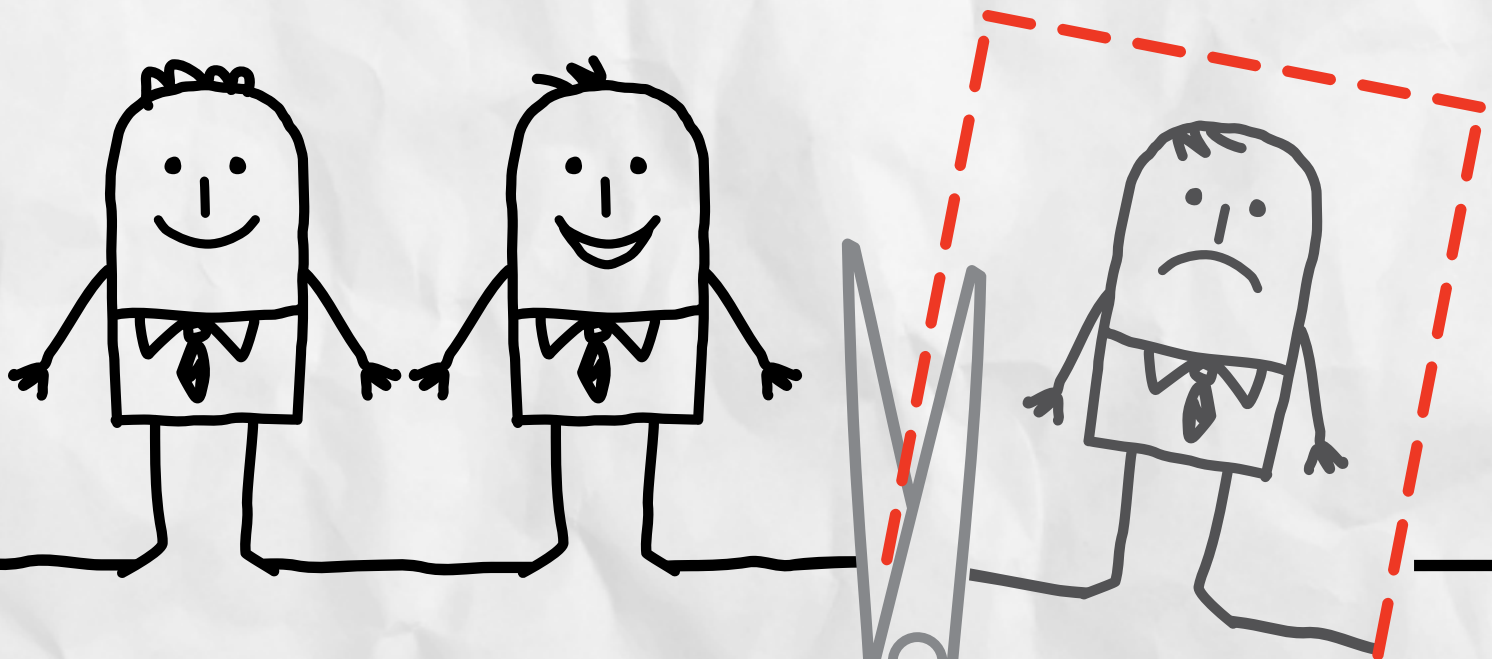


## SHARPENING SUPPORT FOR THE DISPLACED



Heard about the new requirement for employers with at least 10 workers to report the retrenchment of five workers or more? Ahead of it taking effect from 1 January next year, we find out what unions and tripartite partners have to say.

**PLUS:** *How does the Labour Movement step in when there is a retrenchment? Details on page 4 and 5.*

# TOP STORIES



**7 Subsidy for Seafarers Lodging**  
SMOU's newly-launched Seafarers' Accommodation Scheme aims to lessen shipping companies' financial load when they provide lodging for their seafaring officers.



**10 Better Standards in WSH**  
Singapore Institution of Safety Officers launches a professional standard to enhance the competencies and status of WSH practitioners, and uphold high standards in the industry.



**11 Grooming Master Chefs**  
NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) and Singapore Chefs Association ink MOU to mould a new breed of culinary talent.



**13 Face 2 Face with Joshua Benjamin**  
Union of Telecoms Employees of Singapore General Treasurer Joshua Benjamin shares the importance of workplace safety and what the union has done to improve it.

# Reporting Layoffs

The process of companies reporting retrenchment exercises to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) is set to be tightened.

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**

**F**rom 1 January 2017, employers who hire at least 10 workers must inform MOM within five working days after issuing the retrenchment notice to the fifth employee if five or more are retrenched within any six-month period. This new regulation comes under the Workforce Singapore Agency Act.

Presently, MOM gathers information about retrenchments through its quarterly survey of all companies with at least 25 employees.

Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say explained that currently, the vast majority of companies either do not notify the Ministry when they

conduct a retrenchment exercise or wait till the quarterly survey to furnish such information.

"With this mandatory reporting on retrenchments, we don't have to wait till the end of the quarter to know what has happened," said Mr Lim.

Failure to notify within the required time frame is an offence and those convicted may be fined up to \$5,000.

Details of the announcement were released in a statement issued by MOM, NTUC and Singapore National Employers Federation on 25 November 2016.

## AT A GLANCE

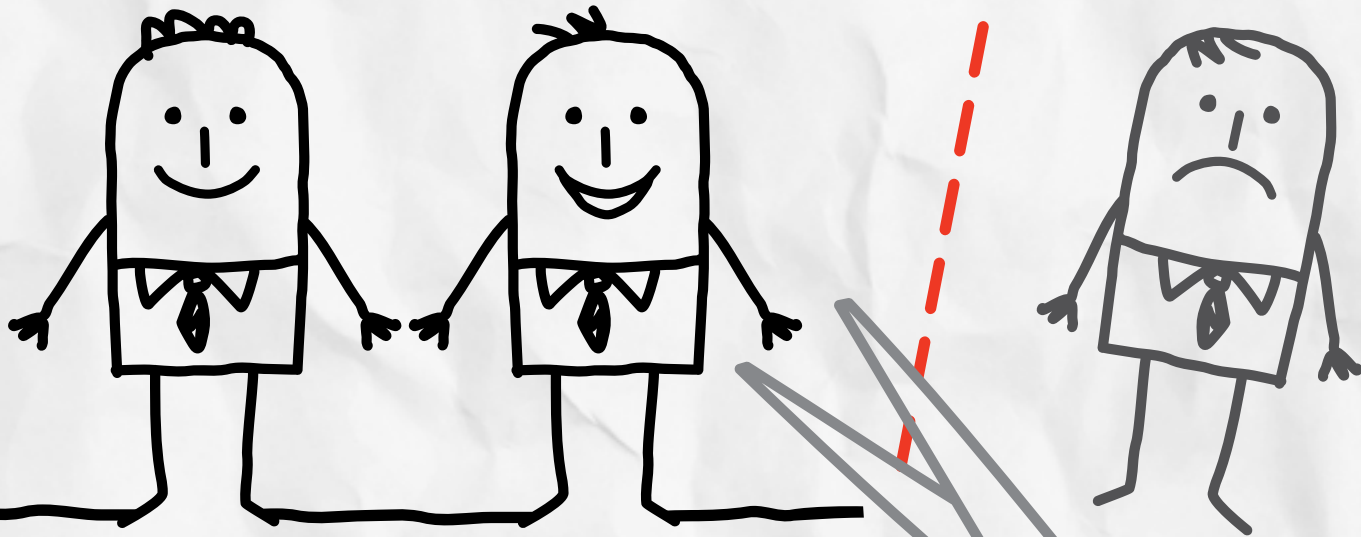
### Retrenchment Notifications

FROM 1 JANUARY 2017

Employers with at least **10** employees must notify Ministry of Manpower if **5** or more employees are retrenched within a **6**-month period.

Notification must be submitted within **5** working days after the employee is notified of his/her retrenchment.

NTUC and e2i can provide timely job placement assistance to affected workers.



# Responses to Mandatory Retrenchment Reporting

*NTUC This Week* talks to various parties to find out what they think about the new requirement that comes into effect from the beginning of next year.

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**

**P**roviding faster career support for retrenched workers – that is the aim of the recently-announced mandatory reporting of retrenchment, said Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say.

He stressed that the Government is concerned about how the long term unemployment rate in Singapore is creeping up and the re-entry rate has been coming down.

According to the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) Labour Market Advance Release for the third quarter of 2016, some 4,100 workers were retrenched between July and September this year.

Though the numbers were less than the previous quarter, they were more than the 3,460 laid off for the same period in 2015.

Minister Lim added that increasingly, retrenchments will not just affect rank-and-file workers but professionals, managers, executives and technicians as well.

## **SUPPORT FOR THE AFFECTED**

To help affected workers, the Taskforce for Responsible Retrenchment and Employment Facilitation made up of representatives from MOM, Workforce Singapore, NTUC and NTUC's

e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) have been rolling out various programmes.

From January to September 2016, career services centres run by e2i and Workforce Singapore have helped 18,300 jobseekers and placed 11,400 of them in jobs.

"Through e2i's expertise in career coaching, job matching and its wide network of partners, we can help workers upgrade their skills competencies in a targeted way.

"We also hope to equip individuals with the latest industry knowledge to enhance their employability," said e2i's Chief Executive Officer Gilbert Tan.

## **TRIPARTITE REACTIONS**

Tripartite partners welcomed the move, with some mixed reactions about the number of employees in the provisions.

"It will be better if employers report any retrenchment to MOM without stipulating a number. Now it is five, many will try to circumvent it. Some employers may retrench four at a time," said NTUC Vice-President and General Secretary of the United Workers of Petroleum Industry (UWPI) K Karthikeyan.

The Singapore National Employers

Federation (SNEF) added: "Our main concern is that smaller companies may find it difficult to keep tabs on retrenchment over a period of time as the administrative procedure is onerous. The exemption of companies with less than 10 employees will help to address this concern."

There have also been some good practitioners, shared the General Secretary of the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union (FDAWU) Tan vHock Soon.

"In a few recent cases, companies have informed us ahead of the required notice period of one month. They gave us three to six months' notice.

"In one case, a company retrenching gave us one and a half years notice to allow us to plan and gather the agencies to assist the affected workers," said Mr Tan.

As for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), NTUC Assistant-Secretary General and Director of U SME Secretariat Yeo Guat Kwang said it is working with NTUC's Industrial Relations Department on proposed guidelines for the U SME partners on the latest MOM requirement.

# Springing into Action

*NTUC This Week* goes behind the scenes to find out how the Labour Movement reaches out to help workers affected by a retrenchment exercise.

Story and Photos by **Jonathan Tan**



Industrial relations officers like Michelle Ong (left) and employability coaches like Celina Koh (right) will ensure that the welfare of affected workers are prioritised.

**R**etrenchment is a dreaded word no worker hopes to ever hear over the course of his or her career. Should it ever become a reality, the Labour Movement is well poised to respond.

Working together, NTUC's industrial relations officer (IROs), its affiliated unions and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) are always on standby to help affected workers bounce back and re-enter the workforce as quickly as possible.

## LEADING THE FRONT

Should retrenchment of workers become the last resort for a company, the foremost priority of a union is the welfare of all the workers involved. Upon notice of an impending exercise, IROs will work together with the union and management to look into how the affected workers can be helped. Simultaneously, NTUC's industrial relations department (IRD) will track the exercise.

"No matter how deep our relationship with the company is, one of the first few things we'll talk about is the retrenchment benefit quantum. I will arrange for a meeting with the company's management as soon as possible to see what the company can share with us, and check that the payments are all in place," shared Michelle Ong, a senior IRO with the Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Employees' Union. She has experienced 10 retrenchment exercises in her career spanning five years.

Payments include retrenchment benefits, annual wage supplement, leave encashment and possible ex gratia for union members only. Considerations for these depend on industry norms, the company's financial situation and tripartite guidelines.

"What's key," shared Michelle, "is having the retrenchment benefits locked down because in today's economic setting, it can take between six to nine months for a displaced worker to find a new job.

"Our role is to ensure that workers are compensated fairly. For the job search aspect, we will also do our part for them through internal referrals to other unions and companies who have opportunities."

To enable IROs like Michelle to better assist the workers, the Tripartite Guidelines on Managing Excess Manpower and Responsible Retrenchment recommends that unionised companies should consult their union as early as possible ahead of any retrenchment exercise.

Concurrently, Michelle will also inform e2i about the upcoming retrenchment exercise so that they can tailor the support for the affected workers.

"The toughest part is when things fall through the cracks," said Michelle, citing her first case where the retrenchment benefits were less than ideal. The workers had only received two months of compensation regardless of their length of service. Follow-up negotiations enabled the union to secure additional compensation for members.

"When things are better organised, such as having retrenchment benefits pre-agreed upon in a collective agreement, it would be easier to negotiate," she said.

For every retrenchment exercise the unions handle, all the details surrounding the company, numbers of affected workers and reasons for the retrenchment are logged and tracked by IRD to enable both NTUC and its affiliated unions to better understand their respective industries.

## PILLAR OF SUPPORT

e2i senior employability coach Celina Koh said that one of the key messages she shares with workers during a retrenchment exercise is that they are not alone.

"We are there for them. Even if they are not ready to look for a new job right now, our doors are always open to support their needs," said Celina.

As part of the support, e2i officers will first conduct a group presentation for affected workers, followed by individual sessions with an employment coach for those who may need more emotional support.

The presentation covers topics such as the economic outlook, different types of assistance available at e2i, and how job search skills can help workers quickly find a new job.

"Our team's average response time to a retrenchment exercise is within one working day. However, with an advanced lead time, e2i officers will be able to better develop customised retrenchment kits for the workers," shared Celina.

Besides giving out kits containing flyers for job fairs and information about services, e2i may also plan employability skills programmes for the recently retrenched workers.

"For workers who have registered with us, we will check in with them on whether they have found a job, or if they need any help, support or training. Officers may also contact these workers

about upcoming events that are suitable for their job search," she said.

## Helping Workers Through Retrenchment

### Union Action

- ▶ Upon receiving notice of a retrenchment exercise, NTUC's Industrial Relations Department will log the case and note the company's name, the intended period for the retrenchment exercise, reasons for the exercise and number of workers likely to be affected.
- ▶ The union's industrial relations officers (IROs) will engage the company to negotiate retrenchment benefits and plan for the assistance that can be rendered to the affected workers.
- ▶ Concurrently, union and IROs will share the worker profiles with NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) so that targeted assistance can be rendered.
- ▶ Companies should inform the union as early as possible if they intend to carry out a retrenchment exercise. This will enable the union and e2i to render assistance to the affected workers faster.

### e2i's Support

- ▶ Upon receiving news of a retrenchment exercise, e2i officers will work closely with the union and its IROs to coordinate arrangements for support.
- ▶ At the same time, e2i officers will customise retrenchment kits with relevant collaterals for affected workers.
- ▶ A group engagement session will be done on site, followed by one-to-one career coaching.
- ▶ Affected workers can register for career coaching or employability skills training during the session, or when they are ready.
- ▶ e2i will subsequently check in with registered workers on the progress of their job search and share details about upcoming events.

**i** NTUC members with queries regarding retrenchment can contact NTUC's Membership department at **6213 8008**.

# Career Help in Central

NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) ventures into the heart of Toa Payoh to open up its second career services centre.

By **Jonathan Tan**



Offering a comprehensive suite of services spanning job matching, professional development and career guidance, NTUC's e2i is a one-stop location for working Singaporeans and job seekers looking for career support.

To reach out to more people, e2i set up e2i central on 1 October 2016 in Toa Payoh at HDB Hub Biz Three. This follows its first career services centre in Jurong East called e2i west.

Here is a list of services you will find at the new 800sqm e2i central:

- Career Coaching
- Masterclasses
- Industry skills upgrading classes
- Employability skills workshops
- Jobs Bank Connect (An online portal)
- SkillsFuture Credit Connect (An online portal)
- Career Fairs
- Professional Job Searches
- Place-and-Train Programmes

For more information, **visit [e2i.com.sg](http://e2i.com.sg)**.



## GOOD TO KNOW

### e2i central

HDB Hub Biz Three  
490 Lorong 6 Toa Payoh, #07-11  
Singapore 310490

### e2i west

Devan Nair Institute for Employment and Employability  
80 Jurong East Street 21, Level 2  
Singapore 609607

### Operating hours

Mon - Fri: 9:00am - 5:00pm  
Sat: 9:00am - 1:00pm  
Sun & PH: Closed

# Lunar New Year Corporate Packages 2017

Being part of the **NTUC Family**, fostering growth and close collaboration is one of our missions. As we usher in the Year of the Rooster, Unions and Social Enterprises can enjoy special corporate packages with fortuitous feasts and happy reunions when you host your corporate meetings and events at Orchid Country Club.

## Lunar New Year Lunch Package

From \$708+/table (Min. 10 Tables) | From \$658+/table (Min. 40 Tables)

### Packages include:

- Choice of exquisite Lunar New Year menus (Muslim and Vegetarian menus available)
- Free flow of soft drink and Chinese tea
- One (1) complimentary bottle of house wine per table
- One (1) 22.7-litre complimentary barrel of beer for min. 12 tables guaranteed or two (2) 22.7-litre complimentary barrel of beer for min. 40 tables guaranteed
- Complimentary parking and shuttle bus service from Yishun MRT Station

### Optional:

22.7 litre barrel beer \$595\* (15% discount for min. purchase of three barrels)  
House Wine 15% discount with min. purchase of 24 bottles

Package is valid from 4 January 2017 to 11 February 2017.

Prices are based on 10 persons per table, and subject to prevailing government taxes. Terms & conditions apply.

## Lunar New Year Dinner Package

From \$738+/table (Min. 10 Tables) | From \$708+/table (Min. 40 Tables)

Waiver of  
**10%**  
service charge

To enquire and book your next event at Orchid Country Club, please call our Sales & Marketing Team at **6750 2166** or email **s&m@orchidclub.com** and quote '**NTWB12**'

## Human Capital Singapore CEO shares insights on the role of human resource when it comes to retrenching responsibly.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

**D**uring a retrenchment, human resource practitioners have a responsibility to do justice to both management and workers within an organisation. According to Human Capital Singapore (HCS) CEO Ho Geok Choo, this comes by putting ethical retrenchment practices in place.

HCS has been a U Associate of NTUC since 14 September 2015.

Mdm Ho said: "Very often, companies facing business difficulty first retrench lower performing employees. We can't really blame them for doing that because when you have to look at who has to go first then, of course, the employees who are performing will get to stay rather than those who are not.

"But being a professional function, HR has to ensure certain ethical practices are put in place when it comes to the release of workers."

### GOOD HR PRACTICES

According to her, the company must first exhaust all other options when it makes its decision to retrench.

"HR practitioners need to constantly counsel and coach weaker performers in the company. And only after exhausting all avenues to help weaker employees to improve their performance, only then can companies justify the release of these workers," she said.

To do this, HR should keep track of employees' performance even before a looming retrenchment.

Another good practice would be for HR to come up with programmes to manage the emotions of affected employees.

"Very often affected workers would ask themselves, 'why me and not the other person?', and it becomes difficult to tell them that it is because they did not perform.

"But if you as an HR practitioner have implemented initiatives to keep track of performances and have been upfront in helping to coach and counsel weaker employees, then the notice of their release would not be as painful because the news would not take them by surprise," said Mdm Ho.

### IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYABILITY

She also said that HR should help ensure that the affected employees remain employable after being released.

"HR should not just give the affected employees a retrenchment package and that's it. Money, when not put to good use, disappears very fast.

"HR should put in place programmes to help affected employees to manage their finances responsibly, help them reskill and manage their

# Ethical Practices

expectations when it comes to looking for new employment," she said.

On helping displaced employees, she added: "HR cannot be isolated from the bigger marketplace. If an HR practitioner is well connected, he or she will know places where displaced workers can find new employment."

### FAIR CONDITION

Calling it a fair condition, Mdm Ho also touched on the new requirement where employers must inform the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) within five working days

after issuing a retrenchment notice to the fifth employee if five or more are retrenched within a six-month period.

"No organisation works in isolation in the industry. Their actions will impact the economy. Informing MOM and also the union early can help us to very quickly turn displaced employees into employable workers. That kind of cooperation is important for the Singapore workforce," said Mdm Ho.

Moving forward, HCS is looking to further work with NTUC to help remove the stigmatisation of displaced workers.

“No organisation works in isolation in the industry. Their actions will impact the economy. Informing MOM and also the union early can help us to very quickly turn displaced employees into employable workers. That kind of cooperation is important for the Singapore workforce.”





The Seafarers' Accommodation Scheme (SAS) aims to help shipping companies provide their officers with quality lodging at Seacare Hotel at subsidised rates.

# Looking After Shipping Companies and Seafarers

**SMOU launches a new scheme that helps shipping companies save on accommodation costs for their seafaring officers.**

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

**A**s the shipping industry is currently facing a cyclical downturn, the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) has stepped forward to lend a helping hand to Singapore shipping companies that have a Collective Agreement (CA) with the union.

The help comes in the form of 6,000 subsidised hotel rooms at Seacare Hotel for the next two years to help shipping companies lessen their financial load.

Called the Seafarers' Accommodation Scheme (SAS), the \$300,000 scheme will allow shipping companies to provide quality lodging at subsidised rates for their officers. The officers are required to present vouchers provided by SMOU to redeem their stay at the hotel.

## **QUALITY, AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE**

The SAS was announced by NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing (pictured above, right) at SMOU's 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner on 25 November 2016.

Speaking to some 1,400 guests at the dinner, SG Chan said: "Today I'm happy that SMOU is initiating the SAS. It's a pilot scheme to help our seafarers to have quality, affordable and accessible accommodation in Singapore. It's a scheme that draws on the funds and savings of SMOU over all these years to give back to our seafarers to take care of them when times are tough. Our seafarers are at the core of what we do and it is only right that we care for them."

Currently, shipping companies pay for their seafaring officers' lodging when they are required to sign off a ship or for training in Singapore.

## **FINANCIAL RELIEF**

According to SMOU, the SAS will ensure that shipping companies get a form of financial relief so that the welfare of seafaring officers is not compromised.

Speaking in the capacity of the general secretary of SMOU, NTUC President Mary Liew said: "The current shipping industry is facing some headwinds and is going through a cyclical downturn. Therefore, it is important that our union continues to rally around and proactively come up with creative and yet practical ways to help the shipping companies overcome this tough period."

Shipping companies such as Tai Chong Cheang Steamship (S) Pte Ltd called the SAS an initiative that ensures "a win-win situation for both the shipping company and seafarers."

The company's director, Captain William Tan, said: "This subsidy comes as a welcome move amidst the shipping situation now, and it will assure our officers of reasonable accommodation option after they sign off in Singapore."

Besides the SAS, SMOU announced earlier this year a \$1.5 million contribution to shipping companies who have a CA with the union for them to continue their shipboard welfare and training for seafaring officers.



Today, Singapore is home to more than 5,000 maritime establishments that employ over 170,000 people. The maritime industry contributes 7 per cent to Singapore's Gross Domestic Product.

## **SMOU CONTRIBUTES TO NETF**

The Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) raised some \$650,000 this year that will be contributed to the NTUC Education and Training Fund (NETF).

Of the amount, \$250,000 was raised through a fundraising golf event that took place on 25 October 2016 at Orchid Country Club. The remaining \$400,000 was approved by the SMOU executive committee.

Making the announcement at the SMOU 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner on 25 November 2016, NTUC President and SMOU General Secretary Mary Liew said: "SMOU is always a firm believer in training and skills upgrading of our members, for these enable them to add value to their work."

"Even during the shipping slowdown, we organised a charity golf for the NETF. Through this, members receive a helping hand to stay competitive so that when the economy picks up, they will be ready to ride the waves."

# The Men Behind Optimus Prime

NTWU Executive Secretary Melvin Yong shares his thoughts on the problems Singapore prime mover drivers face and the steps the union can take to help them.

By **Ryan Chan**



**T**he National Transport Workers' Union (NTWU) is often associated with workers in the public transport industry, but many may not be aware that the union also represents operators of prime movers.

Prime movers are heavy-duty vehicles that transport containers loaded with goods for industrial use.

Following several rounds of ground engagements, NTWU Executive Secretary Melvin Yong recently had the opportunity to shadow a veteran prime mover driver on the job. Sharing his observations in his blog post titled 'The Men Behind Optimus Prime' on [labourbeat.org](http://labourbeat.org), Mr Yong summarised three key problems that these drivers faced: traffic summons and parking, physical health and pay.

## TRAFFIC SUMMONS AND PARKING

The number of articulated vehicles – those with a permanent or semi-permanent pivot joint – such as prime movers, have grown from 3,600 in 2005 to 5,400 in 2015. However, drivers told Mr

Yong that the number of heavy vehicle depots – known as yards – have fallen from 50 in the 1980s to less than 30 today.

There are often long queues to park these vehicles, which cause long hours of waiting and traffic to spillover to the roads. As a result of the latter, drivers often receive traffic summons for obstruction.

"NTWU urges the related stakeholders to review the queue systems at the yards to enhance effectiveness and efficiency. For a start, we can perhaps look at how the ports in Singapore function and see if we can adapt some best practices for use at the yard. We also call for leniency in issuing traffic summons, especially if the circumstances are beyond their control. These drivers are merely doing their jobs," he said.

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

Mr Yong also observed that due to parking constraints, drivers' meal times are affected. To counter this, he said the union will explore the feasibility of designing parts of industrial areas

for heavy vehicle parking. They will also appeal to the relevant authorities for parking lots to be located nearer to residential estates and MRT stations.

Aside from irregular mealtimes, going to the toilet is not as simple for these drivers. A more efficient queue system would allow more time for drivers to have their meals and visit the loo.

Mr Yong also suggested that the yards set up cafeterias or mobile canteens in proximity. NTWU will also be appealing to management partners to conduct an annual health screening for these workers.

## PAY

Prime mover drivers are paid on a per-trip basis. The more trips a driver makes, the more he earns. Mr Yong expressed concern for such a wage structure, citing a lack of income certainty for these workers.

He noted that this puts pressure on drivers to make more trips in a bid to take home a higher pay. This may lead to road safety being compromised, affecting not just the drivers but also other road users.

Mr Yong said: "We need to review the pay structure for our prime mover drivers and explore the possibility of having a fixed monthly pay element. The union will be engaging our management partners to do such a review."

**LABOURBEAT** 

Read the full post 'Melvin Yong: The Men Behind Optimus Prime' on [bit.ly/2gnJS9v](http://bit.ly/2gnJS9v).

# PRIME Mover

Driving a truck that's some 3m tall and 2.6m wide, with a trailer spanning between 20 to 45ft and weighing approximately 4 tons is no easy task. Mohd Jonid takes us behind the giant steering wheel.

by **Jonathan Tan**

Mohd Jonid has been a prime mover driver for more than 35 years. Besides driving the vehicle, other responsibilities include ensuring that the containers he carries are properly documented.



Just the sheer thought of having to manoeuvre it around the tight confines of Singapore's roads will have the best drivers among us sweating buckets. However, for 56-year-old Mohd Jonid, it's all in a day's work.

"New drivers will find the tall height very *shio*k, but after a while, it's all the same," shared the 35-year veteran driver.

A National Transport Workers' Union (NTWU) branch official, Jonid spends between eight to 14 hours a day for five and a half days a week behind the wheel of these behemoths.

A typical day on the job sees Jonid report to his company's logistics facility in Jurong to pick up his vehicle, a Swedish-made Scania P 360 truck.

## IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Prime mover drivers are paid according to the number of trips they make each day.

"As a driver, we could be deployed to any one of the company's warehouses to pick up containers and send them to various yards. We must also prepare the documentation for the containers we carry and present it to the yard counter," said Jonid.

"Most times it's a round trip, where we would drop off a container and pick another up from the same place," explained Jonid. For his company, these return journeys count as two trips.

## TACKLING THE JOB

"It is difficult at the start, but you get used to it. There are many different types of containers, but this depends on you, how you drive, and your skill. The controller will usually match the job to a driver with the right skill.

"For me, if it's difficult, I'll slowly take my time and tackle the job. I will make sure never to endanger anyone else. You can't think that just because you are operating a large vehicle, you have the right of way. A driver must be disciplined and your mindset must prioritise the safety of others. You have to be aware of the risks and be careful with the container you are carrying," shared Jonid.

## OTHER CHALLENGES

Besides the difficulties of the job itself, drivers like Jonid also have to grapple with long queues at the container yards. Describing it as the luck of the assignment draw, Jonid shared that waiting times can sometimes stretch up to three hours per trip.

The opportunity cost here? Less chances to earn more with additional trips.

Compounding matters further, these drivers grapple with Land

“A driver must be disciplined and your mindset must prioritise the safety of others. You have to be aware of the risks and be careful with the container you are carrying.”

Transport Authority officers who might warn or fine them for obstruction of traffic, or related traffic offences such as leaving a vehicle engine running while it is stationary. Drivers are liable to pay for these fines out of their own pocket.

Toilet and meal breaks, too, can be tricky when he is on a job, with little opportunity to leave his vehicle for these essential needs.

"Other drivers might cut your queue as you wait, and sometimes when you get to the counter, the booking might be incomplete with missing details. These things happen. Any wrong or incomplete detail in the booking documentation would mean that the yard won't release the container," shared Jonid.

## WORK CULTURE

He shared that he has seen his company grow through the years from getting small jobs to bigger and bigger ones.

"The company treats us well; they pay on time, and the conditions have been fair and reasonable," he added.



Jonid having a light moment while waiting his turn to pick up a container from a yard.

# Aiming for High Standards

Singapore Institution of Safety Officers becomes the first among 41 U Associates to launch a professional standard.

By **Shukry Rashid**

Available in a booklet form, the Singapore Institution of Safety Officers (SISO) Professional Standard for Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Professionals aims to enhance the competencies and status of WSH practitioners, and uphold high standards in the industry.

The standard was launched at Fullerton Hotel on 30 November 2016. It comes after NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing called on industry leaders during a dialogue session in June 2016 to professionalise industry standards.

The standard also came through after SISO tapped on the Labour Movement's extensive network of unions, enterprises and professional guilds.

SISO President Bernard Soh said: "The WSH profession in Singapore will value-add and play a more significant role in our nation's drive towards achieving Vision Zero."

The Vision Zero movement was launched by the National WSH Campaign in April 2015 to rally everyone to be healthy and prevent injuries at work.

## BENCHMARK FOR OTHERS

The professional standard provides a progressive career ladder and growth roadmap for the WSH profession. For example, it stipulates the key purpose and complexity of each role – from WSH officers to general managers – and the qualifications, knowledge and skills needed.

The standard also acts as a skills benchmark, to align the profession with that of similar local and international organisations.

SG Chan, who was the guest of honour at the launch, hopes to see similar standards being applied to other professions such as human resources and marketing.

He said: "The content might be different, but the philosophy and the framework, they are the same. If we can set up this standard as a benchmark, we hope that other industries will follow."



“How or when does a profession truly become recognised as a profession? U Associates have been debating this question and today we took the first step by launching Professional Standard in WSH with Singapore Institution of Safety Officers (SISO).”

*NTUC U Associate Director Vivek Kumar*

## LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Coinciding with the launch of the standard was the WSH Leadership Programme (WSHLP) Graduation Ceremony. The programme, which was created by NTUC and SISO in November last year, saw 53 students from the inaugural batch graduate during the ceremony.

The six-month WSHLP was designed to groom WSH professionals to take on leadership roles by equipping them with enhanced technical, management, leadership skills and expertise.

One of the graduates was 53-year-old Kam Wai Kuen, a WSH assistant director for Singapore General Hospital.



She was taught by lecturers who were experts in various fields, which enabled ordinary WSH practitioners like her to gain insights and new perspectives on topics such as workplace safety laws.

The programme has also enabled her to create value for her organisation.

"To me, I have a job, and I do my job. But creating value is to create something new out of my job and entrench myself into my organisation," she added.

## GOOD TO KNOW

To find out more about the SISO Professional Standard for WSH Professionals or the WSH Leadership Programme, visit [www.siso.org.sg](http://www.siso.org.sg).

## SMRT Incident Update

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Transport operator SMRT Trains Ltd and two of its employees were charged in court on 1 December 2016 over an MRT track accident that claimed two trainees' lives earlier this year.

SMRT was charged under Section 12 of the Workplace Safety and Health Act, while a director from the organisation, Teo Wee Kiat, was charged under Section 48 (1) of the Act.

Anybody found guilty under the Workplace Safety and Health Act may be liable to a fine not more than \$200,000 or a jail term of up to two years, or both. If a corporate body is charged, the fine may be up to \$500,000.

Meanwhile, Lim Say Heng, a technician who was in charge of the work party, was charged with causing death by a negligent act under the penal code. Lim was one of the two workers dismissed by SMRT in September.

According to the charge sheet, Lim is alleged to have failed to ensure that necessary safety measures were in place so that trains do not enter the track while the work party was there.

If found guilty, Lim faces a jail term of up to two years, a fine, or both.

In response to the charges brought against Lim, who is a union member, National Transport Workers' Union (NTWU) Executive Secretary Melvin Yong said the union will continue to work closely with Lim and provide him and his family support, and "to ensure he is fairly represented".

"Whilst we cannot comment on any ongoing legal proceedings, the union maintains that it is important to allow due process to take its course and all facts to be revealed before drawing any conclusions," added Mr Yong.

# Grooming Master Chefs

NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) and Singapore Chefs Association (SCA) sign MOU to mould a new breed of talent in the culinary scene.

Story by **Jonathan Tan**

**T**he stakes are getting higher and Singapore is getting more serious about dishing out the best in culinary offerings onto the international table. Interested in being part of the new force that whips up magic in the kitchen? You may want to look out for this then.

e2i and SCA have joined forces to spice things up by nurturing the skills and raising the professional standards of young talent in Singapore's vibrant culinary scene through a memorandum of understanding that was signed on 24 November 2016.

The three-year agreement will see both parties working together to build up a strong and qualified Singaporean core for the highly competitive food and beverage sector.

The MOU will provide new opportunities to better develop trainees' skills in the kitchen,



broaden their perspectives and provide them with the necessary knowledge to advance in their careers, in the present and the future.

## JOINT EFFORTS

Initiatives under the MOU will see a slew of new training platforms and masterclasses centred on segments of the culinary arts such as 'Competition Training for Young Inspiring Chefs'.

Such classes will see renowned award-winning Singaporean chefs share with trainees

their knowledge and experiences in competitions such as the recent IKA Culinary Olympics, where Singapore's National Culinary Team was crowned overall champion (see story below). These close engagements are also intended to inspire the next generation of young chefs.

"We need to instil the importance of continuous skills upgrading and hone our young pool of culinary talents on the art and science of cooking. There is a difference between good cooking and learning culinary skills that make food great.

"It is imperative for a chef to continuously sharpen his skills to be a master of his profession. I welcome and value this partnership with SCA because we believe in nurturing and developing our local Singaporean core to be future-ready," said Gilbert Tan, CEO of e2i.

## The Sweet Taste of Victory!

Singapore's National Culinary Team beats top national teams from around the world to clinch double gold. We catch up with Executive Chef Teo Yeow Siang to hear about the winning moment.

**O**ur winning edge is the culture of sharing. We take in experiences from our past mentors, accept their pointers and learn. It is this willingness to share, and the willingness to give back to the next generation of chefs. This is one of the key reasons for our success," said Chef Teo, the national culinary team captain, when asked about the ingredients for team's success at the recent IKA Culinary Olympics in Germany.

Singapore may be well-known for its food culture, but the Olympic triumph was the first time that an Asian country won two gold awards for the cold display and hot cooking categories. Held every four years, the prestigious event saw 30 of the world's top national teams competing.

Chef Teo shared that while the competition took place over a period of five days, the preparation process began a year in advance.

"I had to work at my normal day job as executive chef at Lavish Dine

Catering, manage my family and the competition training. It's was very tough, and it was not cheap," he said.

The costs of research and development, supplies for practice and shipping of the ingredients to the actual competition itself was in the region of \$300,000. Canvassing for funds on their own, Chef Teo shared that the team received support from e2i, companies and their own suppliers.

During the year-long training phase, e2i also supported with various training masterclasses to strengthen the team's techniques.

The effort though, was all worth it. Chef Teo recalled the sense of accomplishment that overwhelmed him the moment the team completed their presentation amidst the pressure cooker intensity of the competition.

"It was so emotional and I felt like crying. I couldn't believe that we actually did it.

"These competitions are a form of mental training. It's tough and about pushing limits. This helps young chefs grow. A lot of it is the mental toughness and the desire to push themselves past their limits to make things happen," he said.



# Striking Better Work-Life Balance

3E Accounting shares how it is using technology and tweaking traditional rules to give equal weightage to work and family time.

By **Ryan Chan**

There is a need for employers and employees to work together and be committed to finding solutions that will allow for work and family balance.

Senior Minister of State (SMS) Josephine Teo said this at a visit to 3E Accounting, a small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) that has made an effort to implement family-friendly initiatives at the workplace.

Instead of a fixed start and end time, staff can adjust their working hours in 15-minute blocks, as long as they complete the stipulated nine working hours per day. This means that staff can report to work any time between 8am to 10am and end their day between 5pm to 7pm.

3E Accounting Chairman and Founder Lawrence Chai, 31, said that this flexibility allows staff to accommodate family commitments such as sending their children to school in the morning.

## TECH FLEX

The 35-employee-strong accounting firm has also invested in technology to give workers the flexibility of working from home for extended periods of time.

One example is the company's use of Double Robotics, a wheeled device that allows staff working from home to be "present" at work. Users, who will be fully aware of their "surroundings" through cameras mounted on the robot, are in full control of the device from home and can operate it to move around the office freely.

Mr Chai said that staff sometimes have family commitments that require them to be away from work, such as parents who want to spend more time with their children during their PSLE year.

He explained: "We believe that talent is very hard to retain. Replacing him or her means a drop in customer service levels as the employee would have built up valuable relationships with clients.



It may be innovation in its infancy, but it's a glimpse at what having a remote presence in the office could be like.



"Clients in turn may not know who to look for after an employee leaves. Retaining employees means productivity doesn't suffer."

SMS Teo said that with these initiatives, employees also need not worry about family commitments impacting their work and can flexibly fulfil both. As an example, the Double Robotics device allows employees to "attend" meetings while at home.

"We get consistent feedback from working parents that the attitudes of employers and colleagues matter a great deal. So even if they're legally entitled to these benefits, if they sense that their colleagues and employers are not very happy about it, they will hold back on taking such leave," she elaborated.

The company's commitment to promoting better work-life balance has been recognised by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP).

3E Accounting was one of 15 companies awarded the biennial TAFEP Exemplary Employer Award earlier this year. The award is conferred to organisations that have

demonstrated effective and progressive employment practices.

## SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

Since the company's investment in technology, productivity levels have improved by almost 47 per cent since the company was established in 2011. The company's turnover rate also fell from about 38 per cent in 2013 to 23 per cent last year. Its annual revenue has jumped from \$789,000 to more than \$3 million in the same timeframe.

SMS Teo, who oversees the National Population and Talent Division, said that instead of compromising, millennials are finding smarter ways to marry career aspirations with more quality time with the family.

She said: "If, at the end of all these efforts, there aren't any business results, the case [for more family-friendly practices] is not made. The results must speak for themselves. If other SMEs think that there is no likelihood of them being able to follow likewise, 3E Accounting provides a very good counter-example."

# Making Work-Life Work

Companies are getting more flexible in accommodating employees' personal and homefront needs. Here is what Kleen-Pak Products Pte Ltd is doing right.

By **Shukry Rashid**



**W**hen Ms Ng Eng heard last year that she had to relocate from her residence in Pasir Ris to somewhere in Bukit Panjang, the first thing that hit her was worry. Her landlord, who is also her friend, had to move, so she decided to follow suit.

Do not be mistaken by her petite physique because the 58-year-old packer for Kleen-Pak still packs a punch. Having worked there since 2013, she cherished the fact that her place in Pasir Ris was near the factory in Loyang.

Ms Ng shared the journey she has to take to work every morning from her new place. She has to leave her house by 5.45am, take a combination of bus and train rides, and only reaches work three hours later. Her working

“We want to do whatever we can to make this place not just comfortable, but flexible towards their needs. Many of them have been with us for many years, and it will be a pity if they have to leave us because we refuse to explore other avenues.”

*Kleen-Pak Managing Director  
Tan Hock Kiam*

hours – from 7am to 4pm – meant that she was late for work every day.

She was beginning to feel like she had no choice but to quit her job.

That was going to be painful as the job was more than just a job, with a workplace filled with friendly colleagues and bosses that treated her like family.

Thankfully for her, Kleen-Pak is a progressive company that allows flexible work arrangements (FWA). With Ms Ng's current FWA that she adopted shortly after she moved to Bukit Panjang, she can comfortably reach work before 9am and end work at 6pm.

Her main role at work is to prepare carton boxes while filling in for colleagues to pack wet tissues while they go on their lunch breaks.

## TRUST TO DELIVER

Kleen-Pak Human Resources Manager Sharon Chng said the company, which employs nearly 50 workers, embarked on various work-life initiatives back in 2013. Besides FWA, the company also enables its managers to telecommute.

She added: “Some of our workers also study part-time, so they need that flexibility.”

Kleen-Pak Managing Director Tan Hock Kiam emphasised that he was never worried about these initiatives affecting employees' work performance.

He explained: “We have to give a certain amount of trust to the employees to ensure they perform. Whether the person is physically in the office, in front of me or not, is not as much of a

concern as long as they perform and deliver.

“We value our workers here because many of them are good workers. We want to do whatever we can to make this place not just comfortable, but flexible towards their needs. Many of them have been with us for many years, and it will be a pity if they have to leave us because we refuse to explore other avenues.”

## DEDICATED ASSISTANCE

To ensure more companies become as progressive as Kleen-Pak, the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) launched the ‘Work-Life Works!’ portal in October 2016.

The portal is Singapore's first integrated work-life resource portal that provides both employers and employees with a comprehensive suite of resources such as assistance to implement work-life initiatives.

The portal, which was created for employers and employees, provides various resources such as guides to implementing work-life initiatives, lists of courses and grants, and an interactive forum.

## GOOD TO KNOW



### Work-Life Works! Portal

To find out more about work-life assistance and balance, visit [www.worklifeworks.sg](http://www.worklifeworks.sg).



By **Shukry Rashid**

**U**nion of Telecoms Employees of Singapore (UTES) General Treasurer Joshua Benjamin may be turning 64 in December this year, but his passion for labour issues is still going strong. He joined SingTel Aeradio in 1976 – now NCS Communications Engineering after merging with Singtel subsidiary NCS Pte Ltd in 2002 – and realised that he and his fellow workers were not well represented.

When he joined the branch in 1989, he took it upon himself to instil better employee representation and improve working conditions. He has also been serving in the NTUC Workplace Safety and Health Committee since 2007.

**NTUC This Week: How much did the issue of safety plague your branch back then?**

**Joshua Benjamin:** Back in those days, there wasn't much awareness on safety. We had to address this because we had workers who maintained aerial antennas that could get up to 300 metres tall while facing strong winds. We also had workers maintaining communication lines underground, and there were no safety guidelines back then. It was then that the

branch went to UTES, sought references on safety procedures and implemented them.

**How did the union tackle other safety concerns?**

Besides maintaining aerial antennas like those in Bukit Timah, we also had to maintain those located off-shore such as on St John's Island. Our maintenance workers had to take a ferry to these locations while transporting heavy equipment. This was another area of safety that we addressed. Slowly, the union worked with the management to implement safety assurances like safety allowances, procedures and insurance.

**What was the management's response when the union brought up these safety issues?**

I think they felt we were troublemakers. But after the union highlighted issues one by one and their importance, the management came around to support us. Whenever the union brought up any issues, we had to present a case to the management. Back then, we had workers who went into manholes to maintain communication cables and fainted because of

gas leaks. Now, we have safety protocols to follow such as ensuring the proper use of equipment so that there is no leakage before entering the work area. Thanks to this, the number of accidents has decreased, and working conditions have become much better.

**How is UTES coping with the increasing number of professionals, managers and executives (PME) at the workplace?**

We already have PMEs who are our General Branch members, and we are looking to form a PME branch in the union. This way, they can become our Ordinary Branch members and they can elect a representative into our union council so that they can be represented better.

**Going forward, will unions represent PMEs more than rank-and-file workers?**

We cannot deny the fact that the number of PMEs in Singapore is increasing. As such, we have to remain relevant by representing them as well. But going into the future with this, we still have to hold on to the basics of why the union was formed, which is to represent the rank-and-file workers.

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ANDROID

# What's Happening Where

Compiled by **Ryan Chan**

## Lighting up Christmas

What's Christmas without bright, colourful lights and enchanting displays? Instead of buying something off the shelf, let your kids help with making this year's decorations. While creating their own lights, kids will also learn about safe circuits, batteries and switches to ensure their lights are up and shining bright in no time.

**i** 12 Dec 2016, 2-4pm, eXplorerkid @ AMK Hub, 53 Ang Mo Kio Ave 3. \$30 (eXplorerkid members), \$40 (public). To register, visit [www.explorerkid.com](http://www.explorerkid.com). For enquiries, email [loretta.lau@explorerkid.com](mailto:loretta.lau@explorerkid.com).

## Constructing Santa's Sleigh

Christmas is just around the corner and what better way to soak in the mood than by helping Santa build his sleigh? Get your children's problem solving skills and creativity flowing as they design, engineer and construct the perfect sleigh big enough for Santa to deliver all the gifts for children on time!

**i** 19 Dec 2016, 2-4pm, eXplorerkid @ AMK Hub, 53 Ang Mo Kio Ave 3. \$30 (eXplorerkid members), \$40 (public). To register, visit [www.explorerkid.com](http://www.explorerkid.com). For enquiries, email [loretta.lau@explorerkid.com](mailto:loretta.lau@explorerkid.com).



## New Year, New You!

Don't let those new year resolutions go unfulfilled! Get your fitness goals off to a groovy start with a K-Pop fitness routine that lets you have fun while you sweat off those holiday calories. Register quick! The first 50 sign-ups will receive Ocean Health supplements worth \$47.90.

**i** 7 Jan 2017, 8am-1pm, Lifelong Learning Institute, 11 Eunos Road 8. For more information, visit [www.ulive.sg](http://www.ulive.sg). To register, email your full name, NRIC, DOB, contact and union to [nuraini.mansor@ntucclub.com.sg](mailto:nuraini.mansor@ntucclub.com.sg) or call **6582 5902**.

## Share A Little Happiness This Season

Start the new year by bringing some joy to the less fortunate. vnEbO's Ways In Sharing Happiness (W.I.S.H.) is back with activities serving different communities across all four weekends in January with the following line-up: Paint a New Hope (7 Jan), Health is Wealth (15 Jan), Green Fingers (21 Jan) and Heritage Snapshots (22 Jan).

**i** To find out more, visit [www.nebo.sg](http://www.nebo.sg). To register, email [melissa.ong@ntucclub.com.sg](mailto:melissa.ong@ntucclub.com.sg) or [eychelle.tung@ntucclub.com.sg](mailto:eychelle.tung@ntucclub.com.sg).



## 及时反应 伸出援手

本期带领大家去了解工运如何协助被裁的工友



职总就业与职能培训中心的就业辅导员辜薇珊



造船与海事工程雇员联合会高级工业关系员王颖文

**裁员对工友来说** 是不祥的词汇。万一发生了该怎么办？工运已经做好应对准备。到时，职总的工业关系人员、附属工会及职总就业与职能培训中心等单位将携手帮助工友尽快重归劳动队伍。

### 一马当先

如果公司不得已须要裁员，工会的首要任务便是为工友争取应得的补偿。职总的工业关系人员一旦接获通知，将和工会管理层一起研究应对方案，以便协助受到冲击的工友。与此同时，职总的工业关系署也将密切追踪裁员的进程。

造船与海事工程雇员联合会高级工业关系员王颖文表示：“无论我们和公司的关系多深，我们首要的工作是和资方谈判裁员赔偿额。一旦裁员发生，我将尽快安排会议，向资方了解情况，以及检查所有的赔偿金是否已经到位。”

赔偿金包括裁员抚恤、花红、薪金和可能有的惠给金。至于总赔偿金额多少，那要视行业规范及公司的财务状况和劳资政指南而定。

“谈判中最关键的是定好裁员赔偿额。因为按目前的经济情况，一名失业工友须花费半年至9个月才能找到另一份工作。”

“我们的任务是确保工友得到公平赔偿。在寻找工作方面，我们也将把工友介绍给刻在招聘员工的公司。”

为了协助像王颖文这样的工业关系员更好地协助失业工友，劳资政剩余人力及裁员责任指南中提出建议，设有工会的公司应尽早于裁员实施之前便通知工会有关的事宜，以便适当应对。

同时，王颖文也会通知职总就业与职能培训中心相关的情况。如此，该中心便可以给予被裁退的工友特定的支援。

她表示，在个人处理的第一宗案子中，工友所得到的裁员福利并不如理想：“最艰难的情况是裁员仓促。”

那次公司裁员，工友无论年资多少，公司只愿意补偿2个月的薪金。还好在后续的谈判中，工会为会员争取到额外的补偿。

她说：“工会所处理的每一宗裁员事件，详情细节全都记录在案，其中包括工业关系员所查明的公司状况，被裁工友数量、公司裁员的背景和原因等。如此，职总和附属工会就能掌握整个事件及相关行业的状况。”

### 援助的支柱

职总就业与职能培训中心的就业辅导员辜薇珊表示，她向被裁工友传达的关键信息是，在整个裁员过程中，工友并不会孤立无援。

“我们时刻为您服务，即使你们现在还不打算找工作，中心的大门还是敞开着，什么时候您需要援助都可以来找我们。”

作为援助的其中一个环节，职总就业与职能培训中心首先会召集被裁工友说明情况与互动，接着会安排需要安抚情绪的工友与就业辅导员面谈。

在说明情况的时候，职总就业与职能培训中心人员所谈的内容涵盖当前的经济状况、就业与职能培训中心提供的各类援助，以及如何应用搜索技巧快速找到新工作等。

辜薇珊表示：“我们团队的裁员反应时间是一个工作日。然而，要是知情较早，我们可以更好地为工友量身定制应对套件。”

我们除了分发内含职业展和服务信息的传单，也会为刚被裁的工友策划就业技能培训课程。

她说：“凡是向我们登记的工友，我们都会关心他们是否已找到工作，或者需要什么样的协助、支援和培训。若有适当的活动，我们也会通知他们前来参加，以便从中寻找工作。”

## 工运：应对裁员

### 工会行动

- ✓ 一旦接到公司裁员的消息，职总工业关系署便马上立案，记录公司名称、裁员期、裁员动机、受影响的工友人数。
- ✓ 工会的工业关系员接着将联系公司谈判裁员福利，并计划协助被裁工友。
- ✓ 同时，工会和工业关系员将抄送一份工友资料给职总就业与职能培训中心，以备协助和支援。
- ✓ 工会要求公司尽早通知裁员计划，以便工会和职总就业与职能培训中心更好地协助遭受裁退的工友。

### 职总就业与职能培训中心的援助

- ✓ 一旦接到裁员消息，职总就业与职能培训中心的人员就会与工会及其工业关系员紧密联系，协调各种援助事项。
- ✓ 与此同时，职总就业与职能培训中心的人员接着便量身定制一个裁员套件及准备相关的材料给受影响的工友。
- ✓ 然后就到职场向工友说明情况和互动，紧接着是一对一的就业辅导。
- ✓ 被裁的工友可以在现场登记求援或就业培训，也可以在之后才登记报名。
- ✓ 登记求援的工友，就业与职能培训中心的人员都会一一在日后向他们了解求职状况，并通知他们最近将要举行的活动。