

**OPENING ADDRESS BY
MS LOW YEN LING, PARLIMENTARY SECRETARY FOR
MINISTRY OF TRADE & INDUSTRY AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
FOR SSI CAREER AND EDUCATION FAIR –
GROW YOUR FUTURE WITH THE SOCIAL SERVICE SECTOR
SATURDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2015**

Dr Ang Seng Bin
Vice President, NCSS

Mr Sim Gim Guan
Chief Executive Officer, NCSS

Mr Ng Cher Pong
Chief Executive, WDA

Friends from voluntary welfare organisations

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning. I am delighted to see many of you at SSI's Career and Education Fair today. Some of you are already working in the sector. About 70% of you are here to explore careers in the social service sector, coming from various backgrounds and industries.

Social Service Sector Plays an Important and Diverse Role

In my short 2 years of service in MSF, I had learnt a lot about the social service sector. I believe we will agree that our social service sector plays an important role in our social fabric. Our sector has a diverse range of professionals who provide services that are holistic, solutions that address immediate issues, and ways that help those who have fallen on

hard times get back on their feet. Our sector needs social workers, therapists and psychologists, and we also need social work assistants, associates, management and corporate professionals.

I encourage you to speak with VWO representatives present today to learn more about the meaningful work they do in our sector.

Upgrading opportunities in the sector

To strengthen our sector, MSF and NCSS have worked together with our sector to enhance capability and capacity. To recognise the value of our professional work, we have raised salary norms to be in line with the market. To uplift sector capability, we have increased accessibility to training opportunities. NCSS Social Service Institute, or SSI, is now an integrated hub for training, practice, resource and career services for the social service sector.

Today, I am excited to announce two further initiatives that provide training opportunities for new entrants and professionals in the sector.

(1) WSQ Advanced Certificate and WSQ Diploma in Social Service

First, we are launching a new Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) Advanced Certificate and WSQ Diploma in Social Service at SSI.

Over the past 1 year, MSF, WDA and SSI have worked closely together to refresh the course content of the Diploma and Higher Diploma in Social Service, so as to convert them onto the nationally-recognised WSQ system. Many sector professionals were consulted, and have contributed to the revision and validation of training materials. The then-President of the Singapore Association of Social Workers, Mr Alvin Chua, chaired an Industry Skills and Training Council which provided advice and endorsed the training content. I would like to thank our sector professionals and WDA for their efforts, which culminated in two

enhanced SSI programmes: the **WSQ Advanced Certificate** and **WSQ Diploma in Social Service**.

These new programmes will replace the existing Diploma in Social Service and Higher Diploma in Social Service. They will help social work assistants and associates hone their skills. Graduates from SSI's WSQ Diploma for Social Service can subsequently apply to take up the Bachelor of Social Work at UniSIM.

The first intake for SSI's WSQ Advanced Certificate and Diploma is in February 2016, and I am pleased to announce that applications will open from today.

(2) SkillsFuture for the Social Service Sector

The social service sector is one of the key sectors under **SkillsFuture**, a national movement to provide Singaporeans with opportunities to develop to their fullest potential throughout life, regardless of their educational starting point.

The second initiative I am pleased to announce, is that NCSS will be opening up applications for the new **SkillsFuture Study Awards for the social service sector**. These Study Awards will empower you to in develop and deepen your skills, so as to maximise your potential. Study Award recipients can look forward to receiving \$5000 to fund course fees and other out-of-pocket costs, such as course materials, subsistence and transport.

To give a greater push towards industry-readiness, the Study Award can be used for the new WSQ Advanced Certificate and Diploma which I announced earlier. I encourage you to find out more details at SSI's booth at the fair today.

As a Singaporean, you will also be able to look forward to receiving the **SkillsFuture Credits** early next year. We hope you can use the SkillsFuture Credits to apply for SSI courses. For those who are considering a career in the sector, use the credits to go for courses to learn more about the sector. If you are already in the sector, I hope you will also make full use of your credits to sharpen your skills and maximise your potential.

In one of my parliamentary speeches a few years ago, I talked about the need to future-proof Singaporeans who are aged 40 and above. I also raised the issue of ageism. I am glad to now say that mid-career Singaporeans, aged 40 and above will enjoy **higher subsidies for WDA-funded courses** from this month. The increased subsidies will apply to SSI courses. In addition to the groups I have already mentioned, the increased subsidies will support those of you here today who are considering a mid-career switch, after having spent some time in other industries and now finding a calling in our sector.

WDA will announce further details of these SkillsFuture initiatives in due course. I encourage all of you to seize these opportunities to deepen the skills that would help you to serve better, and advance in your careers.

Lifelong learning is key to our continued growth as an individual, family and a nation. Lifelong learning means that even as we embark on our careers, we also continue to be developed through training and education. Government will not only support you in your lifelong learning, but also ensure that our social service sector is one which is dynamic, professional and attractive.

I invite you to come on board this meaningful journey with us. As we prepare to meet Singapore's future social needs, may you also *grow your future with the social service sector!*

Thank you.

