

PRESS RELEASE
REPORT OF THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

1. Under Standing Order 100(6), it is the duty of the Public Petitions Committee to consider all Petitions referred to it under the provisions of Standing Order No. 18 [*Petitions*], to classify such Petitions, prepare abstracts thereof in such form and manner as shall appear to it best suited to convey to Parliament all requisite information respecting their contents and the signatures attached thereto and to report the same from time to time to Parliament.

2. The petition of Mr Koh Eng Khoon, Mr Hong Theng Hoh, Mr Sonny Liew and others of like opinion entitled “Relocation of the Sungei Road Market and Stallholders” was presented by Nominated Member Mr Kok Heng Leun to Parliament on 3 July 2017 and referred to the Public Petitions Committee.

3. In the course of its enquiry, the Committee requested the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources to provide a written response to the petition as well as a proposed plan to relocate the Sungei Road Market titled “Robinson Petang 2.0 Free Hawking Zone” that the Committee received from Mr Kok Heng Leun on 7 July 2017.

4. The Committee presented its report on the petition entitled “Relocation of the Sungei Road Market and Stallholders” to Parliament on 1 November 2017. The Report of the Public Petitions Committee [Parl 8 of 2017] is attached.

5. Speaker Tan Chuan-Jin, the Chairman of the Committee said,

“A petition is basically a request for action and has been described as the oldest parliamentary tool where the earliest legislation was, in fact, no more than a petition which had been agreed to by the English Kings. Back then, a petition was the only way for the people to express their views on a subject of concern.

While petitions continue to be a part of the parliamentary practice in some modern Westminster Parliaments, including Singapore, the advent of technology now enables citizens to express their views directly to the Government and MPs through emails, on-line platforms and social media. The act of petitioning to Parliament remains symbolic of this opportunity for a citizen to make his concerns known to Government and Members.

The duty of the Public Petitions Committee is to consider, classify and summarise a petition in a form and manner that best conveys all the necessary information in a report to Parliament. It is for Members to then pursue the matter further in Parliament, if they wish to, by asking a question or introducing a motion.

The Public Petitions Committee has completed its work on the petition entitled ‘Relocation of the Sungei Road Market and Stallholders’. All the necessary information, including a summary of the petition and a memorandum from the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, is included in our report to Parliament.”

1 November 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

For general queries, please contact:
Parliament Secretariat
Email: parl@parl.gov.sg

THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT OF SINGAPORE

First Session

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Parl. 8 of 2017

Presented to Parliament on

1 November 2017

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Members

Mr Speaker (Mr Tan Chuan-Jin)
Chairman

Mdm Halimah Yacob (*Chairman until 7 August 2017*)

Miss Cheryl Chan Wei Ling

Dr Janil Puthucheary
Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information and
Ministry of Education

Mr Desmond Lee (*effective from 12 September 2017*)
Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for
National Development

Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang

Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng
Mayor, Central Singapore CDC

Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong

Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye

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REPORT OF THE PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

The Public Petitions Committee appointed pursuant to Standing Order 100(6) has agreed to the following report:

1 The petition of Mr Koh Eng Khoon, Mr Hong Theng Hoh, Mr Sonny Liew and others of like opinion entitled “Relocation of the Sungei Road Market and Stallholders” was presented by Nominated Member Mr Kok Heng Leun to Parliament on 3 July 2017. There were 792 valid signatories to the petition.

2 A copy of the petition (without the accompanying signatory pages) is attached as Appendix I. A summary of the petition is as follows:

The Petitioners pray for Members to designate an alternative site for the relocation of the Sungei Road Market; to dialogue empathetically, genuinely and comprehensively with the Sungei Road Market vendors and to refer the issue of relocation of the Sungei Road market to a Select Committee of Parliament.

3 The Committee further received a proposed plan to relocate the Sungei Road Hawking Zone (SRHZ) titled “Robinson Petang 2.0 Free Hawking Zone” from Mr Kok Heng Leun on 7 July 2017.

4 Under Standing Order 100(6), the duty of the Committee is to consider all Petitions referred to it, prepare abstracts thereof in such form and manner as shall appear to it best suited to convey to Parliament all requisite information respecting their contents and the signatures attached thereto and to report the same from time to time to Parliament.

5 The Committee noted that the authority to designate an alternative site for the relocation of the SRHZ resides with the Government, and not with the Committee. The Committee further noted that the process for appointing a Select Committee to formally

inquire into a subject matter is by way of a motion agreed to by Parliament as provided for under Standing Order 101.

6 The Committee agreed to submit the petition and the proposed relocation plan to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) for its consideration and to request the Ministry to provide a written response to this Committee.

7 A written response from MEWR to queries raised by the Committee was received on 7 August 2017. Due to changes in the Committee's membership, the Committee considered MEWR's written response at its meeting on 17 October 2017. As some time had lapsed since the submission of MEWR's written response, the Committee then sought an updated memorandum from MEWR. The updated written response from MEWR was subsequently received on 23 October 2017 and is attached as Appendix II.

8 MEWR's response to the Committee's queries is summarised below:

- (a) On relocation of the SRHZ, MEWR reiterated the Government's policy of resettling street hawking activities in purpose-built hawker centres. It said the Government had extended help to the SRHZ users who had chosen to continue their trade at hawker centres or community flea markets. The Government had addressed parliamentary questions on this issue at the Parliament sittings on 15 October 2012, 4 August 2014, 3 April 2017, 3 July 2017 and 11 September 2017. As of 13 October 2017, 37 hawker stalls had been allocated to interested SRHZ users and another 30 SRHZ users had been assisted to operate at flea markets.
- (b) On the Government's engagement with the SRHZ users, MEWR informed the Committee that different Government agencies had engaged more than 200 users who used to operate at SRHZ. MEWR assured the Committee that officers on the ground would continue to keep a lookout for and to engage any of the SRHZ users who may require assistance.
- (c) On referring the issue of relocating the SRHZ to a Select Committee of Parliament, MEWR was of the view that the issue had been extensively discussed

in Parliament and there was no need to refer the matter to a Select Committee of Parliament.

9 The Committee considered the petition and MEWR's memorandum and has no further information to convey to the House.

Petition Presented to Parliament on 3 July 2017

Presented by Kok Heng Leun (Nominated Member)

PETITION

To the Honourable Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Singapore, in meeting assembled.

The humble Petition of Koh Eng Khoon, Hong Theng Hoh, Sonny Liew and others of like opinion

SHOWETH THAT:

Petition for Relocation of the Sungei Road Market and Stall Holders

Whereas the Sungei Road Market, being the only living remnant of the grassroots tradition of free hawking in Singapore, is an invaluable and irreplaceable element of the organic intangible heritage and communal identity of our country;

The Sungei Road Market is the indispensable means of livelihood of the many dozens of elderly vendors who have few or no practicable alternatives; yet are supporting themselves and contributing to our community and shared social fabric through the Sungei Road Market, and have done so for decades;

And the Sungei Road Market renders an invaluable contribution to our country's grassroots sense of community, continuity and shared memory by providing and facilitating a common space rooted in and supported by a long and rich history which tracks the tapestry of Singapore's development;

Now we, the undersigned, petition the Honourable Members to

1. Designate an alternate site to which the Sungei Road Market may be relocated;
2. Dialogue empathetically, genuinely and comprehensively with the Sungei Road Market vendors;
3. Refer the issue of relocation of the Sungei Road Market to a Select Committee for further public consultation and deliberation.

Dated this 19 day of May 2017

Name: Koh Eng Khoon
Name: Hong Theng Hoh
Name: Sonny Liew
No. of Signatories: 792

The above petition is in accordance with the provisions of the relevant rules in paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 18 (Petitions).

Clerk of Parliament
Singapore, 5 June 2017

Written Response from the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources

23 October 2017

SUNGEI ROAD HAWKING ZONE

We refer to the Public Petitions Committee's request for the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) to address the following matters related to the Sungei Road Hawking Zone (SRHZ):-

- A. Whether, in view of the proposals in the "Robinson Petang 2.0 Free Hawking Zone" concept plan, the Government will consider designating an alternate site to which the Sungei Road Market may be relocated;
- B. What steps have been taken by the Ministry and other Government agencies to dialogue empathetically, genuinely and comprehensively with the Sungei Road market vendors and whether there is a need for further dialogue; and
- C. Whether in the Ministry's view, there is any need to refer the issue of relocation of Sungei Road Market to a Select Committee for further public consultation.

2. This note sets out MEWR's response.

A. Relocation of the Sungei Road Market

3. With regard to the proposal for the SRHZ to be relocated to an alternative site under the "Robinson Petang 2.0 Free Hawking Zone" concept plan, we note that the issue of the relocation of the SRHZ has been comprehensively addressed in Parliament on several occasions.¹

4. During the Parliamentary sitting on 3 July 2017, Senior Minister of State (SMS) for the Environment and Water Resources Dr Amy Khor responded to a question filed by the Member of Parliament Er Dr Lee Bee Wah on whether the Government would reconsider its decision not to provide a replacement site for the SRHZ. In her response, SMS Dr Amy Khor had recounted the history of the SRHZ in the context of the Government's long-standing policy of resettling street hawking activities in purpose-built hawker centres. Moreover, the nature of the SRHZ had changed over time and the activities of the SRHZ had resulted in disamenities in the surrounding areas, posing risks to public health and incurring additional public resources to upkeep the public areas. Nevertheless, the Government had sought to allow the SRHZ to remain in operation for as long as possible, even though the area had been zoned for residential use.

5. Rather than relocate the SRHZ, the Government is actively helping SRHZ users who wish to continue their trade to do so at hawker centres or community flea markets where such activities can be properly managed. Government agencies such as the National Environment Agency (NEA),

¹ This issue was raised at the Parliamentary sittings on 15 October 2012, 4 August 2014, 3 April 2017, 3 July 2017 and 11 September 2017.

Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), and Workforce Singapore (WSG), and community organisations such as the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC) have also been assisting SRHZ users with financial, employment and social support, to help them with their transition.

6. As of 13 October 2017, we have allocated 37 hawker stalls to interested users and assisted another 30 users to operate at flea markets. We are extending relevant support to the users as they take time to settle in, adapt and build up their businesses at the new locations.²

7. We have received positive feedback from some of the users operating at the hawker stalls and flea markets. For instance, Mdm Tan Guo Mei, who currently operates a stall at the Chinatown Market, shared that the hawker stall which was allocated to her provides shelter from the elements and allows her to market her goods at all times, regardless of the weather. Mr Hew Beong Fah, who is also operating at the Chinatown Market, appreciates the fact that his allocated hawker stall provides him with the space to properly categorise and display his products. Such users are adapting to running their new hawker stalls and are keen to continue expanding their offerings and improving their display methods to increase their sales.

B. Government's Engagement with the SRHZ Users

8. Since 2012, the Association for the Recycling of Second Hand Goods (the Association) had been informed that there were redevelopment plans for the SRHZ area and that notice would be given to the users to cease operations upon confirmation of the details of the implementation timeline. MEWR had also informed the House in October 2012 that the users had been advised by the NEA to anticipate the redevelopment and to make alternative plans.

9. On 22 July 2014, NEA had reiterated that there would be no relocation of the SRHZ. When the site occupied by the SRHZ was eventually required by the Ministry of National Development (MND) for ground preparation works to facilitate future public housing development, NEA notified the Association on 13 February 2017 of the impending closure of SRHZ, giving 5 months' lead time before its last day of operation on 10 July 2017.

10. NEA and the relevant Government agencies announced the closure of the site on 14 February 2017 through a joint media release. To ensure that all users were made aware of the closure, NEA put up banners and notices at the SRHZ.

11. As part of the Government's communication and engagement with SRHZ users, NEA, MSF and WSG proactively reached out to the SRHZ users personally to understand the concerns of each individual and offer relevant assistance options. In particular, during the period from April to July 2017, officers from NEA and other agencies walked the ground at SRHZ on weekdays and weekends to personally offer lock-up stalls at hawker centres,³ link them up with flea market operators with

² For example, NEA has worked with the Singapore Institute of Retail Studies to organise a 2-day course (Handle Merchandise Display) for users so that they can learn how to better display their goods and increase sales. NEA has also continued to engage SRHZ users by, for example, visiting them at their hawker stalls to render assistance where they can.

³ For original permit holders, NEA offered the hawker stalls at a subsidised rental. In addition, NEA offered a full rental waiver for the 1st year and a 50% subsidy off the subsidised rental for the 2nd year. For the other SRHZ users, NEA offered hawker stalls at assessed market rental and in addition, 50% subsidy off the

stalls that had been set aside for them, as well as facilitated financial, social and job placement assistance to the SRHZ users who needed it.

12. As for the 11 original permit holders,⁴ NEA had also visited them at their homes to brief them on the assistance options⁵ offered to them and subsequently organised a dedicated session to further explain the various forms of assistance as well as to address their concerns.⁵

13. For users who were interested in the lock-up stalls, NEA officers had assisted them in making the applications and explained to them that they could appoint immediate family members as stall assistants to assist them. For users who were interested in operating at flea markets, NEA officers made arrangements with the relevant Community Club personnel to bring them around the flea markets to give them a better sense of the location and clientele.

14. NEA also worked closely with the community to help the SRHZ users transit to plying their trade at hawker centres or flea markets. For example, the Central Singapore CDC assisted the SRHZ users under their Transition Assistance Programme (TAP) with flea market rental subsidies for up to 6 months, capped at \$1,000. The Chinatown Complex Hawkers Association (CCHA) had also organised a welcome event for the SRHZ users who took up stalls at Chinatown Market⁶ and offered the SRHZ users free CCHA membership for a year. In addition, Central Singapore CDC, is working with the voluntary welfare organisations, volunteers, institutes of higher learning and corporates to help the SRHZ users selling second-hand goods refurbish and promote their stalls.

15. The officers from MSF had conducted home visits to reach out to those who were interested in applying for financial assistance but could not be reached by telephone or were unable to go to the Social Service Offices. In addition, many Grassroots Advisers and community leaders have been visiting the SRHZ users residing in their constituencies in their homes to check if they require further community assistance.

16. We have assisted all SRHZ users who have come forward and are in need of help. All in, the government agencies have comprehensively engaged more than 200 users who operate at SRHZ.⁷ As of 13 October 2017, the NEA and the other Government agencies have provided various forms of assistance to almost 90 users. Besides the close to 40 users who have been allocated stalls at

assessed market rental for the first 2 years for those living in public housing and who do not own more than one property. Furthermore, to reduce the upfront cost involved, SRHZ users who have difficulty paying the 2-month security deposit will be allowed to pay a 1-month deposit; and can also defer paying this until 2 months after the commencement of their tenancy.

⁴ In the 1970s to 1980s, when the Government resettled street hawkers into purpose-built markets and hawker centres with proper amenities, 31 rag-and-bone men who operated on the streets were not included in the resettlement programme. Instead, they were issued permits to continue to operate at the Sungei Road site. Of these 31, only 11 permit holders continued to operate at the SRHZ until recently. ⁵ At the home visits, NEA shared that if the permit holders required further financial assistance, they could approach their nearest Social Service Office (SSO) or contact ComCare. NEA also shared that if the permit holders required further employment assistance, they could visit or call the Workforce Singapore or the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) Career Centres.

⁵ The briefing session for the 11 original permit holders was organised on 17 February 2017.

⁶ 11 out of the 13 SRHZ users at the centre attended the welcome event on 27 June 2017.

⁷ An average of 150 users operated at the SRHZ on weekdays and an average of 200 operated at the SRHZ during weekends or public holidays.

hawker centres, about 30 other users have been assisted to operate at flea market stalls while about 20 users have received either financial or employment assistance.

17. The NEA and the other Government Agencies have continued to reach out to the 70 or so SRHZ users who had earlier indicated interest in receiving assistance but had not come forward to NEA. Fewer than 10 users have not decided on the assistance options offered and have yet to make any applications. We will continue to stay in touch with them. More than 90 SRHZ users have told us that they do not require any assistance. This is because they are able to support themselves, or their families can support them, or they have full-time jobs elsewhere. Nevertheless, our officers on the ground will continue to keep a lookout for and engage any of the SRHZ users who require assistance.

18. NEA and the relevant Government agencies have been keeping the general public informed of their efforts through joint media statements, such as on 11 April, 11 May and 16 June 2017.

C. Whether to Refer Issue of Relocation of SRHZ to a Select Committee

19. The issue of the closure and relocation of the SRHZ has been extensively discussed in Parliament, notably on 3 April 2017 and 3 July 2017. In view of this, MEWR is of the view that there is no need to refer the relocation of the Sungei Road Market to a Select Committee for further public consultation.

Minutes of Proceedings

1st Meeting

Tuesday, 11 July 2017

2.00 pm

PRESENT

Mdm Speaker (Mdm Halimah Yacob) (*in the Chair*)
Miss Cheryl Chan Wei Ling
Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang
Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng
Mr Tan Chuan-Jin
Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong
Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye

ABSENT

Dr Janil Puthucheary

1. The Committee deliberated.
2. The Committee agreed to write to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources to submit a memorandum on matters raised.

Adjourned to a date to be fixed.

2nd Meeting

Tuesday, 17 October 2017

12 noon

PRESENT

Mr Speaker (Mr Tan Chuan-Jin) (*in the Chair*)
Miss Cheryl Chan Wei Ling
Dr Janil Puthucheary
Mr Desmond Lee
Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang
Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong

ABSENT

Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng
Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye

-
1. The Committee deliberated.
 2. The Committee agreed to write to the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources for updates on the Petition on Sungei Road Hawking Zone.
 3. As the Committee also received another Petition, it agreed to write to the Ministry of National Development to submit a memorandum on matters raised on the Petition on More Inclusive Provision of Public Housing for Single Parents.

Adjourned to a date to be fixed.

3rd Meeting

Tuesday, 31 October 2017

5.00 pm

PRESENT

Mr Speaker (Mr Tan Chuan-Jin) (*in the Chair*)

Miss Cheryl Chan Wei Ling

Dr Janil Puthucheary

Mr Desmond Lee

Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang

Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng

Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong

Mr Melvin Yong Yik Chye

1. The Committee deliberated.

Report

2. The Chairman's report brought up and read the first time.
3. Resolved, "That the Chairman's report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph."

Paragraphs 1 to 9 inclusive read and agreed to.

4. Resolved, "That this report be the Report of the Committee to Parliament."
5. Agreed that the Chairman do present the Report to Parliament.

Adjourned to a date to be fixed.
