

**OPENING ADDRESS BY A/P KEVIN LIM,
VICE PRESIDENT, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE
AT THE SOCIAL SERVICE INSTITUTE'S
GRADUATION AND AWARDS CEREMONY 2022
THE THEATRE, MEDIACORP**

Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Education

Ms Tan Li San, Chief Executive Officer, National Council of Social Service (NCSS)

NCSS Board Members

Distinguished Guests

Partners

Graduands and Award Recipients

Ladies and Gentlemen

1 Good morning.

2 A very warm welcome to the Social Service Institute (SSI)'s Graduation and Awards Ceremony. We are finally able to hold the ceremony after a two-year break and it is my pleasure to meet you in-person today.

3 First and foremost, my heartiest congratulations to all our graduands. You have pulled through the rigours of part-time studies, whilst juggling the demands of work, life, and family, as well as pivoting to both online and hybrid modes of learning. I applaud you for your resilience and adaptability.

4 Whether you are a new entrant to the social service sector, a mid-careerist, or an experienced professional looking to pick up new skills and knowledge, the completion of your respective programmes today marks a new, exciting chapter in your career.

Lifelong Learning – A Critical Enabler

5 On this note, allow me to share one inspiring story, out of the many we have today. Seated amongst you is Mr Heng ZeChuan, an aspiring social worker and graduate of the SSI Advanced Certificate in Social Service programme. From a young age, ZeChuan's childhood and teenage years were fraught with challenges that stemmed from family issues. His constant struggles eventually led him into depression, where he engaged in self-harm and even had suicidal thoughts. It was at this lowest point when he was approached by two social workers, who believed in him and brought him back on the road to recovery. This year, ZeChuan celebrates his 8th year in recovery. Through this journey, ZeChuan found his passion and calling in the sector, taking up not one but three NCSS and SSI programmes, including the Peer Support Specialist programme as well as the Higher Diploma in Social Service. ZeChuan will be sharing more in-person later during the ceremony, but I am certain that his incredible story of resilience and grit has touched our hearts and will continue to inspire us, even after we part from this event.

6 The support from SSAs is just as crucial in spurring the development of sector professionals. Today, we would also like to recognise five SSAs that have shown strong commitment towards the development of their staff and workforce.

7 One of them is Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities. On average, over 250 of its staff attend training at SSI each year. Some of SSI's introductory courses on screening tools and casework training have helped new hires at Thye Hua Kwan transit more easily into their work, through short, condensed learnings and practical applications. Its case workers also become more equipped to assess the needs of families and devise suitable interventions for them, especially in areas such as child protection and family violence.

8 Another SSA that has invested heavily in training is Care Corner Singapore. Annually, an average of 150 staff attend courses related to casework training, management of family violence and support tools for families and adults. Care Corner also has an internal sharing initiative "Learn and Build", which encourages staff who have attended training sessions to share their reflections and learnings with other team members. This greatly facilitated the application of learning and multiplied the benefits of training. It is truly heartening to witness the spirit of learning through formal and informal means.

9 I would like to take the opportunity to recognise our Adult Educators, a group who plays a critical role in the upskilling of our sector and the larger workforce. Many of them have worked tirelessly over the last two years to convert their lessons online, whilst preserving the learning experience. To our graduates, I encourage you to see yourself not only as a sector professional, but also as an educator armed with new knowledge and skills, and share your reflections and learnings with your team members back in your respective organisations.

Building a Sustainable Learning Ecosystem

10 SSI, being a part of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), is committed to work with partners from the public, private and people sectors to develop a professional and skilled workforce for the social service sector. This enables quality service for our service users and ensures that the sector is adequately resourced with manpower to meet current and future needs. In meeting these needs, SSI recently launched the Training Network Model (TNM) 2.0, a five-year strategic initiative that aims to transform seven social service agencies (SSAs) into Centres of Excellence, equipped to offer training programmes to the sector. Through this initiative, we hope to train an additional 6,000 learners by FY26 to better support the development of sector professionals.

11 This initiative is a crucial milestone for SSI in its journey towards building a sustainable learning ecosystem. Social service professionals will be able to tap on the comprehensive suite of courses offered by SSA partners, augmenting the training programmes conducted at SSI. On the flipside, the SSAs onboard TNM 2.0 will receive support and funding from NCSS to establish their training operations. SSA partners will also be able to embark on new organisational priorities like courseware research and development in a sandbox environment, which encourages a spirit of risk-taking and innovation. TNM 2.0 partners will be empowered to not only provide services to their clientele, but train their workforce and the larger talent pool. I am confident that this initiative will provide more accessible, quality training to social service professionals.

Heart of What We Do – Serving the Sector

12 Today, we will also be sharing a story of a mid-careerist and perhaps many of you may be able to relate to him. In the story, Mr Mohamed Isa Kassim shared the diversities of his past career and how he leveraged these experiences in his current role as a social worker with Thye Hua Kwan Family Service Centre @ MacPherson. Isa's story is one of 30 heart-warming stories under "Stories from the Heart", a series that NCSS has curated in celebration of its 30th Anniversary to showcase the good work of the sector and thank the sector professionals, volunteers and many partners who have joined hands with us to serve the needs of our community. You can read more from NCSS' website.

Conclusion

13 In closing, I would like to offer my heartiest congratulations once again to all graduands and award recipients. As we collectively chart our next phase of transformation in the next five years, I am confident that the knowledge and skills you have attained will be useful in preparing you to handle current and emerging needs. Thank you for your dedication and invaluable contributions to serve those in need in our community. I hope your passion for the sector and for continuous learning continues, as you forge ahead in your career. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours and a fulfilling journey ahead in the social service sector.

14 Thank you.