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THERE'S NO BETTER TIME TO SAY *I QUIT* SMOKING

National Smoking Control Campaign (NSCC) 2011 focuses on starting a ground-up quit smoking movement

Raymond Ng, aged 37, has one regret in his life - he never had the chance to quit smoking together with his beloved father as planned. His father suddenly passed away from heart disease more than three years ago. His greatest wish now is for his 33-year-old brother, who smokes 40 sticks daily, to quit smoking for the sake of his two young children.

2 Raymond started smoking at the age of 12. At his peak, he was smoking 60 sticks daily. Today, Raymond is smoke-free for the third year running after three attempts at quitting. He has no intention to revert to his old ways. He is finding good use for the \$700 monthly savings, his hypertension condition has improved, and his girlfriend is now glad to grant him more kisses.

3 Raymond wants to inspire and share his experience to help smokers quit. He says, "Anyone can do it. It is not an easy task but quitting won't kill you, smoking will."

Smoking – The Singapore Situation

4 The prevalence of adult smoking in Singapore has risen from 12.6% in 2004 to 14.3% in 2010¹, and this is despite aggressive measures to raise awareness of the harmful effects of smoking, and other measures such as increased taxation.

5 The National Health Survey 2010 findings have shown that smoking has risen most sharply in the age groups of 18-29 and 30-39 years. An increase has also been seen mainly among males. There is also a large proportion of smokers in households with income of below \$2,000 a month.

¹ Source: National Health Survey 2010 – The prevalence of Singapore residents, aged 18-69 years, who smoked daily.

6 HPB CEO, Mr Ang Hak Seng said, “HPB’s focus is to get adults to quit smoking. Our mission is to stem the increase in smoking and achieve a reduction to below 10%.

7 “We are adopting a targeted ground-up approach. Our survey indicates that the majority of smokers are male. National service is a natural catchment to reach Singaporean males. For example, we are working with the Singapore Police Force Training Command in a customised in-camp smoking intervention programme that has seen a success rate of 94% in quitting and reduction in cigarette consumption. Our survey also shows that a large proportion of smokers come from the low income groups. Many of them currently receive financial assistance. We are now working with the CDCs to provide free smoking cessation counselling to recipients who are smokers.

8 “To achieve this ground-up approach, we need to work with the *People, Public and Private* sectors. Through more than 100 touchpoints, we can provide convenient and accessible programmes which will touch a smoker wherever he is, at home or at work. Our research has shown that in fact, more than half of all smokers want to quit. The *I Quit* movement will leverage on this desire and improve the quit rate.”

People – Accessible Resources within the Community

9 Studies have shown that it takes a smoker an average of six to seven attempts before successfully quitting smoking, and smokers are also more likely to quit successfully through a supportive environment. With this in mind, this year’s NSCC adopts a community-based, yet personalised approach that encourages smokers to build a network of support to tap into, to make their first or next attempt at quitting smoking a success.

10 The measures being brought into effect via NSCC 2011 include the community-based *I Quit* Clubs (*Refer to Annex I for more details*). These are support groups organised by grassroots organisations to befriend smokers in their community and encourage them to quit smoking. Through these support groups, contemplators can access resources to help them quit. Grassroots leaders, with the support of HPB, are being trained to provide support and be a ready source of information for smokers who want to quit smoking.

11 Research shows that smokers who quit with support are more likely to succeed. The *I Quit* Club builds on this evidence as well as the success of HPB’s earlier smoking cessation programme, *Cabaran Segar* (meaning ‘*Fresh Challenge*’), which focused on the Malay community and leveraged on relationships to support the quit process. Last year’s *Cabaran Segar* saw a 20% success rate, which is double that of international norms for community settings. *Cabaran Segar* participants have since formed their own support network, reaching out to help other smokers, validating that a community-based programme works.

12 To ensure that quit counselling is readily available to all, free smoking cessation counselling will be extended to lower-income families via the Community Development Councils (CDCs). All five CDCs have adopted this project and will implement it in their respective communities (*Refer to Annex II for more details*).

13 With the prevalence of mobile and online communications in Singapore, and the need for smokers to have 'anytime, anywhere' access to resources, HPB has created an online quit community on Facebook. HPB has also leveraged a smartphone application that tracks real-time progress of a smoker's quit journey and delivers quit tips and motivational messages on a 24/7 basis. HPB's Quitline (1800-438 2000) has also extended its counselling service to new platforms including SMS (9463 3771) and Windows Live Messenger (MSN Messenger), which are available during office hours for those seeking support from a qualified quit consultant.

Public – Rallying the Troops

14 Given that the largest proportion of smokers is male and that national service is a natural catchment to reach Singaporean males, HPB will be working to strengthen programmes in collaboration with the Singapore Police Force (SPF), the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). For example, the Singapore Police Force Training Command has started a customised in-camp smoking intervention programme that leverages on both direct counselling and peer group support. HPB will also continue to mount an inter-agency effort with NEA, HSA and Singapore Customs to fight the tobacco problem.

Private – Workplace Programme takes Flight

15 HPB has worked with 50 companies on Workplace Smoking Control Programmes and is now embarking on an enhanced targeted programme. Industries with typically higher numbers of smoker employees, such as Manufacturing, Transport and Storage, Hospitality and Wholesale and Retail industries will be targeted for specific tobacco control initiatives for their staff. Under this programme, HPB is working with 10 multinational as well as small and medium-sized (SME) companies. Facilitators will receive training to build their capabilities to assess the smokers' needs and offer a programme to meet their unique working environment, such as shift work that does not afford time off-site. Not only will the programme be more accessible through partnership with quit counsellors to provide on-site counselling and nicotine replacement therapy, but also via the Quitline counselling services - phone and SMS - that will enhance timely support. Companies such as BD Medical and NatSteel have already signed on to this Workplace Smoking Control Programme (*Refer to Annex III for more details*).

16 Guardian, Watsons and Unity Pharmacies will offer free smoking cessation consultations to *I Quit* participants for a period of one year to support the *I Quit* movement. Their pharmacists are progressively being trained by HPB to be quit consultants, under our Pharmacist Health Ambassador Programme. Another supporting partner of the NSCC 2011 is Johnson & Johnson.

17 For more information on *I Quit*, please visit <http://www.hpb.gov.sg> and the *I Quit* Facebook Page at <http://www.facebook.com/IQUITClub>.

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I Quit Club – From outreach to mentorship

The *I Quit Club* is a community-based special interest group which comprises smokers who have pledged to quit and ex-smokers who are ready to provide support and encouragement to smokers as they attempt to quit. The Club members will be brought together by grassroots organisations within each constituency.

The grassroots volunteers will recruit smokers in their constituency for a structured cessation programme at the Community Clubs, or direct them to the nearest cessation services such as a neighborhood pharmacy. The grassroots volunteers will also provide friendship and mentorship to the smokers they come in contact with, to see them through their quit journey.

To equip the grassroots volunteers for this initiative, training will be provided by qualified HPB-appointed Quit consultants. The training will address the necessary skills required to provide encouragement and support to a smoker. Through an interactive and hands-on training session, the grassroots volunteers will practise skills for recruiting and providing mentorship to the smokers.

Currently, four constituencies, namely Admiralty, Braddell Heights, Bukit Batok East and Bukit Timah, have formed a pool of grassroots volunteers who are ready to establish the *I Quit Club* and reach out to smokers in their constituencies. HPB's target is to form 10 community-based *I Quit Clubs* by the end of this year.

Besides the community-based *I Quit Clubs* at the constituency level, participants from smoking control programmes under *I Quit* at the workplaces and other community or public platforms can also form their own *I Quit Club*, based on the *I Quit Club's* principles of outreach and mentorship.

An example would be the participants from *Cabaran Segar* (which means '*Fresh Challenge*'), a Malay-centric smoking cessation programme that was held in early 2011. With a tailored buddy support system, *Cabaran Segar* participants have established a deep sense of camaraderie and have now formed their own special *I Quit* interest group. The participants are still in constant contact, supporting each other to stay smoke-free and when meeting at outings, football games and barbeques.

Smoking Control Programme for Financial Aid Recipients

Smoking is a luxurious habit which cost Singaporeans in terms of:

- cost of the cigarettes;
- opportunity cost of smoking-related work absenteeism; and
- expenditure on healthcare for smoking related diseases.

Consistently across developed countries, a major part of the economic burden of smoking falls on the lower income groups.

In an effort to address this, HPB is working with all five Community Development Councils (CDC) in an initiative to encourage low-income families to quit smoking. The programme helps families recognise the costs of smoking and hence make an informed choice to more efficiently manage their income, by:

- educating and exposing Financial Aid Recipients (FARs) to healthier lifestyle choices;
- helping FARs recognise the costs of smoking; and
- providing affordable, tailored support to smokers who are ready to quit smoking.

To tailor the programme to better reach the smokers, a two-pronged strategy is adopted to meet the needs of the clients – those ready to quit and those who may need additional encouragement to commit to attempt to quit.

Based on their readiness to quit, CDC officers will be able to channel smokers to the most appropriate intervention strategies.

All smoker FARs under the Work Support and ComCare Transition schemes are required to attend the programme. Smokers, however, will not be forced to quit smoking by the end of the programme in order to continue receiving financial aid.

Smoking Control Programme for Workplaces

The workplace is a unique setting to reach those industries with a higher prevalence of employee smokers. To cater to the needs of employees, workplaces which offer a HPB-supported programme have both an on-site component as well as off-site support to help smokers remain smoke-free. The programme is a continuum of support for smokers who want to quit and to prevent relapse.

The smoking control programme conducts on-site face-to-face smoking cessation counseling for three months. The counseling sessions are coupled with monthly support group sessions, where a befriender is among those within the workplace going through their quit journey together. Thereafter, the programme will leverage on off-site referrals to cessation service providers such as HPB's Quitline consultants for telephone or SMS follow-up.

To encourage employers and employees to make the transition, HPB provides practical support in terms of financial grants to implement the programme, capacity building and knowledge resources for the workplace health facilitator, as well as recognition through the Singapore Health Awards which adds to the employer's overall branding and employee value proposition.

Employers play a key role in facilitating a successful quit attempt. HPB has worked with some workplaces that have supportive policies in place, such as provision of time-off for employees to attend the programme and identified role models and quit champions. These factors have contributed to a lowering in smoking prevalence in these workplaces.