

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR HO CHEE KIT, PRESIDENT OF THE RESTROOM ASSOCIATION (SINGAPORE) (RAS) AT THE LOO (LET'S OBSERVE OURSELVES) AWARDS CEREMONY ON 16 NOVEMBER 2023, 2.00PM, AT KAMPUNG ADMIRALTY COMMUNITY PLAZA**

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Good afternoon to:

Our Guest of Honour Mr Baey Yam Keng, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and the Environment

Mr Allen Ang

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Singapore Green Building Council

Ms Lim Jing Ting

Director, 3P Network Division, National Environment Agency

Ms Gloria Tan

Executive Director, Public Hygiene Council

Award recipients, partners, sponsors and distinguished guests

Let me begin by extending my warmest welcome to everyone at the 15th LOO (Let's Observe Ourselves) Awards. The LOO Awards was first held in 2009 by the Restroom Association (Singapore) or RAS, to recognise organisations and individuals for making a significant difference to the restroom environment. In

2009, a media conference was held at a coffeeshop on 19 November, in conjunction with the World Toilet Day, to announce 15 award recipients. The award recipients were subsequently invited to the LOO Awards ceremony on 2 December during the World Toilet Summit & Expo held at Suntec Singapore. Over the years, the LOO Awards has evolved with new categories introduced and the number of award recipients has tripled from 15 in 2009 to an average of about 50 for the past five years. Especially the restroom cleaning attendants, with only one awarded in 2009 to 30 of them today. Owing to public donations, which is much appreciated by the RAS, grocery vouchers are distributed to the awarded restroom attendants every year. Apart from the awarded attendants, I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations to all other exemplary award recipients for your strong commitment and commendable contributions to the restroom environment.

### **LOO Campaign @ Hawker Centres**

For years, the RAS has been proactively collaborating with all stakeholders to raise the standards of public restrooms and there have been vast improvements not only in shopping malls but also public transport hubs including bus interchanges and MRT stations. Smart features have been installed in these restrooms to ensure any lapses are rectified on time. Unfortunately, hawker centres and coffeeshops have yet to improve at the same pace over the years. Therefore, in April 2021, RAS launched a 3-year LOO Campaign @ Hawker Centres to target the hawker centres so that the effectiveness of this campaign can be evaluated. The hawker centre campaign is a holistic three-pronged approach of training on washroom cleaning & maintenance, restroom audits and public outreach.

For the past two years, detailed audit reports with common lapses and recommendations were sent to the management of hawker centres namely the Town Councils, social enterprises and the National Environment Agency or NEA. RAS also collaborated with them to rectify these lapses either through its Happy Toilet Programme participation or provision of free thorough-cleaning trials. RAS also reached out to more than 25,000 public patrons and stall holders with QR-code educational tissue packets on showing kindness to cleaning attendants, which also garnered more than 1,200 online cleaning attendants' nominations for its LOO Awards and online pledges to keep the hawker centre restrooms clean. We are heartened with the improvement in the Toilet Cleanliness Index of hawker centres to a score of about 66% this year. The results of the study, conducted by the Singapore Management University or SMU, have clearly shown our efforts from our LOO Campaign @ Hawker Centres have paid off since its launch in April 2021. We will continue to collaborate with the hawker centre stakeholders on this campaign which is scheduled to end in March next year.

### **LOO Campaign @ Coffeeshops**

From the design of the backdrop, I'm pretty sure everyone can see that it is a design of a coffeeshop. Today, I'm pleased to announce the launch of the LOO Campaign @ Coffeeshops, which is targeted to end in 2026. I'm honoured to receive the kind support of our Guest of Honour Mr Baey, who'll be launching the campaign later. With the LOO Campaign @ Hawker Centres ending early next year, we wish to duplicate its holistic approach for the coffeeshops. Same as in previous years, we supported Ms Rosie Ching, Principal Lecturer of Statistics of SMU, with the latest Public Toilet Cleanliness Index study, by training the SMU undergraduates on restroom assessment in August this year. I wish to congratulate Ms Ching and the undergraduates, who worked tirelessly on the

study for the past two months, for receiving our awards today. With the study results, we hope to first work with low-rated coffeeshops on a similar approach to rectify the lapses and achieve positive results like our LOO Campaign @ Hawker Centres.

Apart from our campaign, we strongly believe that the mandatory Environmental Sanitation or ES regime by the NEA will help guide specified premises especially coffeeshops, to achieve high standards of cleanliness and hygiene. The ES regime, which was implemented on 30 July 2021, formalises mandatory cleaning and cleanliness standards and regulatory action will be taken against premises for non-compliance. With continued support from the stakeholders, we are anticipating coffeeshops to make improvements over time as well. We also urge the NEA to step up their enforcements against recalcitrant coffeeshops. We hope with concerted efforts from everyone, coffeeshop toilets can really become restrooms and remain clean.

### **Conclusion**

Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to Guest of Honour Mr Baey, our LOO Awards judging panel from the National Environment Agency and Public Hygiene Council, our partner Singapore Green Building Council, award recipients and distinguished guests, for taking the time to commemorate World Toilet Day with us. I also want to thank the Housing & Development Board or HDB for sponsoring this excellent venue and the product companies for sponsoring our LOO Awards today. Let's continue to work together towards a quality restroom environment for everyone. Thank you.