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# Media Release



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News Editor

## **Bringing Free Case Talks on Consumer Rights into Heartlands to Empower Residents**

- **South West CDC and CASE collaborate to educate residents in South West District against falling prey to errant retailers**

Moving in to a new home often marks a significant milestone in one's life. However, common concerns faced by new residents include falling prey to errant retailers and proper avenues to redress grievances. Out of 19,000 complaints received by the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) in 2016, 1,300 complaints were related to contractors<sup>1</sup>. The South West Community Development Council, in partnership with CASE have brought a series of CASE talks on consumer rights straight to the heartlands, to help homeowners-to-be mitigate potential consumer pitfalls in home renovations. The fifth of such talks will be held at the Housing & Development Board (HDB)'s MyNiceHome roadshow for Bukit Gombak Vista in an effort to provide greater outreach and accessibility to the residents and over 200 families moving into Bukit Gombak Vista.

2 29-year-old Mr Jeremy Wong, and his fiancée Ms Sheery Lau, 28, both first-time homeowners, attended the first instalment of the CASE talk. He found the talk useful and feels that the talk has helped them to be more savvy consumers. "It is our

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<sup>1</sup> "Statistics." *CASE – Consumer Guides | Statistics*, 2016, [www.case.org.sg/consumer\\_guides\\_statistics.aspx](http://www.case.org.sg/consumer_guides_statistics.aspx)

first time buying and renovating a flat. We learnt some basic useful information such as the need to check contractors' background and reviews before engaging them," says Ms Lau. Mr Wong added that the tips he learnt would reduce their risk of experiencing "horror stories where renovation firms close down suddenly and abandon the job".

3 "The renovation talks by CASE are especially useful for many first-time home owners who are moving into the South West district," says Mayor Low. "By educating them on their consumer rights, and what to expect from contractors or interior designers, we hope to equip and empower our residents with the knowledge they need for a successful renovation. These roadshows involving HDB and CASE are an example of how South West CDC frequently collaborates with different partners to customise programmes and outreaches that meet the needs of our residents."

4 Over the past year, the South West CDC and CASE has organised a total of 4 talks in the district, reaching out to close to 800 participants. These talks covered topics such as the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA), Lemon Law, CaseTrust Accreditation Scheme, Mediation, and Things to Know When Renovating as part of the CASE talk series. Moving forward, more talks will be brought in to promote greater awareness amongst residents.

5 "The complaints received by CASE for the renovation industry usually include multiple delays and unsatisfactory renovation works, or worse, contractors that become uncontactable after collecting payment," says Mr Lim Biow Chuan, President of CASE. "Many consumers tend to pay a large deposit, and some even pay in full upfront to the renovation contractor. It is therefore important that they know their consumer rights, in order to better protect their pre-payments, and limit their exposure. The South West CASE talks are part of our efforts to educate consumers intending to renovate their homes in these aspects. We are happy to collaborate with the CDC to create more awareness to more consumers."

### **About the South West Community Development Council (CDC)**

The South West Community Development Council (CDC) was formed on 24 November 2001, with the mission to Assist the Needy, Bond the People and Connect the Community.

Through local help programmes, the South West CDC provides assistance to help the less fortunate in our community. The South West CDC also organises projects and programmes to promote community bonding and social cohesion. The South West CDC adopts the "Many Helping Hands" approach to encourage community ownership among residents, community partners and corporations to realise its vision of "Owning Your Community".

### **About the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE)**

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that is committed towards protecting consumers' interest through information and education, and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of their key achievements is in advocating for Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA), which came into effect on 1 March 2004.