

**OPENING SPEECH BY MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI
MINISTER OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
AT THE LAUNCH OF YEAR 3 OF BEYOND THE LABEL
ON THURSDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2020, AT 10AM OVER ZOOM**

Friends from Tote Board,
Social service and healthcare sectors,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1 A very good morning to you. I am glad to join you today as we launch the third edition of the Beyond the Label campaign. Through this movement, we want to break down the barriers of stigma that persons living with mental health conditions face. We want to encourage the public to understand and see them for who they are. Supporting them on their path towards recovery.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

2 When we first launched the campaign two years ago, it was a very different world. Singapore was advancing steadily on the strong foundations we had built – transforming our economy and strengthening our social compact. Suddenly, COVID-19 struck our shores and we found ourselves in a crisis of a generation. It was a challenging time for our nation and people. Everyone had to adapt to many new changes to tackle the health crisis.

3 The crisis had brought to the forefront the issue of mental health and wellness. People were anxious. They faced concerns about contracting the virus, losing their jobs and being socially isolated. Through a poll of more than 900 respondents, NCSS found that people were experiencing more psychological distress during the Circuit Breaker period. Especially those with a pre-existing mental health condition. More were also reaching out through the National CARE

Hotline and Belle – the Beyond the Label Helpbot set up to provide easy access to mental health resources and services.

4 As livelihoods are hit, we can expect mental health needs to rise as people grow increasingly anxious. To this end, we have taken steps to strengthen our ecosystem of support – across social and health domains – for persons with mental health conditions.

5 We set up a **Youth Mental Well-Being Network** earlier this year, even before the crisis hit us. We invited all who were keen to improve youth mental health well-being to join us. Over 1,000 individuals from all walks of life responded to the call. Working towards a common goal to provide better support for youth mental well-being.

6 Most recently, we launched **mindline.sg** in July. Through this convenient one-stop website, individuals can find resources to help them cope with stress and improve their well-being.

7 We are also working together with partners – across social and health sectors – to review policies and develop services to better support persons with mental health conditions.

BEYOND THE LABEL 2020

8 It is timely against the backdrop of the ongoing crisis, that we launch this year's edition of the Beyond the Label campaign.

9 We will focus this year's campaign on Singaporeans who may be facing socio-economic uncertainties and are under mental distress. We want to encourage people to be open to seeking and accepting help early, in order to develop mental fortitude to face life's stressors and challenges.

10 The short film which you will see shortly was directed by Mr Alvin Lee from Chuan Pictures, who is also a panellist today. It is a moving film which portrays the experience of a family facing job loss due to COVID-19 and how it took a toll on the caregiver's mental health. This is something that many can probably resonate with – having to come to terms with the loss of jobs and livelihoods, balancing caregiving duties, and adapting to the new normal. All of which can be extremely stressful. We want to encourage Singaporeans who face similar stressors to seek help early. With professional help and support from our families, we can overcome difficulties and improve our mental health.

11 NCSS has also lined up meaningful activities this weekend for the virtual Beyond the Label Fest. There will be a new interactive e-Escape room and a virtual concert featuring many of our popular local artistes. These activities provide an avenue for the public to understand the issue of stigma towards mental health conditions in a fun and meaningful manner. They also bring together individuals who are passionate about the mental health cause. I thank all our partners and the artistes for supporting the cause. and hope that more will join us.

12 I also want to give special mention to the individuals who will be sharing their stories of resilience as part of Beyond the Label. We will be hearing from Mr Jeremy Chan as he shares his personal experiences with us later. Jeremy, as well as many others, have shown great courage by stepping forward to tell their stories – assuring others that they are not alone, that they too can get better with help.

CONCLUSION

13 As individuals, we can also play our part. We can encourage those around us who are feeling anxious or stressed to seek help early. They may be loved ones, family members or co-workers. All of us play a part in building networks of support

in our community. Together, we can build a more resilient society and emerge stronger.

14 Thank you.