



Media Release

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RESTROOM ASSOCIATION (SINGAPORE) RELEASES ITS FIRST COMPREHENSIVE TOILET SURVEY RESULTS

The Restroom Association (Singapore) or RAS holds a media conference today to share the findings and recommendations of the survey (*refer to Annex A*) conducted by a class of 21 graduating students from the Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Business & Accountancy from 11 - 29 December 2011.

The survey consisted of 5 core sections as follows:

- A) Toilet happiness
- B) Facilities, design & maintenance of toilets
- C) User experience
- D) Awareness, education & enforcement
- E) User & cleaner behaviour

Based on the survey findings consolidated by the students, the RAS is proposing a holistic approach to enhance the standard of the restroom environment as follows:

1. Mandatory rating scheme for toilets
2. Continued government intervention & enforcement
3. Specialised training of restroom attendants
4. Higher toilet design guidelines
5. Effective public awareness & engagement

Please refer to www.toilet.org.sg/docs/npsurvey.pdf for more details on the survey results.

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About Restroom Association (Singapore)

The vision of the Restroom Association (Singapore) or RAS is A Gracious Society Embracing Excellence in Restroom Culture. Started in 1998 as a non-profit organisation, RAS is dedicated to building an excellent restroom culture by actively engaging owners, the cleaning industry and users to play their part. Some of its programmes or activities – supported by the National Environment Agency (NEA) – initiated and conducted include the Happy Toilet Programme, Happy Toilet School Education programme for Preschools, STAR (Sustaining Toilets As Restrooms) Awards Programme, Eco-Assessor Programme and LOO (Let's Observe Ourselves) Carnival & Awards. RAS is a strategic partner in national community events like Clean & Green Singapore and is also a founding member of the World Toilet Organization and the Keep Singapore Beautiful Movement.

Glossary of Chinese Terms (In alphabetical order)

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|---|-----------|
| 1. Happy Toilet Programme | 康乐公厕计划 |
| 2. LOO (Let's Observe Ourselves) Awards | 卫浴文化奖 |
| 3. LOO (Let's Observe Ourselves) Carnival | 卫浴文化嘉年华 |
| 4. President Tan Puay Hoon | 会长陈培芬 |
| 5. Restroom Association (Singapore) | 新加坡卫浴文化协会 |

ANNEX A

Overall

1. Most of the respondents were either very unhappy or unhappy with the cleanliness of coffee shops and hawker centres followed by bus interchanges, parks and MRT stations. Most felt that the rating of toilets should be made compulsory.
2. About half were very unhappy or unhappy with users' efforts while most remained neutral about owners' efforts and government intervention. The respondents were happiest about the effort of cleaners.
3. About half felt that users are most responsible for keeping the toilets happy followed by owners and cleaners.
4. With regard to the need for improvement, respondents ranked toilet cleanliness first followed by its maintenance and design.
5. Respondents felt that the main cause of dirty toilets was irresponsible users.
6. Respondents felt that it was most important that users took responsibility for maintaining toilet cleanliness.
7. There is also a need for owners and cleaners to step up efforts in keeping toilets clean.

Facilities

1. Generally, toilets in Singapore possess basic facilities and average levels of cleanliness.
2. Monitoring of the odour problem and the sensor automatic flushing system is needed.
3. Sanitary bins, urinals and toilet bowls are the least clean facilities.
4. Male toilets are dirtier than female toilets.
5. Public parks, pools and food establishments have dirty walls and doors.
6. MRT stations, bus interchanges and food establishments have dirty toilet bowls and urinals.
7. Schools and food establishments have dirty washbasins.
8. Public parks, swimming pools and schools have dirty sanitary bins.
9. Food establishments have the worst ventilation.
10. Many locations have dirty floorings.

Design

1. About half of the respondents responded that the cubicle door space was tight.
2. Correct positioning and adequate provision of hand dryers are needed because few would use the hand dryer frequently and most who did not use the hand dryer would use it if it is within reach.
3. Design preference:
 - Slide latch/turn knob door lock
 - Sit type toilet bowl
 - Drum roll toilet paper dispenser
 - Individual wash basin
 - Automatic tap and soap dispenser
 - Automatic hand dryer (female) vs Jet (male)
 - Full length mirror
 - Urinal with modesty board

Awareness, education and enforcement

1. Though educational posters did remind users to keep the toilets clean, less than half noticed the presence of posters.
2. Though about half felt that users should be responsible in enforcing cleaner toilets, few would consider even gently reminding those who dirty the toilet.
3. Some felt that enforcement would propel everyone to react faster.

User Behaviour

1. Generally, respondents are neutral with regard to toilet cleanliness.
2. The top three user behaviours were splashing water on the floor, not flushing after use* and litter in urinals and toilet bowls*
3. Only a third of the respondents would not visit an establishment selling good food if its toilets were the dirtiest.
4. Few would inform owners or cleaners to clean up dirty toilets.
5. Few would consider even gently reminding others who dirty the toilet.

**Attributed more to ineffective/malfunctioned automatic flushing system than poor user behaviour*

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Mandatory rating scheme for toilets

Locals were either very unhappy or unhappy with the cleanliness of coffee shops (Qn A2: 61.3%) and hawker centres (57.1%) followed by bus interchanges (43.5%), parks (40.3%) and MRT stations (32.4%). For a start, the government should consider a mandatory rating scheme for the coffee shops and hawker centres. Many (Qn D5: 82.8%) felt that a compulsory grading scheme for all public toilets is needed. The current Happy Toilet Programme (HTP) is a voluntary scheme.

2. Continued government intervention and enforcement

Though about half (Qn D4: 40.6%) felt that users should be responsible in enforcing cleaner toilets, few (Qn E6: 18.2%) would consider even gently reminding others who dirty the toilet. The government (Qn D4: second highest at 33.8%) should therefore continue its efforts to enforce cleaner toilets. Moreover, few (Qn E3: 15.2%) would inform errant owners or cleaners to clean up dirty toilets. Given that businesses at food establishments selling good food would not be much affected by their dirty toilets, errant owners will not see the need to clean up their toilets. (Qn E2: 34.8%).

3. Specialised training of restroom attendants

With regard to the need for improvement, respondents ranked toilet cleanliness (Qn A5: 84.6%) first followed by its maintenance (76.8%) and design (57.8%). Therefore, the cleanliness and maintenance of toilets have to be addressed. Take for instance, to resolve the odour problem (Qn C3: 47.61%) and functionality of the sensor automatic flushing system (Qn E7: second highest), owners should not only step up cleaning and inspection schedule but also hire cleaners who have undergone the toilet cleaning and inspection course. More attention should be focused on the regular cleaning of sanitary bins, urinals and toilet seats (Qn C2) as they are the least clean facilities.

4. Higher toilet design guidelines

Better designs will help provide a more pleasant experience for the users. Therefore, owners should look into the design preference (Qn B1- B9), cubicle door space (Qn C3: 43.6%) and positioning of the wash basins, soap dispensers, hand dryers (Qn B10: 23% vs B11: 70%) and litter bins. Provision of litter bins near urinals can resolve the problem of littering in urinals (Qn E7). More comprehensive guidelines on toilet designs and maintenance should be established for owners to adhere to. The guidelines in Japan can serve as a reference guide.

5. **Effective public awareness and engagement**

Apart from poster displays, other means of reaching out to the public are needed such as our existing education programmes for preschools, schools and the general public. If posters are to be displayed (Qn D1: 48.6% vs D2: 76.1%), they should be captivating and strategically displayed such as near the wash basins, urinals and cubicle areas. The public are generally not associating dirty toilets with food, safety and health (Qn E2: 65.2%). Therefore, the content should adopt the deterrent approach such as fatal consequences of unhygienic practices. Materials can be targeted and focussed on the following user behaviours (Qn E7):

- a. Splashing of water on the floor
- b. Not flushing after use*
- c. Litter in toilet bowls or urinals*
- d. Littering on toilet floors
- e. Not washing hands after use
- f. Footprints on toilet seats

**Educational messages conveyed to the public should be to ensure toilet bowls and urinals are flushed before leaving.*

Apart from awareness, means of engaging the public are also important. Since adopting the approach of users policing users (Qn E6: 18.2%) is not appropriate, engaging the public to take ownership should be promoted such as picking up litter in the toilet even if it is left behind by others.

CONCLUSION

RAS will work with its identified key players to enhance the standard of the restroom environment as follows:

Government

- Mandatory rating scheme for toilets
- Continued government enforcement and intervention
- Specialised training of restroom attendants
- Higher toilet design guidelines

Owners especially coffee shops and hawker centres

- Specialised training of restroom attendants
- Higher toilet design guidelines
- Effective public awareness and engagement

The Keep Singapore Beautiful Movement, Public Hygiene Council and Singapore Kindness Movement

- Effective public awareness and engagement