

**ADDRESS BY MR MELVIN YONG (MP FOR TANJONG PAGAR GRC) AT THE “SPEAKING YOUR MIND” BOOK LAUNCH ON 18 JAN 2020 AT KC ARTS CENTRE**

Ms Porsche Poh, Executive Director, Silver Ribbon Singapore

Ms Jenny Teo, Co-Founder, Please Stay Movement

Dr Lee Cheng, Vice President, Singapore Association for Mental Health

Fellow Mental Health Activists,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good afternoon. I am very happy to join you for the book launch today.
2. Good mental health is essential to our overall health and well-being. But while mental health issues are real and ever-present, particularly at our workplaces, many are afraid to voice out for fear of stigmatisation.
3. Our workplaces are becoming increasingly desk-bound, particularly for many of our PMEs. Studies have shown that such sedentary jobs give rise to new forms of Occupational Diseases.

For example, long working hours coupled with a stressful workplace environment can result in mental health issues such as workplace burnout, which is now a recognised occupational phenomenon by the World Health Organisation. Feeling “burnt out” is a common phrase we hear among working professionals, but little has been done to learn more about its longer-term health effects.

4. Such occupation-related mental health issues can lead and have led to negative physical health outcomes, and it is important that we protect our workers who may be suffering in silence.

### **Importance of destigmatising mental health issues**

5. As a society, it is important that we raise awareness and socialise mental health issues among the general public. Only by doing so, can we then destigmatise the topic and build an ecosystem of support to help with the detection and early prevention of mental health issues.
6. On this note, I would like to commend the efforts of our youths from the National University of Singapore, behind today’s initiative.

“Speaking Your Mind” is a collection of heartfelt stories to help raise awareness of mental health issues. I hope that readers will be able to identify and resonate with the life stories of people who have either personally been through or assisted those with mental illnesses.

7. I also commend the immense courage of the individuals who were interviewed in this book, for stepping forward to share their struggles and personal battles with mental health issues. Several of the stories show their resilience when faced with tough times and highlight the importance of the support network around us.

### **Labour Movement to partner with SAMH to recognise inclusive employers**

8. I am therefore happy to announce that NTUC will be partnering with the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) to recognise inclusive employers, as part of our continuing efforts to ensure better workplace mental health.

Through profiling inclusive employers as industry role models, we hope that we can encourage more companies to do the same.

9. Beyond recognising employers who have hired employees who have recovered from mental health issues, NTUC and SAMH will also recognise companies who have gone the extra mile to put in place robust mental wellness programmes to help their employees stay mentally healthy and resilient. I will announce more details of the collaboration at the upcoming Committee of Supply Debate.

## **Conclusion**

10. Once again, thank you for having me today. I am heartened to see our youths stepping forward and acting for a cause that they believe deeply in.

Let us continue the good work, let us join hands, let us together build a more inclusive Singapore.

Thank you.