

**JOINT WELCOME BY TAS 2019 ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
CO-CHAIRPERSONS, IMH CEO PROF CHUA HONG CHOON, AND  
NCSS DEPUTY CEO, MS TINA HUNG, AT THE  
9<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE –  
TOGETHER AGAINST STIGMA 2019, MARINA BAY SANDS, SINGAPORE  
3 OCTOBER 2019**

**Prof Chua:**

Good morning, President Halimah Yacob,

Her Excellency Joanne Diedre Tyndall, High Commissioner of New Zealand in Singapore

Her Excellency Margriet Vonno, Ambassador of the Netherlands to Singapore and Brunei

Her Excellency Nancy Lynn McDonald, High Commissioner of Canada in Singapore  
Professor Norman Sartorius, Co-chair of the World Psychiatric Association Section on Stigma and Mental Illness

Ms Anita Fam, President, National Council of Social Service

Distinguished guests

1 Tina and I are privileged to welcome you to the 9th International Conference – Together Against Stigma.

2 Over the next 3 days, we are going to open our hearts and minds to look beyond the scientific and clinical aspects of mental illness, beyond diagnosis or labels, to focus our conversations on building a more inclusive society for persons living with mental health conditions. And, that is exactly the theme of this year's conference.

**Tina:**

3 Indeed, there is so much more we need to do to build inclusivity at home, in schools, workplaces and communities. The 2016 Quality of Life Study conducted by

the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) showed that persons with mental health conditions have a significantly lower quality of life than the general population. They do not feel accepted and respected by the people around them. This is largely due to the stigma that is still prevalent in our society today. Our findings are certainly not unique to Singapore, and that is why we are all here. Many of us, from around the world, are taking concrete steps to address mental health stigma.

4 Last September, NCSS launched “Beyond the Label”, Singapore’s first mental health anti-stigma campaign. We want to galvanise the public and grow our efforts to fight mental health stigma and to embrace the inclusion of persons with mental health conditions in our community. We want to assure our peers and their families that it is ok not to be ok. It is ok to ask for help and it is ok if you need time to feel better. It is time for all of us to open up and talk about mental health. This is also the key theme for our Beyond the Label campaign this year. You can search for “Beyond the Label” on Facebook to watch the videos that we have curated with many persons in recovery and those around them.

5 We are pleased to share our Singapore journey with you at this conference, and we are excited to learn from all of you, many of whom have travelled from all around the world to share your expertise and experience. This sharing of best practices and valuable lessons that we can draw from the bigger mental health community will go a long way in uniting us in our collective efforts to build a caring and inclusive global community for all.

**Prof Chua:**

6 Indeed Tina. Fifty-five local and 80 international experts, including peers, will be speaking at about 100 presentations and workshops happening across 5 parallel tracks! We also have over 500 delegates from 24 countries here with us, including peers and we look forward to hearing your views as we discuss solutions to make our schools, workplaces and communities more accepting of persons with mental health conditions.

7 On Saturday, we also have a special lecture – The Stanley Kutcher Lecture - on youth mental health literacy by Prof Stanley Kutcher of Dalhousie University, Canada. For members of the public, we have also collaborated with one of Singapore’s Chinese media to organise a public forum in Mandarin to discuss stigma issues. Do remember to join us for the conference closing, after the last plenary session. We will be unveiling a photo montage of all of us – so, please go to the photo booth during the breaks to snap a photo of yourself for this montage!

8 Preparing for this conference has taken many months and I want to thank the Organising Committee who have worked very hard to make this happen. Our very special thanks to Professor Norman Sartorius and Prof Sir Graham Thornicroft, Chair, World Psychiatric Association Section on Stigma and Mental Illness. And to our International and local Advisory Panel, thank you for your invaluable guidance and support.

9 Finally, thank you to all our sponsors, speakers and delegates for being here as one like-minded community. We wish everyone 3 fruitful days of learning, meeting old friends and making new ones!

10 It is now my pleasure to invite President Halimah Yacob on stage to deliver her address. Madam President, please.

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