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**SPEECH BY MS ANITA FAM, PRESIDENT, NCSS**

**ON “IMPACT THROUGH INNOVATION”**

**AT THE SOCIAL SERVICE SUMMIT, 16 JULY 2019 AT MARINA BAY  
SANDS EXPO & CONVENTION CENTRE**

**Greeting**

1. Good morning Minister, partners, friends and colleagues. Thank you for making the time and joining us today at our Social Service Summit.

**Person-centred approach**

2. Don't you think that the earlier performance by Adelyn was astoundingly good? Please join me once again in showing our appreciation to her [AF claps here]. Adelyn's performance serves as a timely reminder that individuals should be seen and recognised for their strengths and abilities. Adelyn is an inspiration to all of us as she is empowered, dreams big and has never given up in spite of the challenges she has faced through the years. The empowerment of individuals so that they can be like Adelyn is central to the 4ST (ie, our Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts) where we share a common vision of “every person empowered to live with dignity in a caring and inclusive society”.

3. We are all here for the same purpose but in our different capacities - to serve the people and community, to enable them to achieve their fullest potential. The 4ST roadmap guides us to achieve that shared vision, and I am heartened to know that many of you have adopted this roadmap and are journeying with us towards achieving this.
  
4. The 4ST is undergirded by the fundamental understanding that we need to look at the needs of people holistically. This allows us to curate solutions which use a person-centred approach - in the way we work with service users, build organisational effectiveness and strengthen collaboration. The key to being more effective in what we do is not found in just running 'better' programmes, but in having a deeper understanding of the needs of our users. Once we are focused on understanding their needs, we can find different ways in improving the quality of their lives.

### **Impact through Innovation**

5. The theme of this year's Summit is 'Impact through Innovation.' Why did we choose this as our focus? When one thinks 'innovation', one naturally thinks that innovation belongs to the domain of the profit-driven world. This should not be the case. Innovation is just as critical for us in the non-profit space - even more so I feel as we face growing pressure to serve more people in need and to deliver measurable results with limited resources.
  
6. As society becomes increasingly complex and our needs evolve, our sector needs to reinvent itself and find new solutions to these challenges with limited resources. We need to have a more open mindset, be open to change and new ideas, to new

ways of doing things, and even to be open to ... failing. Innovation can change affordability, accessibility and effectiveness of practice and this can only be done if we have organisational alignment, ownership and an innovative culture.

7. Innovation efforts can be applied to programmes, products or devices, partnerships, fundraising, marketing and operating processes. Objectives too can vary broadly. Some of us may innovate to reduce a competitive disadvantage so that we can catch up with other organisations. Others of us may innovate to achieve disruptive change which can lead to a long term advantage and many of us may do so when driven by necessity because of manpower constraints and limited resources.
  
8. Innovation is a key challenge for our sector. From our recent Social Service Sector Survey conducted with 287 CEOs and Executive Directors, 26% of those surveyed indicated innovation as one of their agency's top three challenges. Most of the agencies shared that their top areas for desired improvement and lowest performing areas were in funding and engagement, career or capability development plans, innovation and collaboration. There are definitely opportunities for innovation and I would like to share three examples with you so that you get a sense of what innovation is and can be to our sector.

**Example 1 - Sree Narayana Mission - Empowering Seniors - Resident's Committee**

9. The Sree Narayana Mission believes that their Nursing Home residents are capable of making decisions and playing a greater role in the running of their

Nursing Home. They are not simply recipients of services but have been empowered to be 'co-decision makers' to co-deliver services. The residents have formed a 9-man committee where they hold town halls with residents to seek their views, and thereafter make recommendations to SNM's management team on their needs and desires with regard to meals, programmes and activities. This person-centred approach has seen a reduction in the residents' depressive symptoms and chemical restraints – which has significantly improved their quality of life.

## **Example 2 - HCSA Community Services - Empowering the Vulnerable through Training & Employment**

10. Another example is HCSA Community Services. HCSA launched the Academy Culinary Training Centre which offers a course based on the Food Service Skills framework by SkillsFuture Singapore.

11. With the tightening of the inflow of foreign workers, the launch of HCSA Academy to equip HCSA's service users and other vulnerable individuals with the relevant skills to secure gainful employment was a great opportunity to meet the manpower demand in the F&B industry, as well as to enable these individuals to attain financial independence, and reintegrate into society. As part of HCSA's 'Smart Village' digitization initiative, the Academy will embark on e-learning programmes with online courses and Augmented Reality. Through scheduled site visits to the workplace, job coaching and refresher & skills upgrading programmes, graduates are assured of smooth transition and constant guidance.

12. The Academy has also worked with other employer partners such as Marina Mandarin Singapore, Intercontinental Singapore, Accor Group, Parkway Health and Astons among others to help the trainees find sustained employment. Such collaboration in the ecosystem has created job opportunities for these trainees so that they can be gainfully employed and rebuild their lives to be filled with purpose and hope.

### **Example 3 – HealthServe Ltd – Effective Volunteer Management framework to Optimise Resources**

13. At the Summit last year, we discussed how the 3Ps (ie, the People, Private and Public sectors) could come together to tackle the resourcing constraints and challenges on a more sustainable basis.

14. One way to tackle the manpower shortages in our sector is to tap the ecosystem for manpower solutions. Volunteers are a great way to support social services. For example, HealthServe has more than 400 regular volunteers who serve disadvantaged migrant workers in Singapore through healthcare, counseling, casework, and social assistance. These are volunteers who dedicate a minimum of 24 volunteer-hours with at least 4 engagements in a year and come from all walks of life – from doctors to lawyers, housewives to students. In all, they clocked up more than 26,000 hours in 2018 which is equivalent to 13 full-time employees in HealthServe. That makes up more than 70% of their entire workforce strength of 17 which is most significant!

15. HealthServe has been using various technology solutions to connect, identify and appreciate their more active and committed volunteers which has contributed to their retention. One cannot underplay the value of enhancing our volunteer management capabilities within our sector which will help soften the impact of shortage in manpower.

16. You will be hearing more of these different innovation themes in our breakout tracks later today. Also, the Innovation Showcase in the Hibiscus Room features more than 50 partners who will share emerging ideas and the latest technology that can be applied to our sector.

17. For example, Xjera Labs, an IMDA accredited company which provides video analytics and facial recognition solutions. These solutions can be used to predict behavioral issues and alert staff in residential homes before fights break out as well as detect and alert staff of intruders, thereby saving time spent on monitoring CCTV screens. So far, 35 organisations from the private and public sector have benefited from these solutions.

18. We have intentionally designed today's programme so that you will have more time during your break to look at what has been showcased for you so please visit the Innovation Showcase and explore how you can use some of these innovative tech solutions.

## **Change starts with us – role of leadership in leading innovation**

19. As we continue to advocate for new ways of doing things, we must also recognise that leaders hold the key to harnessing the innovation potential in our agencies and in our sector. In order to do so, there are two main factors which have to be in place. First, there **must** be an innovation mindset within the organisation and secondly, there **must** be an alignment in the leadership, between the board and management.

20. As leaders, we can decide on one of two paths – one, that we do only what we are funded for, or two, that we do what we believe in, which may cost more than what we are funded for. If our desire is to do more for our service recipients than what we are funded for, then we need to be creative in figuring out how we can resource that part of the work which is not funded and that calls for an innovative mindset. That will allow us to think of how we can approach our challenges and limitations differently.

21. NCSS is committed to providing leadership and direction for our sector, and to journeying with you to strengthen the capabilities of your organisation so that you can do this. This has already started with the recent roll-out of the Tote Board Non-Profit Sector Transformation Initiative – Organisation Development Programme where effort has been made to enhance organisational capability with a focus on both OD and human capital initiatives.

22. To help assist in creating better alignment between board and management, we will also be starting a series of President - Chair Dialogues to engage board chairs

on key issues such as organisational alignment, resourcing our sector and the future of our sector. It is important for our leaders to re-think the way we lead as well as to have a forum where we can share our aspirations and challenges with one another. In this way, I hope that we can collectively shape a more vibrant social service ecosystem to meet the future needs of our sector.

23. To strengthen non-profit board leadership, the SID's Singapore Governance for Outstanding Organisation Directors or the 'S-GOOD' Programme in short, developed in collaboration with SSI, was recently launched in May. I strongly encourage all board members to sign up for the S-GOOD Programme as this programme will give you a deeper insight into developing good governance practices and to become more effective non-profit board members.

24. It is also important to differentiate the roles and responsibilities of board and the management so that we can achieve better organisational alignment. Boards should address broader, mission-focused activities, leaving the daily managerial activities to the CEO/ED and management. However, management should bring all relevant information to their board so that informed decisions on major issues can be made.

#### **NCSS 40-under-40**

25. There is one more element to this equation of innovation and leadership alignment - we need to future-proof our sector by adopting a longer term strategy when it comes to leadership development. Before I elaborate on our next initiative, let me do a poll here – how many of you are under the age of 40, please raise your hands.

26. I'm glad to see a sizable crowd of younger folks here because this is a clear and positive signal of your keen interest in finding out more and participating in these key issues of our sector. This next initiative is for you.

27. I am excited to announce the launch of the 'NCSS 40-under-40'. This is an amazing 3-day 2-night residential programme to be held in October this year. It aims to empower 40 people with promise under the age of 40 to contribute their voices to shaping our sector's future, build collegiality and leverage new-found connections to make change happen. Youth leaders from the social service, health, public and private sectors will engage with prominent figures including President Halimah Yacob up close, take part in leadership conversations and forge strong bonds with their fellow participants.

28. In order for our sector to continue doing our good work, it is important that we prepare, develop and groom current non-profit professionals for leadership roles in the future. It is necessary for us to use this generational shift to change the face of our sector and find new ways of fulfilling our missions and improving the community in smarter, faster, more cost-efficient and innovative ways. Success for us will be when we have facilitated a network of next generation leaders who work together and create impact for our future.

29. NCSS will share more information after this Summit. Meanwhile, you are most welcome to visit the NCSS booths on Tribe, GatherHere and Social Service

Leadership to find out more on what we are doing for our social service professionals.

30. Many of you may have read in recent media reports that the Commissioner of Charities (CoC) said that it would be providing “guidance” to charities which engage in non-charitable activities such as the setting up of business subsidiaries. This statement should not be construed that charities should not set up social enterprises at all. Rather, it recognises that some charities do have enterprises which either generate income to support their charitable activities or provide employment for their service users. The intent of this guidance and review, as pointed out by the CoC, is to protect the interests and assets of charities by guiding charity boards in their decision-making on whether to engage in business activities, and to ensure that proper governance is in place should they do so.

31. The key, therefore, is for charities to remain focused on their charitable purposes, be clear of their objectives and ensure high levels of transparency and accountability. It does not in any way preclude nor discourage the charities in our sector from running enterprises which have charitable purposes.

## **Closing**

32. In closing, I would like to emphasise the common purpose of using a holistic person-centred approach to achieving better outcomes for our service users. This requires us to re-think the way we plan and deliver services and be agents of change.

33. Many of you may be aware that NCSS will be using the term 'Social Service Agency' instead of 'voluntary welfare organisation' or 'VWO' from hereon as we believe that it is a more holistic representation of the purposeful work that is being done in and by our sector. Change is never easy. This is such an emotionally charged issue which I can deeply appreciate as I too have been part of this sector for more than two decades.

34. The dialogue on whether 'VWO' was an appropriate term to be used started as early as the 2016 Social Service Summit where we gathered feedback from many of you. There was broad agreement then that the term 'VWO' may not fully reflect what the sector is today, and what it can be in the future.

35. I recognise that many of us in our sector are deeply attached to the use of 'voluntary welfare organisation' or 'VWO' but it's time for us to more aptly describe ourselves as to who we are ... for we are neither just 'voluntary' in how we are staffed and we don't just do 'welfare' work. Today, we are agencies in the social service sector run by professionals, and together with volunteers including board members, are doing meaningful work which empowers the people whom we serve. Using the term 'social service agency' is therefore a broader, less limiting, more inclusive description of what we do now and will continue to do going forward.

36. Some of you may also think that "agency" is used to refer to government agencies. That is not so. In social science-speak, "agency" refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices. So, the change in terminology from "VWO" to "Social Service Agency" is in line with our sector's

transformation and aspiration to continue as agents of change, empowering lives and building a caring and inclusive Singapore. Though not mandated, we welcome all of you to join us in embracing this term as well.

37. We, in NCSS, wish to acknowledge and extend our deepest appreciation to those who have gone before us these past 60 years on uncharted paths to bring us to where we are today. A short video which we will be showing shortly will encapsulate much that has been done. We have certainly come a long way since and have much to be grateful for. Thank you to all of you who have been part of this journey and I look forward to being part of this journey ahead to build the future together with all of you.