

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **NCSS Study Reveals that Workplace Adjustments in Companies Will Address Barriers to Hiring Persons with Mental Health Conditions**

- *Findings highlight that workplace adjustments have wide ranging benefits for companies and all its employees*
  - *NCSS partners with the WorkWell Leaders Workgroup – a grounds-up collective of private and public-sector leaders – to champion for workplace wellbeing as a priority*

**30 October 2018, Singapore** – According to the 2016 Quality of Life study by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), persons with mental health conditions expressed their desire to be employed. Yet according to the 2017 NCSS Study on Attitudes towards Persons with Mental Health Conditions in Singapore<sup>1</sup>, **seven in 10 agree that negative attitudes of co-workers are major barriers to employing persons in recovery from mental health conditions.**

Following the launch of its nation-wide campaign “**Beyond the Label**” to rally the community to unite against mental health stigma, NCSS has today released key findings from the first **2017 Study on Demand and Factors to Overcome Barriers to Employing Persons with Mental Health Conditions** (“Study”). Placing the spotlight on employers and inclusion of persons in recovery at the workplace, the Study surveyed 505 participating companies in Singapore through telephone interviews and focus group discussions from April to November 2017.

This Study is the first of its kind to look at the demand and factors to overcome barriers to employing persons in recovery. It complements other existing research and studies

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<sup>1</sup> 2017 NCSS Study on Attitudes towards Persons with Mental Health Conditions in Singapore was conducted to find the baseline of the public’s attitudes towards persons with mental health conditions, identify factors associated with attitudes and provide recommendations based on findings. Key findings can be found in the NCSS release titled “NCSS launches first nation-wide campaign to fight mental health stigma” dated 8 September 2018.

on mental health inclusion, including the 2017 NCSS Attitude Study and the 2016 NCSS Quality of Life study.

Key findings from the Study include:

**(1) Employers reported higher perceived costs than actual costs for implementing workplace adjustments that will support the hiring of persons in recovery.**

Employers surveyed held perceptions that the cost of implementing seven out of eight workplace adjustments was higher than the actual cost of doing so. The highest disparity was seen for the category “increased work support and supervision” with the perceived cost (S\$608.80 per employee per year) being more than double that of the actual cost (S\$285.60 per employee per year). The categories of workplace adjustments can be found in Annex A.

**(2) Companies that had implemented at least one workplace adjustment and hired persons in recovery saw an improvement in qualitative and quantitative benefits to the organisation and its employees.**

Companies surveyed that had implemented at least one workplace adjustment realised various qualitative and quantitative benefits. On average, greater benefits were observed by companies that hired persons in recovery as compared to those that did not. Some of these benefits include improvement in workplace morale, increased productivity as well as a reduction in associated costs to hire and retrain for each vacancy.

**(3) Every S\$1 invested in a workplace adjustment generated an average of S\$5.60 in returns<sup>2</sup>.**

The Study showed that every S\$1 invested in a workplace adjustment generated an average of S\$5.60 in returns for companies. Benefits include reduction in absenteeism, reduction in medical claims and increase in average working hours per employee per week.

**(4) Employers are willing to hire persons in recovery but lack knowledge and understanding on how best to manage and include them at the workplace.**

More than nine in 10 companies that have hired persons in recovery and about five in 10 companies that have not hired or do not know if they have hired persons in recovery are willing to hire persons in recovery. Employers cited time, resource, and information constraints as the main limitations to embracing a fully inclusive workplace for persons in recovery. To address these findings and assist employers that are willing to hire persons in recovery, NCSS is developing an **employer toolkit**, which will share information and resources that companies might require when hiring or supporting persons in recovery at the workplace. The toolkit will be ready by early 2019.

***Partnership with WorkWell Leaders Workgroup to Rally for Mental Health at the Workplace***

Commenting on the findings of the Study, *Ms Tina Hung, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, NCSS*, said, “As the key findings of the Study show us, mental health inclusion in the workplace does not only benefit the employee with mental health condition but has wide-ranging benefits for an organisation and all its employees. We must continue

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<sup>2</sup> The statement was based on the responses of 133 companies who had implemented between one to seven workplace adjustments. After calculating the fixed and variable costs for eight types of workplace adjustments, the monetary benefit was then calculated based on the sum of the net monetary change in each category as a result of workplace adjustments. For example, the monetary benefit of a reduction in absenteeism was calculated by multiplying the annual reduction in days of work missed because of workplace adjustments and the average daily wage of an employee.

to fight against the stigma of mental health at the workplace and invite more employers to come on board to help us build a more caring and inclusive society.”

In line with this, the **WorkWell Leaders Workgroup**, comprising private and public-sector leaders, was formed in May 2018 to champion for workplace wellbeing as a leadership priority. The 20-member Workgroup is spearheaded by Ms Anthea Ong, Nominated Member of Parliament, social entrepreneur and founder of Hush TeaBar.

The Workgroup brings together C-suite leaders, in addition to Heads of Human Resource, once every quarter to share, discuss and co-create inclusive practices towards a shared vision for more inclusive and caring workplaces in Singapore. To mark World Mental Health Day in October this year, the workgroup made its first collective action in support of “**Beyond the Label**” by rallying 60 employers<sup>3</sup> to pledge their support and commitment to workplace wellbeing. Some of the actions that these employers are taking include raising awareness and encouraging dialogue, including, with and by leaders, on mental health within the organisation, creating employee resource groups with ‘mental health diplomats’ or ‘wellness warriors’, conducting mental health education and training, and providing access to support.

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<sup>3</sup> The list of employers who have pledged can be found in Annex A.

### **National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450-member social service organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest and Social Service Institute (SSI) are part of NCSS.

For more information, please visit [www.ncss.gov.sg](http://www.ncss.gov.sg)

### **Beyond the Label**

Beyond the Label was launched by the National Council of Social Service on 8 September 2018 to spark reflection in individuals towards their existing attitudes and perceptions towards persons with mental health conditions, educate and equip the public with tips and knowledge to interact and support persons with mental health conditions and facilitate more conversations about mental health and stigma.

For more information, please visit <https://www.ncss.gov.sg/Our-Initiatives/Beyond-The-Label/>. To find out how you can be part of the “Beyond the Label” movement, please contact the Mental Health Services team at [ncss\\_mental\\_health@ncss.gov.sg](mailto:ncss_mental_health@ncss.gov.sg).

The categories of workplace adjustments used in the new **2017 Study on Demand and Factors to Overcome Barriers to Employing Persons with Mental Health Conditions** are:

1. Access to Counselling
2. Allowing for Flexi-Work Arrangements
3. Training for Supervisors
4. Increased Work Support and Supervision
5. Job Redesign
6. Provision of General Mental Health Education
7. Provision of Assistive Technology
8. Provision of Health Benefits

The **60 employers** that had pledged their support and commitment to workplace wellbeing include:

**(1) Accenture**

Accenture has in place many programmes and policies that take care of its employees' mental wellbeing in the workplace. This include training and education to better recognise and mitigate mental health challenges in themselves and others. Accenture also launched its mental health ally program in Singapore, which helps promote a safe culture to talk about mental health conditions. It has a network of allies in 12 countries. Effective September 1, 2018, its Outpatient Specialist insurance plan was extended to cover treatments related to mental, behavioural, psychiatric or psychological disorders.

*Ms Grace Yip, Managing Director, Head of Human Resources, Accenture ASEAN,* said, "We focus on enabling our employees to be their best and bring their whole self to work. Yet, we are working in a time when the rate of change is unprecedented. We recognise that we need to innovate ourselves, like we do for our clients every day, and improve the way our people work and live. As such, we have taken a multi-dimensional

look at helping our people succeed professionally and personally – to help them be physically energised, mentally focused, with a sense of purpose and belonging.”

## **(2) Dow Chemical Pacific (Singapore) Pte Ltd**

Dow Chemical Pacific (Singapore) Pte Ltd is an organisation whose employees have benefitted from the workplace adjustments implemented. Its employees have access to counselling services provided by its Employee Assistance Programme vendor, and can request for flexible work arrangements and workplace accommodation like acquiring or modifying equipment, or providing qualified reader or interpreters. This is in addition to the regular sessions and communications on health and wellness topics.

*Mr Paul Fong, Country Manager, Dow Singapore and Malaysia, said, “We provide ‘Quiet Rooms’ in our office sites in Singapore and Malaysia and these rooms are where employees can spend some private time to take naps, express breast milk, meditate or relax in quiet contemplation during their work hours. The feedback from employees is that these rooms have been well utilised and greatly appreciated.”*

## **(3) Hush TeaBar**

Social enterprise Hush TeaBar is completely run by a small team of differently-abled persons, including 3 persons in recovery from mental health conditions and 4 Deaf individuals – supported by a team of over 20 trained Deaf freelancers and volunteers. Working on a virtual team structure for flexibility and for members to have a sense of empowerment of their time and life, the team uses technology like WhatsApp to update on workplan and development. The social enterprise is also willing to implement job redesign for its employees, when required. Coaching support is also given to the employees.

*Mr Lewis Chen, Lead Partner (Experience, Operations & Finance), Hush TeaBar, diagnosed with depression and mild schizophrenia, went through two breakdown episodes while with Hush TeaBar. He was hired for a sales role that was customer-facing. After it was found that this role triggered his anxiety attacks from past work traumas, his role was re-designed to be in operations. His performance improved*

drastically and was promoted earlier this year. He also learnt to sign rather fluently and now leads the entire operations function of Hush TeaBar, including the Deaf team.

#### **(4) Johnson & Johnson Pte Ltd**

Johnson & Johnson Pte Ltd is a member of the Workwell Leaders Workgroup, and launched its internal Employee Resource Group – Mental Health Diplomats on World Mental Health Day this year. The initiative is a key step in building a more inclusive culture and opening minds to having conversations around mental health and wellbeing. In addition, Johnson & Johnson offers Employee Assistance & WorkLife programme. Easy access to confidential consultation, mental health and worklife tools and resources are available at all times by phone, web portal, phone app and on-site consultation.

Johnson & Johnson also partners many like-minded organisations to run events and initiatives that promote the mental health cause. Castles in the Air, for instance, is a platform to address public stigma towards mental health and define persons in recovery as artists in their own right. It is in support of Beyond the Label, and encourages open dialogue and discussions – emphasising that recovery is possible for persons with mental health conditions with treatment adherence and strong support networks.

#### **(5) Nexia TS Pte Ltd**

Nexia TS Pte Ltd aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for disclosure, adopt inclusive hiring practices and equip its staff with confidence and knowledge to better support persons with mental health conditions. Although this is its first participation in the mental health cause, Nexia TS already has in place allocation of counselling partners dedicated to each department and staggered lunch-hour flexibility and work from home policy. It also plans to organise lunchtime talks on mental health for all staff, as well as communication materials to staff to raise awareness of mental health conditions and how they can manage.



**(6) Oracle Corporation**

Cloud solution provider, Oracle promotes an inclusive working environment. Ms Deborah Seah supports the Oracle Marketing team, and is also a person in recovery from bipolar disorder and generalised anxiety disorder. She receives strong support from her supervisor and colleagues.

*Mr Sotis Dramalis, Vice President of Marketing, JAPAC, Oracle Corporation, said, “Deborah is an excellent staff who is on top of her work, despite the fast pace that we operate in. Diversity and inclusion is a particularly important aspect of Oracle’s culture, and we strongly believe in helping our staff develop their full potential. Our staff should receive the support they need.”*

The remaining employers are:

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| Ascendas Singbridge                               | NHG Diagnostics                                      |
| Aviva Ltd   | Nirvana Memorial Garden Pte Ltd                      |
| Bootstrap Beverages                               | Payboy Pte. Ltd.                                     |
| CaptionCube Pte. Ltd.                             | ProAge Pte Ltd                                       |
| Credit Suisse                                     | PwC Singapore  |
| DBS Bank Ltd                                      | RSVP Singapore The Organisation of Senior Volunteers |
| Dell EMC  | Sakae Holdings Ltd                                   |
| ELXR Pte Ltd                                      | Savoir Asia  |
| Emergenetics Caelan & Sage                        | Schroders  |
| Focus Management Services Pte Ltd.                | Silver Ribbon Singapore                              |
| Frasers Property Limited                          | Singapore Anglican Community Services                |
| Galaxy Insurance                                  | Singapore Association for Mental Health              |
| GEX Ventures Pte Ltd                              | Singapore Business Federation                        |
| Goldbell Foundation (Goldbell Group of Companies) | Singtel  |
| Institute of Mental Health                        | Social Collider                                      |
| J Rental Centre                                   | South West Community Development Council             |
| Mercer (Singapore) Pte Ltd                        | Spic & Span  |

Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth	Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre
Ministry of Social and Family Development	Swire Pacific Offshore Operations Pte Ltd
National Council of Social Service	Tan Tock Seng Hospital
National Healthcare Group Pharmacy	The China Navigation Company Pte Ltd
National Healthcare Group Polyclinics	The Mindful Company
National Healthcare Group Pte Ltd	T-Systems Singapore
National Skin Centre	UNFRAMED
National University Health System	UOB Limited
National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre	Woodlands Health Campus
Ngee Ann Polytechnic	Yishun Health