

WELCOME ADDRESS BY MS TAN PUAY HOON, PRESIDENT OF THE RESTROOM ASSOCIATION (SINGAPORE) (RAS) AT THE SEVENTH LOO (LET'S OBSERVE OURSELVES) AWARDS ON WORLD TOILET DAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2015, 2.00PM, AT QIHUA PRIMARY SCHOOL

A very good afternoon to:

Our Guest of Honour Mr Ronnie Tay, Chief Executive Officer of the National Environment Agency or NEA

LOO (Let's Observe Ourselves) Awards recipients, partners, supporters and distinguished guests

Today is World Toilet Day and we warmly welcome all of you, to our 7th LOO Awards to jointly commemorate World Toilet Day with us. We also wish to extend our heartiest congratulations to all award recipients for your outstanding contributions.

The annual LOO Awards is our initiative to commemorate World Toilet Day every year and, recognise organisations, cleaning attendants and individuals for their outstanding contributions, to improving the toilet standards of Singapore. This year, preschools and schools are included, to better recognise their crucial role of educating the younger generations.

Schools: Our Strategic Partners

Schools have been our strong strategic partners since the launch of our school

programme in 2005. We started with only one school in 2005 and we have since expanded to more than 200 schools. We know students are our best ambassadors to promote good restroom culture. They are great influencers to their peers, family members and the community. It is fitting that the LOO Awards is held at Qihua Primary School this year as it signifies our long-time commitment in educating the young.

World Toilet Day Commemoration

Last year we launched the World Toilet Day Commemoration Fund for participating preschools and schools. We are delighted to award the funding to 15 preschools and schools, for them to organise activities in October and November to commemorate World Toilet Day.

On 7 November, I was invited to Sunflower Preschool @ Punggol Field Walk, one of the preschools that were awarded the funding. I was heartened to see Sunflower Preschool inviting parents in joining their children, to design toilet educational posters and videos. I took the opportunity to share about World Toilet Day to both parents and children, urging them to cherish the good sanitation standard of Singapore and, take care of toilets wherever they go.

This year, it's promising to see preschools and schools, which received the funding, either organising appreciation activities for cleaning attendants, or performing environmental cleaning to experience the strenuous work of cleaning attendants. Next year, we hope there will not only be more preschools and schools, but government and private organisations, holding activities to jointly commemorate World Toilet Day with us.

Our Report Card

In 2013, we shared about our three-year plan to evolve ourselves as a one-stop solution provider for building owners and Voluntary Welfare Organisation (VWO) for the cleaning attendants. Our sheer hard work has paid off with more restroom owners consulting us including our renowned Changi Airport. Consultations have extended out of Singapore to Malaysia for the first time, including a government board in Putrajaya and, a company in Iskandar which is backed by the Johor state government.

After becoming a VWO member of National Council of Social Service or NCSS in 2013, we have been actively reaching out to cleaning attendants to recognise their efforts. More than 200 cleaning attendants have since benefited from receiving grocery vouchers donated by the public. Since 2010, we are an Institution of a Public Character or IPC, which constantly strives to ensure greater accountability. This year for the first time, we were approved as an IPC for a period of 3 years. Among the 7 environmental IPCs, we are proud to be the only 3-year IPC on par with Gardens by the Bay.

Last year, we shared about our intention to position ourselves as a professional assessment and accreditation body. This year, we went through training conducted by the PUB, so as to assess toilets for compliance with water efficiency requirements. We can now share any lapses with the PUB for their enforcement. This signifies another milestone for us.

Changes Among Stakeholders

This year, we have witnessed changes among all the stakeholders. For the building owners, we have more Happy Toilet participations. For the cleaning industry, we are delighted to see Happy Toilet owners requesting their cleaning service providers to approach RAS, to train and assess their cleaning attendants for the Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) Perform Basic Cleaning of Washrooms module. We even have cleaning service providers initiating Happy Toilet accreditation, which is usually initiated by building owners, building management and business operators. As for the public users, there has also been a change in their user behaviour.

In October, as part of its corporate social responsibility initiative, SurveyMonkey collaborated with us to launch an online survey on its platform. From the survey results, we observed a number of changes in toilet standards, public awareness and user behaviour. For example, almost 6 in 10 respondents wanted water-free hand sanitisers in toilets. Respondents were more hygiene conscious, with more than 6 in 10 respondents not visiting food establishments with dirty toilets, as compared to only 3 in 10 respondents in 2012. In general, user behaviour of respondents who knew about RAS were better than those who didn't. Thus, there's a need for RAS to evolve and change.

Evolution as a Toilet Hub

The ultimate goal of the Restroom Association (Singapore) or RAS is to become a toilet hub. Though it's not possible to have a Ministry of Toilets, it's definitely feasible to have RAS as a toilet hub - a hub for all toilet matters concerning building owners, cleaning attendants and public users. As we are already on track in our outreach to building owners and cleaning attendants, the public

users are our next target. The best way to engage the public users is to first raise awareness about RAS, followed by inviting them to become our friends and, eventually recruiting them as our volunteers.

The recent SurveyMonkey results indicated almost 5 out of 10 respondents know about RAS, which is slightly better than 3 out of 10 in 2012. Next year, we are planning to commemorate World Toilet Day by launching a Great SaniSale or GSS, using the same acronym as Great Singapore Sale. We will work with sanitary-product companies to offer GSS discounts to Friends of RAS. Thus, the GSS is the first step to raise awareness about us. Once they become our friends, we will encourage them to become our volunteers.

Conclusion

I wish to end by expressing my deepest appreciation to the Guest of Honour Mr Tay, partners, supporters and distinguished guests for your company. I wish to again congratulate all award recipients for your relentless commitment. RAS cannot surmount all challenges alone to build a gracious society, embracing excellence in restroom culture. RAS' efforts in the restroom journey can only bear fruits with the continued support of all stakeholders.

Thank you.