Many have track records of serving in the association and I was amazed by their commitment and energy level.

I did not read out aloud what I had written or submitted during nomination, as I was filled with a sense of pride and admiration facing a dedicated and energetic group of social workers who were willing to stay back till the end. One life member remarked that this was the first time people showed such high enthusiasm! At that moment, I quietly said to myself that I can now accept and fully commit to serve even if it is just for these 60 people present at the AGM. I told the group that I was prepared to fight for the post of President but there was no other contender. I asked them to watch me, support me and walk with me and the new team in driving and fulfilling the association's new vision and mission. I conveyed my hope to increase membership to match figures to that of the number of RSWs and use my conviction and experience as a people developer to drive initiatives and professional standards, engaging partners and stakeholders and to encourage members to strengthen our professional identity.

It has only been 10 days since that night and I have already started an exciting journey communicating with members, social workers and receiving congratulatory messages from SWAAB members, my bosses at NTFGH, fellow heads of social work departments and colleagues. It was heartening to hear my friends and associates expressing support and willingness to come forward to help out and also to sign up membership to support me and my team. The Association is for Social Workers. I would like to position it as a resource HUB and "Go To" point for Social Workers, employers, stakeholders like policy makers, civil society, professional groups, potential local and overseas job seekers and students. For any new initiatives like developing employer guides or workforce norms for social workers, benefits, insurance coverage etc, a bigger membership base would give a stronger representation and we will enjoy economies of scale and aid in negotiating terms.

If we each bring in one new member, our member voices will double and be stronger. This gives my team a strong mandate to represent you. We continue to have encounters with people who think that one may not need the relevant academic qualifications to become a social worker and skills training will suffice. Dialogue sessions are often held via association platforms. A large Social Service Organization can have close to 100 SW practitioners and if the organization leader supports and encourages membership and accreditation, we will have a strong fraternity and our impact and influence for change or improvement will give us a stronger voice. Professional identity is best represented via association.

Singapore will elect a new President in September 2017. Whoever he or she may be, we will organize the annual Outstanding Social Worker and Promising Social Worker Award as in previous years. As SASW President, I invite your nomination to put forth deserving social workers to be recognised. This is the highest honour we can give to our colleagues who have invested much time and effort in their services to clients or projects that have an impact or benefitted citizens. Do stop and pick up a

nomination form to let us know the good work done. At the Association, I intend to create platforms and help coordinate or identify cross sector projects to give our younger talent opportunities to learn, experiment and be mentored by social work leaders on various meaningful and innovative projects. I stepped forward to serve as I know this is the place for me to express my views from the professional angle and be emboldened to state our positions regardless of our institution or employers' stand.

I have broadly identified the following few areas that the new Ex-co will focus on:

- Strengthen standing through adoption of good governance
- Deepen engagement (lifetime connection)
- Broaden reach (global connection and perspectives)
- Enrich participation (crowdsharing concept of researches, best practices; ethics consults)
- Hone social work leadership knowledge and skills

This is only my first message to share my initial thoughts and direction. Do expect more updates and engagement from the new team. Many of you have either heard or seen me at other social work seminars but I want to let the fraternity experience the kind of person and leadership in this new chapter as I impart and share my three decades of social work practice and leadership.

I invite you to connect with us and share your views, research articles, posters and feedback. Please feel free to email me at email: president@sasw.org.sg or chey_may_long@nuhs.edu.sg. I welcome new ideas, fresh faces and want to encourage professional volunteerism from active, retired social workers, inactive members to help us serve you better. Better still, step forward and contribute ideas, nudge, send and encourage young workers and students to allow them a platform to deepen the connection with veterans and keep the passion and fire burning.

Here is wishing all Social Workers a Happy National Day as we remember and honour our forefathers and those veteran social workers who helped reduce suffering and make Singapore liveable and beautiful!

Long Chey May

President

Singapore Association of Social Workers

9 August 2017