

**Remarks by NUS President Professor Tan Chorh Chuan
NUS' 110th Anniversary Launch Ceremony, 1 February 2015, 9.00am
Taman Jurong Community Club**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnan
Mayor, Central Singapore District, Ms Denise Phua
NUS Pro-Chancellor Mr Po'ad Mattar; NUS Chairman and Trustees
Grassroots Leaders, Residents and Friends of Taman Jurong
Students, Alumni, Staff and Colleagues of NUS, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning and a very warm welcome! Thank you very much for taking time on your Sunday morning to join us for this event. I particularly want to thank all our guests from Taman Jurong, who make time to join us.

As you've heard, this year is doubly special for NUS because it marks Singapore's 50th birthday and NUS' 110th Anniversary. Several of our guests asked me why we do not hold this event in the NUS campus but rather here in this very lovely space. So I want to explain that the launch of our 110th anniversary celebrations here in Taman Jurong is symbolic for at least two reasons.

The first is what I'll term historical symmetry. Let me explain.

As you all know, NUS traces its roots to a modest medical school founded in 1905 through the strong support of the community. Since then, that medical school has grown to become among the best in Asia and the world, yet the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine has remained true to its roots.

Through the NUS Medical Society, our students have been working with the Taman Jurong Citizen's Consultative Committee since 2008 to provide regular free health screening to residents in rental flats and following up with those with chronic diseases. This initiative has since grown to become the largest, student-run community service programme in the School, involving some 300 medical students as well as nursing and social work students. Last year, they screened close to 800 residents and by following up with those with chronic diseases, they have helped to significantly increase the proportion with good blood pressure control, by double the amount, from 42% to nearly 80%.

So, members of the community came together in 1905 to found the medical school and it's wonderful to recall that 110 years later, medical students from that school have now come together to set up the largest community service programme in this constituency and others.

The second reason is that NUS itself has changed dramatically to become the leading global university it is known for today. Along with this transformation, our university's tradition of serving and contributing to our country and society has continued to grow strongly. Beyond the pursuit of excellence and academic achievement, giving back to the community has remained an integral part of our education philosophy.

So, NUS110 is a very timely opportunity for us to reflect, share and celebrate service to the community and we felt it would be most meaningful for us to do this in the community, rather than on the NUS campus.

Over the years, NUS students and faculty have initiated and sustained a very large number of varied community programmes and activities. We have chosen some of these community initiatives to showcase here today at the NUS110 “Because We Care” exhibition, and we hope you will be able to view some of them later this morning.

So let me just briefly and very quickly highlight 2 examples.

Students in the NUS Community Service Club have been conducting weekly visits to the Bishan Home for the Intellectually Disabled. They initiate and run activities with the residents that encourage them to develop the skills and independence which would allow them to be more self-reliant in handling everyday tasks.

In terms of fund-raising for charities, the annual Rag and Flag which is solely organised by the NUS Students’ Union has raised over \$6 million since Year 2000 for beneficiaries under the Community Chest.

So we look back with some pride on what’s been achieved so far. But as part of our NUS110 celebrations, we also wish to reaffirm our strong and continued commitment to service to the community and society. So this morning, I am pleased to announce the launch of a new programme - NUS CARES.

NUS CARES stands for NUS **C**ommunity **A**dvancement with **R**esearch and **E**ducation **S**ynergies. It’s quite a mouthful but forgive us, we are academics after all. The goal, I think, is a very worthy one because our aim is to evolve NUS CARES as a distinctive approach that we feel will strongly complement existing and new community service initiatives in NUS, Singapore and beyond.

As the name suggests, the intent is for NUS CARES to become a solutioning platform. **A solutioning platform.** We will work with partners to identify persistent and important problems that they face in their community engagement programmes. We will then tap on NUS’ vast pool of student talent and academic expertise to study the selected problems, devise and pilot practical solutions, and where successful, disseminate the key learning points that would allow scaling up of effective practices.

Corporations can also participate in giving back to the community by leveraging on this platform through sponsorships; and in terms of experiential learning, NUS CARES will enable NUS students to be exposed to real-life issues affecting different segments of our community, study them in depth, and develop and implement possible solutions.

I am pleased that NUS CARES is off to a good start with our first three partners, namely Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC), National University Health System (NUHS) and the NUS Medical Society (MedSoc). It is my

pleasure to thank them for their partnership and for helping us to launch this programme.

Three initial projects, each with one partner, have been identified.

The first is, NUS CARES is partnering Central Singapore CDC to address the problems faced by their elderly and needy residents who need to use wheelchairs. We are very grateful to Mayor Denise Phua for her strong support and many ideas. For example, many of the elderly in her district do not have the strength and stamina to navigate their manual wheelchairs without the aid of a helper. On the other hand, motorised wheelchairs are costly and spare parts for their repair are lacking. So students from different engineering disciplines in NUS' Design-Centric Programme (DCP) will study these problems and formulate solutions which may include designing a wheelchair that is more affordable, robust and easy to use and maintain. They will then test-bed their solutions in Kampong Glam and successful ones will then be extended to the rest of the Central Singapore district.

The second project we are collaborating with involves the National University Health System and I am very grateful to the Chief Executive, John Wong, for his strong support. The focus will be on patients who are admitted to National University Hospital (NUH) three or more times within a year. These "frequent admitters" make up about 8% of the total number of patients, yet these 8% of patients account for about 25% of all inpatient admissions and take up nearly 100,000 bed-days every year. Nearly half of these admissions were for three days or less. What NUS CARES will do is to provide the additional expertise that will help NUHS to identify the behavioural, social and environmental factors that contribute to this high re-admission rate. Based on these findings, NUS CARES colleagues will work with NUHS to devise strategies to provide assistance and support to these patients at home so that they would not require such frequent admissions to hospital.

The third project is in partnership with the NUS Medical Society. With their Neighbourhood Health Service (NHS) programme now in its eighth year, MedSoc students are very keen to assess the social impact that they've created and how they may further improve the effectiveness of their programme. Through NUS CARES, students who had been trained in social impact measurement in the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme will work with the medical students to conduct a social return on investment (SROI) analysis of the Neighbourhood Health Service programme. These findings will provide the Medical Society with ground-level feedback on the impact and effectiveness of their programme and identify areas for further improvement.

I think we are off to a very exciting start and moving ahead, I believe that NUS CARES will add a new and different dimension for NUS to work with partners to make meaningful contributions to our community. We are very grateful for your strong support this morning and we invite you to extend your support further to our dedicated students and staff in their many efforts on the ground to be of service to those in need.

Before I end, I would like to extend my special thanks to Lam Soon Pte Ltd for contributing household provisions for 500 low income families under the

Neighbourhood Health Service programme in Taman Jurong. I know the students from the NUS Community Service Club and staff from the Office of Corporate Relations have been very busy packing all these provisions, which include items contributed by NUS. The students and staff will be delivering these provisions door-to-door later on.

In closing, I would like to thank our Guest-of-Honour, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, as well as Mayor Denise Phua, for gracing this opening event with your presence. My appreciation also to DPM and to Taman Jurong grassroots leaders for kindly allowing us the use of this very nice facility.

Thank you once again and I hope you have a very pleasant time in this event and also a very pleasant rest of your Sunday!

Thank you very much.