

**Women's Wing Conference/ Women's Wing 35th Anniversary Commemoration
31 Aug 2024**

Speech by SMS Sim Ann, Chairman of Women's Wing

PM and Dy Sec Gen Comrade Lawrence Wong

Ministers

MPs and Branch Chairs

Retired WMPs

WW Exco Members

Sisters and brothers from the NTUC

Activists and Partners

1 Welcome to the PAP Women's Wing Conference 2024 – ably organised by our comrade MP Rachel Ong.

2 This year's WW Conference is special for 2 reasons.

3 First reason – we are excited to have as our GOH Comrade Lawrence Wong, who is attending a WW event for the first time since taking on his new role as Singapore's fourth Prime Minister.

4 Second reason – the Women's Wing turns 35 this year!

a. It is a significant milestone

b. And a good time for us to take stock of WW's past and present, and look towards to its future

Establishment of the Women's Wing

5 PAP Women's Wing was born in 1989.

a. A good 35 years after the Party was established

b. And 3 years after the PAP Youth Wing was set up

c. Think about it ladies – we are actually younger than the Youth Wing!

6 The relatively recent arrival of WW into the PAP family tells us, of course, that getting more women involved in political work has never been easy.

7 Although half of our voters are women, electoral politics has traditionally been a male-dominated field.

8 But, with constant progress in women's education and opportunities, things have been changing for women, in many professions, in business, in sports, in culture – and in political activism on the ground as well as political representation.

9 This is the kind of progress that our WW founding Chair longed to see back in 1989. Together with Dr. Dixie Tan and Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Prof. Aline Wong was among the 3 women MPs elected in 1984.

10 That ended a long drought of 14 years when there was not a single woman MP in Parliament, after Mdm Chan Choy Siong retired.

11 As the first Women's Wing chair (1989 - 2001), Prof. Aline Wong sought to empower women to shape the nation's future and become more active and vocal in politics.

12 Her first initiative was to encourage PAP branches to establish a Women's Committee in their branch, with designated leadership roles.

13 Our second Women's Wing chair, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua (2002 – 2011) expanded Women's Wing reach.

14 She launched Project WINGS: Women Inspiring, Nurturing and Grooming Singaporeans to connect women and children with opportunities for economic and social development.

15 She also put forth a bold vision: to achieve a target of 30% women in Parliament. Today, we are close to achieving this goal, with 23 PAP women MPs contributing to women's parliamentary representation.

16 Our third Women's Wing chair Minister Grace Fu (2012- 2018) reorganised the Women's Wing and prepared us for roles in policy advocacy. [Slide 4] Through Position Papers submitted to the government, Women's Wing called for greater support for marriage and parenthood and for women in the workplace, housing policies to help young couples start their families earlier, and for the introduction of shared parental leave.

17 Our fourth Women's Wing chair Minister Josephine Teo (2019- 2022) advanced Women's Wing mission by fostering key partnerships to advocate for women's empowerment, in line with policy advocacy. [Slide 5]

18 Memorably, she also led us in engaging the ground and surfacing policy proposals in support of the broader Conversations on Women's Development. These efforts are reflected in the White Paper on Women's Development.

19 Minister Grace and Minister Josephine have both steered Women's Wing towards policy advocacy. Our efforts continue to bear fruit, as seen in the recent National Day Rally, where Prime Minister Wong introduced an additional 10 weeks of shared parental leave and doubling of mandatory paternal leave from two to four weeks.

20 Let's take this opportunity to record an appreciation to our past Women's Wing Chairpersons, and let me also thank Minister Indranee Rajah who along with Ministers Grace Fu and Josephine Teo serve on Women's Wing Advisory Panel. You are the wind beneath the Women's Wing!

Current priorities of the Women's Wing

21 I am honoured to carry on the baton and work closely with our EXCO, our Women Members-of-Parliament and Women Branch Chairs, and our amazing activists to take Women's Wing forward.

22 My belief is that a PAP with active participation from women is a Party that:

- a. Is stronger at ground engagement;
- b. Is more effective in identifying and championing issues that matter to Singapore women and Singapore families; and
- c. Has more like-minded friends and partners

23 My goal, and the goal of the EXCO, is to energise and equip every Women's Wing branch and activist to help our Party win hearts and minds on the ground.

24 I am grateful that EXCO, our Women Members-of-Parliament (MP) and Women Branch Chairs and our activists have been so supportive of our current priorities. You have been so thorough and dedicated in delivering concrete action.

25 So much so that Women's Wing stands ready to support our Party to do more and co-create the future with all Singaporeans.

26 When our Party leaders unveiled in June this year the three goals of #RefreshPAP - Engage Wider, Communicate Better, Organise Stronger, what was the Women's Wing response?

27 Not only does Women's Wing support #RefreshPAP 100%, we are already living the refresh!

28 Under **Engage Wider**, we have built new partnerships.

- a. Earlier this year, we signed a multi-year collaboration with the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Singapore (OGSS) to promote women's health in the community. This includes regular community outreach events to raise awareness about key women's health concerns, including reproductive health, maternal care, mental well-being and access to healthcare services
- b. We are also actively partnering with Bayer and NTUC WAF to conduct a joint survey on women's health concerns, with results expected later this year

29 We have been resourcing each Women's Wing branch to strengthen their capability for baseline outreach.

- a. We connected mothers in the community with help – this was in the form of \$347,000 worth of supermarket vouchers in 2023, and a projected \$440,000 this year
- b. Sharing sessions known as "PAP Women In Action" which create a rich peer-to-peer learning environment among Women's Wing activists
- c. Legal talks spearheaded by not just our women MPs but also our male ally MP Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim.

30 We have been developing scalable programmes for our Branches to implement – such as the Smart Fridge Food Rescue

- a. Now found in Bukit Timah, Bukit Gombak, Sengkang East and Marine Parade

31 Under **Communicate Better**, we believe that communication is a two-way process.

- a. To better understand and support the evolving aspirations of Singaporean women, particularly the younger generation, we are conducting a series of ground engagements and surveys focused on dating, marriage, and parenthood. These insights will guide us in advocating for support for women at every stage of their lives.
- b. We have also been proactive in enhancing our outreach. To further connect with and inform the public about Women's Wing events, we launched our Women's Wing Instagram this year. A special shoutout to Comrade Nadia Ahmad Samdin for her instrumental role in getting it started!

32 Under **Organise Stronger**, we have also been busy at work – coming together as multiple Women's Wing branches to run bigger and more impactful initiatives, and collaborating between WW and our sisters at the NTUC!

- a. Exemplified by the "Getting To-Gather" events which Comrade Yeo Wan Ling has been curating
- b. It began with 2 of our branches Bukit Timah and Punggol Shore, working with NTUC U Women and Family, AEAS Singapore, and Centre for Domestic Employees (CDE) to collect new and pre-loved items for distribution to migrant domestic workers at an event that honours their contribution to Singapore families
- c. Inspired by this initiative, the Women's Wing Yuhua branch organised a Sustainability Donation Drive in June 2024, where over 3,000 items were distributed to more than 2,000 residents
- d. More recently, Bukit Timah, Punggol Shore, Yuhua and West Coast branches came together on 18 August to co-create an event called "All Things Nice" which supports young women starting out in their careers by sharing with them work-appropriate items of clothing and accessories contributed by our constituents

33 And, because women are multi-taskers, we did all this on top of organising our 3 signature events a year, recruiting Friends of Women Wing and organising ourselves at the district level!

Conclusion

34 At the PAP Women's Wing, we have had a very fulfilling and busy 35 years. All that we have accomplished in terms of supporting women's development would not have been possible without the support of all who have guided, assisted and partnered

us. This includes men as well as women! We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

35 But our best years – for Women’s Wing as well as for the women of Singapore – are ahead of us! There remain challenges to overcome, opportunities to seize, and exciting futures to shape.

36 We will continue to advocate for Singapore women in all seasons of life and in all roles – be it daughter, sister, spouse, mother, grandmother, worker, professional employer, business owner, caregiver, and leader. As I have shared with everyone, the PAP, and party’s women are very active, and can help contribute to a Singapore that is better for women, better for men.

37 I know we have Prime Minister’s fullest support in this ongoing endeavour.

38 Working together, we can ensure that every woman can achieve her fullest potential.

39 Thank you.