

**WELCOME REMARKS BY BENJAMIN WILLIAM,
SINGAPORE RED CROSS SECRETARY GENERAL/CEO,
AT LAUNCH OF RED CROSS COMMUNITY HEALTH ON WHEELS
| TAMPINES WEST COMMUNITY CLUB | 29 JULY 2018 |**

Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister for the Environment and Water Resources
and Member of Parliament for Tampines GRC

Mr Seah Moon Ming, Chairman of SMRT Corporation

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good afternoon. Thank you for your presence here today, as we launch a new service to augment our already expanding framework of services for the vulnerable amongst us. I especially wish to thank Minister Masagos for his fervent and consistent support for the community work of the Singapore Red Cross.

About two years ago, we shared with SMRT our idea of a vehicle that could make ancillary services more accessible to the elderly. In the course of providing our other humanitarian services, we realised that many vulnerable and needy persons were missing out on important therapy and other ancillary services. We wanted a service that can rove around Singapore and bring customised care to people in different neighbourhoods. At that time, SMRT was looking to fund specially equipped vehicles as a *Gift of Mobility* to the elderly and persons with disabilities. This was when the idea of “Community Health on Wheels” was planted and took root.

In recent years, more and more elderly persons are living alone, and this number is growing rapidly. Today, we understand there are about 47,000 seniors living on their own. We are told this will increase to 90,000 in ten years. Three in four Singapore residents aged 65 and above are affected by diabetes, high cholesterol or hypertension, or a combination of three. Given the many challenges they face, many neglect ancillary services such as wound care or therapy or the prevention of chronic illnesses. They are more concerned about putting food on the table. It's also difficult for some to visit the polyclinics or hospitals. So we want to bring such healthcare services to them.

As an organisation dedicated to the support for vulnerable persons, the Singapore Red Cross wants to do all it can to help our seniors live well and healthy lives. It is with this in mind that we are launching the *Community Health on Wheels*. The idea is simple. We want to augment the current primary healthcare framework for the elderly, and play a part in managing medical conditions such as chronic and acute illnesses. We hope to provide the continuum of care to improve the quality of life for our seniors.

Apart from Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy, *Community Health on Wheels* will offer BMI Measurement, Falls Risk Assessment, Cognitive Assessment, Health Education and Counselling. We will also look into the psychological well-being of clients and caregivers, and provide social support in referrals for other Red Cross services such as *TransportAid*, *ElderAid* or *FoodAid*. For the rest of the year, we are committed to bring *Community Health on Wheels* to residences,

family service centres and places of worship. When the operations are fully mature we will be reaching thousands of elderly and vulnerable persons every year.

At the heart of *Community Health on Wheels* are some 60 Red Cross volunteers from nursing, allied health, social work and psychosocial backgrounds. They belong to our professional volunteer networks - respectively the *Nurses Network*, *Social Work Network* and *Allied Health Network*. Together, all our volunteers have been trained and are committed to scale up operations across weekends and public holidays, so as to maximize the outreach to our elderly all over the island.

Mr Oslee Kwang is one such example. As part of our Nurses Network, Oslee oversees *Community Health on Wheels* operations. He shared that his very first health screening was “a mix of excitement and nervous anticipation”. After months of planning and numerous meetings, the event went smoothly. He shared that it was a fulfilling experience not only for the elderly clients, but also for the volunteers and organising committee members.

Today, about 60 SMRT staff volunteers and 30 Singapore Red Cross volunteers are also here to support the community that they serve. They have been helping out with the launch event’s planning, preparations, befriending and supporting our seniors, as well as bringing Go Bags (emergency preparedness kits) to the homes of single elderly. Let’s give all the volunteers a round of applause for their commitment and selfless service.

This is just one part of a jigsaw. The HealthAid vision of Singapore Red Cross is to work with the community to strengthen support for the vulnerable within, and more importantly built resilient communities in Singapore. We want to help our

seniors live their golden years, confident that they live in a safe and friendly environment, and grow old in their own community, with all the support they need.

I wish to thank SMRT Corporation and its CSR team for believing in our vision, and for sponsoring the vehicle. I look forward to growing our partnership for humanity. Thank you.