

Social Service Summit 2023
Strengthening Connections, Partnering for Impact
Welcome Address by Ms. Anita Fam

1. A very good morning to you - Minister Masagos Zulkifli, partners, colleagues, fellow sector journeyers, friends. Welcome to this year's Social Service Summit! We have a very exciting programme lined up for you over these next two days. May it be a good time of learning as well as networking for all of you.
2. Through the years, we have seen our sector evolve and social issues have also become more complex. Gone are the days where we tackled just one social problem at a time with a dedicated pot of funding. Health and social care challenges are so closely intertwined and interdependent. They are way more complex these days and involve a myriad of relationships and sometimes much uncertainty. There are often competing needs and changing demands. Not to mention that we are also limited by a finite pool of resources.
3. So, in essence, we are driven by necessity to do things differently, recognising too that it's in the power of the collective that we can tackle those challenges and realise a different future.
4. So our theme for this year's Summit - "**Strengthening Connections, Partnering for Impact**" – is intentional. For there is much to say on how connections and partnerships can help amplify the impact of the work we do in this sector. It is timely too, given that this year is also MSF's year for celebrating social service partners.
5. We are also celebrating two very significant milestones this year as it is Community Chest's 40th Anniversary as well as our Social Service Institute's 20th Anniversary.
6. Over the past 40 years, Community Chest has been partnering businesses and individuals to mobilise resources to address social service needs. That said, you would have noticed that the language and understanding in this space have shifted. Until recently, we understood charity-giving to be for the short-term to meet critical needs of a target population. However, there is now a broader and deeper

understanding of what effective philanthropy-giving is – that is, giving which is more strategic, longer term and involves ongoing partnerships with the community and the charities in this space.

7. More givers, especially corporates, are now looking to be more involved in the philanthropic process, rather than adopting the more conventional approach of just giving a monetary donation. There is also a deeper interest in how 'ESG' (ie, environmental, social and governance) outcomes can be measured as a means for measuring the sustainability and social impact of their philanthropic activities and investment.
8. To help businesses better shape and track the 'S' in their ESG efforts, NCSS and NVPC, with input from various other stakeholders, are therefore developing a new Sustainable Philanthropy Framework and playbook.
9. This Framework aims to guide businesses in measuring and monitoring the impact of their donations, efforts in volunteerism and inclusive hiring. It will also include information such as:
 - a. how businesses can change their business models to enhance their competitiveness while advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities where they operate, as well as,
 - b. tangible metrics for businesses to measure and monitor their impact.
10. We target to launch the Sustainable Philanthropy Framework, metrics and playbook in the first quarter of 2024.
11. The willingness of corporates to be more involved is only one half of the picture. Social service agencies too must be well positioned to receive these resources. This is where an openness to collaborate and work together truly matters and can make a real difference in outcomes for our service users. To this end, NCSS will also be rolling out a series of playbooks for our SSAs, including a fundraising playbook to help SSAs identify areas of improvement and how they can better partner corporates to create more sustainable resourcing opportunities. Resources are already readily available to help build the capabilities of SSAs in volunteer management.

12. In addition, we also have dedicated funds that help foster collaboration in our social service sector. At last year's Social Service Summit, I announced that we would be launching the 4ST Partnership Fund, with the objective of funding innovative, collaborative and empowering solutions to address service needs. This fund pools resources from like-minded funders to achieve a common goal. I am happy to share that this was officially launched by then Senior Minister Tharman at our Seeds of Sustainable Philanthropy event earlier in April this year.
13. NCSS seeks to play the role of a catalyst for innovation and collaboration within the social service sector by engaging sector partners in the co-creation of service solutions to meet service user needs. To this end, we are also looking at creating platforms, for interested applicants of the 4ST Partnership Fund, to come together to discuss and share ideas. These platforms will help to generate new connections and networks across different agencies and even across different sectors, which can give rise to innovative and collaborative ideas and solutions.
14. The 4ST Partnership Fund's briefing and information sessions saw a turnout of more than 100 participants and so far 23 applications from social service agencies, social enterprises and ground-up groups have been received. We are heartened by the positive response.
15. Other than the 4ST Partnership Fund, there are other innovative models of collaboration amongst sector partners emerging in our sector. One example is the Philanthropreneur-in-Residence (PIR) programme, launched by Quantedge Foundation last year to advance social mobility in Singapore. The PIR programme incubates social sector champions and helps them develop and scale up their best ideas to create outsized impact for social mobility in Singapore. Beyond funding support to implement their ideas, PIRs will receive holistic end-to-end support, including strategy development, networking opportunities, capacity building and executive support.
16. For too long now, our SSAs have suffered from underfunding as both funders and donors have been only willing to fund the direct costs of the programmes and

services. It is encouraging to see that funders and donors are moving away from this more traditional way of thinking that every dollar is best spent on the beneficiary. I for one used to think like this. My personal criteria, until fairly recently, was that every dollar which I gave should go to and be spent on the beneficiary, with nothing going to overhead costs and capability building. It has only been in recent years that I have come to realise that an SSA is as strong and high performing as its calibre of leadership and management. More should therefore be invested in the organisational development and capability building of our SSAs which is what we in NCSS have been focusing on.

17. We therefore launched the Community Capability Trust (CCT) last year to develop stronger SSAs by investing in their organisational capability building efforts. As a signal of the commitment towards supporting the sector, the Government, Tote Board and Community Chest provided an initial capital of \$230 million, with further matching of up to \$150 million from the Government and Tote Board for donations raised by Community Chest for the CCT. With a budget of up to \$480 million over 10 years, the CCT supports a longer-term and more systematic approach towards building capabilities in key areas such as organisational health, innovation and digitalisation, people practice and volunteer management, as well as newer areas such as Board leadership, evaluation and research and financial sustainability. These are areas which traditionally were not supported by funders and donors. Applications for grants in some of these capability building domains are now open, and funds have already been allocated to areas of digitalization and capability building in volunteer management. I strongly encourage all of our SSAs to take full advantage of this grant funding and embark on your organisational capability building efforts today.

18. To develop and sustain these capabilities, it is important for us to recognise that the true cost of delivering continued effective social services also includes overheads and general operating costs. Therefore, to begin this dialogue, it is important for us to understand how much our SSAs spend on all aspects of their operations, and this includes not only direct but also indirect costs. SSAs therefore need to be equipped so that they can understand and learn how to quantify the true cost of their operations so that the mix of direct and indirect cost required to deliver impact can be accurately

reflected. Funders and donors too need to shift their thinking so that grantees of their funding are paid what it takes to get the job done.

19. This 'Pay-What-It-Takes' approach takes a considerable mindset shift on the part of everyone and NCSS is prepared to take the lead in this conversation. Recognising that different types of SSAs have different cost structures, NCSS will study the financials of our SSAs to see what their typical spend is on indirect costs and give guidance in due course. For a start though, I recommend that we all look at the 2019 Handbook on 'Full Cost Recovery for Charities' published by NUS which one can find via the Charity Portal.

20. I am so pleased that we have Mr Ho Kwon Ping, founder and executive chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, and Mr Chatri Sityodtong, founder, chairman and CEO of ONE Championship with us today. They will share their invaluable insights on ecosystem thinking and I am sure that much of what they will share will spark our imagination on how we can collaborate and work together more.

21. Over the past month we had specially curated Learning Journeys for the attendees of this year's Summit. These experiential and interactive sessions focused on the key themes of today's Summit, and featured sharing by representatives across the Private, People and Public sectors. For example, in the 'Keep Calm and Digitalise' Learning Journey, some of you were able to try out the digital tools that CPAS (i.e., Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore) had adopted recently to improve their staff productivity and clients' quality of life. Attendees also gained insights into driving digitalisation strategies. I hope that these sessions have facilitated deeper conversations and inspired you to take the next step in your very own Digitalisation, Ecosystem Building and Financial Sustainability journeys.

22. Before I go, may I please take this opportunity to show my gratitude to all of you who have contributed tirelessly to our social service sector. I can really see the willingness of our sector to evolve and adapt to emerging trends and new ways of working and this gives me the assurance that our sector is in a good place to transform to better meet our service users' needs in the years ahead. I hope that this

year's Summit will be a meaningful one for all of you and may you have a fruitful two days ahead!

23. Thank you.