

OPENING CEREMONY OF SAFE SPACE @ PAVE

Speech by Mr Michael Gray

President, PAVE Management Committee

20 March 2018

President Halimah Yacob

MP for Nee Soon GRC, Mr Louis Ng

Permanent Secretary for MSF, Mr Chew Hock Yong

Deputy Secretary for MSF, Dr Lee Tung Jean

Friends of PAVE

Madam President Halimah Yacob, welcome and thank you for officiating at the opening of SAFE SPACE @ PAVE. You have long been a supporter of social services, and we are honoured by your presence today. MP for Nee Soon GRC, Mr Louis Ng, thank you for joining us this morning -- with Safe Space located in your constituency, we look forward to working with you.

Today is a special day for PAVE and all of us who care about family violence and its impact on children. Children are precious, so when we hear how they are hurt or see them in pain, it is particularly disturbing.

Children were the reason PAVE started as an organisation dealing with family violence 19 years ago. We recognised early that domestic violence can have long-lasting effects on children if not

addressed early. Over many years of working with children, as well as adults, PAVE's social workers have seen over and over again how child abuse exists alongside family violence in many cases.

MSF's own study in 2015 showed that in more than 50 per cent of cases analysed, child abuse occurred together with domestic violence. So, locating a Child Protection Specialist Centre with a specialist centre for family violence is a step in the right direction, and PAVE was happy to say yes when MSF chose us to open Singapore's third Child Protection Specialist Centre.

The issues in this area of social work are complicated and the situations can be quite sad. But if children have a Safe Space to have their voices heard and their feelings acknowledged, we offer them a different life journey – one that hopefully will allow them to enjoy their childhood and move on.

There are many who have helped to make this Centre a reality and I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all.

First of all, Madam President, let me thank you for advocating for specialist centres to get an increase in funding when you were Senior Minister of State at MSF. We are grateful for the support from you, as well as from MSF and NCSS, as it has allowed social work professionals to do their job without worrying about funding.

We thank MSF's Child Protection Branch, for being such collaborative partners through this difficult but important work with children who are abused. All of us at PAVE appreciate the

Child Protective Service officers we work closely with for the good of our clients.

As the song we just heard, “Note to God”, says, we cannot do this work healing broken relationships alone. Indeed, all that you see today -- from the Safe Space logo to the backdrop of this stage , the video you are about to watch, the TV, the paintings on the wall, the posters, the toys, the games that you will see -- has come together thanks to the donations and efforts of many who gave of their time and creativity voluntarily to make this centre child-friendly and child-focused. To everyone who helped to make this a Safe Space for our children, thank you.

On behalf of PAVE’s management committee, I would also like to acknowledge and thank our team of social workers at Safe Space who are dedicated to helping children. Despite the difficulties you encounter, including from irate parents and families, you remain resolute in your desire to make life a little better for distressed children.

Safe Space is honoured to join our friends and fellow professionals at Big Love and Heart at Fei Yue in running Child Protection Specialist Centres and working to make a difference in many children’s lives. When we change children’s lives for the better, we change a generation of future families.

Thank you.