

TAFEP 10th Anniversary –

10 Years of Creating Fair and Inclusive Workplaces and the Human Capital Partnership (HCP) Programme



It was a day of celebration as the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) reached an important milestone – its 10th anniversary. On 16 November 2016, Minister for Manpower Mr Lim Swee Say, TAFEP Co-Chairpersons Mr Heng Chee How and Mr Douglas Foo, joined TAFEP staff and over 500 guests to celebrate this special occasion at Resorts World Sentosa. Speaker of Parliament Mdm Halimah Jacob and Mr Bob Tan, the first Co-Chairpersons of TAFEP, also graced the occasion.

In his welcome address, Mr Foo highlighted TAFEP's key achievements and milestones over the last decade in promoting fair and progressive employment practices, such as the Tripartite Guidelines on Fair Employment Practices and the Fair@Work Promise. He said, "TAFEP's greater purpose is to help workers everywhere excel, by removing barriers that come in the form of stereotypes and biases. And when workers are able to perform to their fullest potential, their organisations will naturally enjoy success too." He added that moving forward, TAFEP will continue to improve workplace practices in Singapore, not just as an enabler, but also as an advocate and champion.

Mrs Roslyn Ten, General Manager of TAFEP, shared similar sentiments as to how TAFEP's role has evolved since it was established in 2006, from looking at workplace discrimination on age to also cover workplace discrimination on grounds of race, gender, religion, marital status, disability and nationality. She said, "(the growth in TAFEP's staff strength) signifies the importance of TAFEP's work which has expanded beyond building fair and inclusive workplaces in the early years, to championing and driving the adoption

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of progressive employment practices at the workplace today. TAFEP is fully committed to build on this momentum of advancing fair and progressive employment in Singapore.”

In his speech, Minister Lim highlighted the importance of valuing and investing in employees as “human capital”, regardless of their background and ages, in order to succeed in the manpower-lean economy of the future. To spread the culture and adoption of progressive and best practices to more workplaces in Singapore, Minister Lim launched the HCP Programme, which is supported by the tripartite partners and various economic and social agencies and is administered by TAFEP.

The Singapore Workforce comprises 2/3 locals and 1/3 foreigners. The HCP programme is a new tripartite initiative to bring together a community of progressive employers who are committed to grow their businesses and stay competitive by developing their human capital with the following outcomes:

- Stronger Singaporean Core by investing in the development of local employees across all levels (develop the 2/3).

- Stronger complementarity between local and foreign employees (1/3 complementing 2/3 instead of 1/3 competing with 2/3).
- Skills transfer from foreign to local employees to enhance capabilities of the local workforce (enhance overall competitiveness of the workforce i.e. $2/3 + 1/3 > 1$).

HCPartners will receive a range of benefits, such as green lane services, one-stop advisory services provided by TAFEP for better access to various assistance grants, schemes and programmes and recognition of the individual and collective efforts of the HCP community.

Minister Lim said, “The HCP is pro-business, pro-worker and pro-economy.” He encouraged all progressive employers, across all sizes and sectors, to commit to the three priority outcomes and to join the HCP community to strive for better jobs for our people, better workers for our businesses and more sustainable and inclusive growth for all.

“The HCP is pro-business, pro-worker and pro-economy... Let us work together, embrace the Human Capital mindset, and strive for better jobs for our people, better workers for our businesses, and more sustainable and inclusive growth for all.”

To find out more on the HCP, please visit <https://www.tafep.sg/human-capital-partnership-programme> or contact the TAFEP, HCP Programme Manager at 6302 2782 or hcpartner@tafep.sg.

Mandatory Retrenchment Reporting from 1 January 2017

From 1 January 2017, employers who retrench five or more employees within a six-month period must inform the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) within five working days after they provide the notice of retrenchment to the affected staff. The new rule, which is under the Workforce Singapore Agency Act, will apply to all employers with at least 10 employees. Failure to notify within the required timeline is an offence and employers may be liable on conviction to penalties such as fines up to \$5,000.

In a joint press release statement issued on 25 November 2016, the tripartite partners, namely MOM, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF), said that the new rule will allow more timely help to be provided to affected workers by Workforce Singapore (WSG) and the Taskforce for Responsible Retrenchment and Employment Facilitation.

Helping Workers Faster

At a visit to WSG Career Centre@Paya Lebar on 25 November 2016, Minister Lim Swee Say said that getting employees

Minister Lim said, "... the sooner we are notified of the retrenchment, the sooner we know who are the workers being affected, then we can move in faster to provide employment support, career support to the affected workers."

back to work was a top concern for the tripartite partners.

The Taskforce for Responsible Retrenchment and Employment Facilitation, led by WSG and comprises representatives from MOM, NTUC and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), will help retrenched local employees find alternative employment and provide relevant training to enhance their employability. Retrenched workers will receive earlier guidance on suitable jobs and be invited to attend workshops on handling interviews, among other things.

e2i's Chief Executive Officer Mr Gilbert Tan said, "Through e2i's expertise in career coaching, job matching and its wide network of partners, we can help them upgrade their skills competencies in a targeted way."

Chief Executive WSG Mr Tan Choon Shian said, "WSG will continue to strengthen our employment facilitation support for retrenched individuals and job seekers to meet the needs of hiring employers and facilitate job matching." Individuals affected by, or who think they may be at risk of, retrenchment can also

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proactively approach WSG or e2i for assistance.

Support from Tripartite Partners

Tripartite partners welcomed the move, and shared some of their concerns and feedback.

According to SNEF, its main concern was that smaller companies find it administratively difficult to keep tabs on retrenchment over a period of time. The exemption of companies with fewer than 10 employees will help to address this. SNEF and TAFEP will also be conducting briefing sessions to help employers familiarise themselves with the new requirements.

Some employers already go beyond the requirements, shared Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union (FDAQWU) General Secretary Mr Tan Hock Soon. "In a few recent cases, companies have informed us ahead of the required notice period of one month. They gave us three to six months' notice. In one case, a company retrenching employees gave us one and a half years notice to allow us to plan and gather the agencies to assist the affected workers," said Mr Tan.

For more information on the requirements for mandatory retrenchment notification, please visit <http://www.mom.gov.sg/notify-retrenchment>.

Singapore Tripartism Forum Age Management Seminar 2016

The tripartite partners jointly organised the 4th Age Management Seminar on 1 November 2016 at Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel which was graced by the Minister of State for Manpower, Mr Sam Tan. Themed "Breaking the Invisible 'Age' Barrier – Building Easier, Safer and Smarter Jobs", the seminar

aimed to promote age management strategies and to encourage employers to adopt job redesign to better attract and retain older workers. More than 200 human resource practitioners attended the seminar, where they benefited from the insights and best practices shared by the speakers and

panelists. Participants also learnt about the resources available to help them implement age management strategies such as the WorkPro Age Management Grant and Job Redesign Grant, and the Job Redesign Toolkit that was jointly developed by the tripartite partners.

