



**SPEECH BY MR TAN KIAT HOW, REACH CHAIRMAN AND SENIOR
MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION
AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AT REACH PANEL
APPRECIATION EVENT
12 NOV 2022, 1PM AT MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND
INFORMATION**

Minister for Communications and Information Mrs Josephine Teo, thank you for your words of encouragement to all of us here at REACH.

Members of the incoming and outgoing Panels, friends, colleagues.

Very good afternoon.

1. Thank you for taking time off your busy schedules to join us at this Saturday afternoon's event.
2. For those of you who have been to REACH appointment ceremonies before, you may notice that we are doing something different this year.
 - a. We have set-up a variety of activity booths around the atrium today. We hope that these will give you a taste of what REACH does to engage citizens. So hopefully you will go by the booths, enjoy yourselves, and also get a sense of what we do on the ground day in day out, week in week out, month in month out.
 - b. More importantly, we hope this is a space for you to connect with other panellists as we surely have a lot in common and to learn from one another.
3. I would like to start by thanking our outgoing panellists for their service.
 - a. It's been an exciting two years working with all of you and it's been my privilege and honour to work together with you on many of the REACH activities. I wanted to take a moment to thank all of you for your hard work, especially over the last

two and a half years during COVID-19. Engaging Singaporeans from all walks of life is no easy feat but all of you have been positive and tireless even amidst the challenges that the past two years have brought to us. So I'll like to express my deepest gratitude, especially to the panellists who served us for three consecutive terms - Mr Azriman Mansor, Mr Lucien Teo, Dr Victor Tong, Ms Joanne Guo and Dr Eng Soo Kiang. Please give them a round of applause. Please do stand up and be recognised. Thank you for being our tireless champions. Your expertise and insights have been invaluable to shaping REACH's work.

b. I'll like to also mention our outgoing youth panellists that Minister Josephine had talked about in her speech. You managed to juggle school work with all the activities on the panel. I don't know how you actually do it. Some of you were so dedicated that even before exams, you still showed up at our REACH events, helping us, contributing until we had to ask if you have to go back and study. Thank you so much, you juggled schoolwork, school activities and still contribute so much of your perspectives, energy and time to REACH. I appreciate the ideas you have brought to the table, and the times you stepped up to assist at REACH youth events – be it as participants, as moderators or even as emcees. You've also supported us in our efforts to keep abreast of social media trends. I remember being very impressed when Charlotte shared her experience getting the COVID-19 vaccine on our Instagram.

4. There are so many of you who have spent time and effort working with us, shaping our projects and activities and being such an invaluable resource, like Sarojini, Royston, Andrew, Serene, and others who I've not mentioned your names. So, let's give them an applause as well. Thank you so much. Your contributions behind the scenes, such as participating in REACH events, sharing about our dialogues and Listening Points with your networks and communities, and sharing your ideas to improve REACH's engagement efforts, are significant. Not well seen on the ground but behind the scenes, actively working with us, so thank you very much.

5. It has been an honour working with all of you, especially our outgoing panellists, and I thank you once again for all your contributions to REACH. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the future, as you become REACH alumni members. As what Eagles said in Hotel California, you can check out anytime, but you can never

leave. Welcome to our REACH alumni network. I know that the next panel members will have big shoes to fill but I am confident that they will rise to the challenge.

6. To the incoming panellists, you have much to look forward to over the next two years. As Minister Josephine had said earlier, we will be making a few changes in the structure of the panel for the upcoming term. Let me just touch on a few points.

7. The first change is that our REACH Supervisory Panel is now being renamed as the REACH Advisory Panel.

- a. This name change better reflects the role of our panel and its relationship to REACH. Panel members are experts in their respective fields and would provide advice and guidance on the development and implementation of REACH activities. We hope to work with the Advisory Panel to co-design and drive initiatives to better connect with Singaporeans.

8. The second change is that we are expanding the panel to keep REACH in touch with today's social needs, and drive engagements in key national issues.

- a. We will be introducing representatives from new sectors and cause-based interests. This is a great opportunity for REACH to partner with these groups and learn from the excellent work they are doing to make positive changes to Singapore. For the upcoming term, we have representatives from the areas such as Women's Development, sustainability, and mental health.
- b. For many years, REACH has worked closely with representatives from the media and we are very happy to have representatives of the media continue with us in this term of the panel. But we are also inducting representatives from digital media, and influencers who are connected to young Singaporeans. We hope that with this expanded main panel, REACH will do even better in our mission to engage Singaporeans from various backgrounds and do so in exciting and innovative ways.

9. The third change concerns our youth panel. Over the years, we have gradually expanded the number of young panellists representing different educational institutions in Singapore. These young panellists have much to offer, as they bring unique youth perspectives to important national issues. Since they are all in a similar stage of life, they also gel well very naturally with each other. Starting this term, our

youth panellists will be appointed into a separate, complementary Youth Panel. I must say joining them in all the discussions and activities, I feel old. We have a series called Adulting 101. Maybe I can suggest to our REACH colleagues that we should have a series called Youth-ing 101 so that we can better understand their slangs, the way they express themselves, the way they think about the world and for us to also get better educated on how to better connect with young Singaporeans.

On that note, I want to thank our youth panellists, especially the inaugural batch. We learnt so much from all of you and like what Minister Josephine Teo said just now, all of you set the standard. You flew the flag high for young Singaporeans and because of that, we are setting up a dedicated, separate, complementary youth panel to represent youth voices so please give yourselves a round of applause.

- a. Our upcoming Youth Panellists come from universities, polytechnics, ITEs and art institutions. They lend a youth perspective in providing input and advice on a range of topics, including but not limited to education, employment, mental health, arts, culture, and youth development.
- b. To our new Youth Panellists – warm welcome. You are embarking on an exciting journey and have an opportunity to make youth voices heard in Singapore, and I believe you will make a real difference to your respective communities partnering with REACH.

10. The structure of the Panel has changed, but the purpose of the Panel has not. REACH will continue to work closely with our Panellists wherever possible, to tap on their networks and seek their views on how we can improve our outreach activities. We recognise that as a government body, our perspectives may be limited, and we will always benefit from having trusted advisors who can expand our horizons.

11. I would like to quickly share what lies in the road ahead for REACH:

- a. Moving forward, REACH will increase our efforts to connect with lesser-engaged communities, as we did in the past couple of years. Some progress has been made in the past year, for example, we were thankful for the opportunity to work with Highpoint Halfway House, to speak with ex-offenders and learn about the challenges they face trying to reintegrate back into society. With the assistance of other partners, we also surveyed niche groups such as caregivers of people with special needs and overseas Singaporeans. We will

continue to partner with passionate individuals and organisations who know the ground well. We truly believe that every voice matters. We will also continue to strengthen longstanding relationships with existing partners, such as some of the student groups like Varsity Voices, and some of ground-up groups I mentioned earlier.

- b. We will continue to innovate and explore new avenues of engagement. In-person engagements will always be our bread and butter. It's always different when you see each other face-to-face, sit down, look at each other in small groups and talk about issues that matter to us. It's always different. Face-to-face engagement will always be important. But with technological changes, new ways of doing things, we have also explored new experimentations, new innovative ways of reaching out. For example, with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, we were so excited. I can see the excitement in our colleagues in REACH when finally, we can go out to do Listening Points, to do dialogues face-to-face on the ground. We were excited to be back at the neighbourhood markets, bus interchanges, community centres, physical locations to engage people.
- c. And we did it for many important issues for example, Budget 2022, and other issues important to us like geopolitical challenges, rising cost of living and more. And we have also experimented, innovated, reaching out to new audiences and segments in the community through the airwaves, print media, online media, and social media. As technology and the operating environment change, we will continue to evolve. Maybe at this juncture I can point to you the blue bag at your feet. It's just one example of how we are experimenting. You see the very cute cartoons on it. Some of you might know that these cartoons were actually drawn by our own staff, to try and reach out to young people, to different groups of our communities. These are cartoons that we use and there's a series that we use to engage people on different things and explain messages but it's one of the things we try experimenting. Some people like it, some things we can improve but I think at the heart of it is that we're willing to try something different, experiment, learn from things that don't go so well and do better next time.

12. So as all of you can see, there is a lot of work to be done. We are very confident that with the help of our newly minted Advisory Panel and Youth Panel, the next two years will be fruitful, with lots of innovating and learning.

13. The world around us and our society are changing, presenting new challenges and opportunities. All Singaporeans are facing these changes differently, and everyone has their own experience to share, their own story to tell. In this increasingly complex world, REACH's mission of ensuring that every voice matters is more important than ever. So, in conclusion, to our outgoing Panellists, thank you again for doing this crucial work together with us. Please remain active and stay connected with us through the alumni network. To our incoming Panellists, thank you for stepping up to the mantle to build upon what previous generations of REACH officers and panellists have done. I am certain that together, we can achieve great things for the benefit of Singaporeans and Singapore.

14. Thank you very much.