



Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for National Development, and Mr Saktiandi Supaat (left), an MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC, were at the launch of Dragon Heart Community Platform, which aims to encourage residents to give feedback and suggestions to tackle municipal issues. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Getting Toa Payoh residents to discuss, solve issues together

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In a bid to get more Toa Payoh residents to discuss and work out solutions to community problems, researchers and the authorities have put together three mobile carts equipped with tabletops, seats and LED screens for them to hold meetings.

They have also created a website that provides information resources and a WhatsApp chat group for residents to discuss issues.

To kick-start the new initiative, the residents' committee got residents to come up with a pilot project. They decided on tackling the improper disposal of bulky waste in their neighbourhood. The residents will decide the location and size of the bins, which would be placed by the Bishan-Toa Payoh Town Council, which has offices in Toa Payoh and Bishan.

Other issues they may look at in future include neighbourhood noise, second-hand smoke, pigeon-feeding and hoarding.

The initiative, called the Dragon Heart Community Platform, was launched by the Municipal Services Office (MSO) and the Centre for

Sustainable Asian Cities in the National University of Singapore (NUS), together with the Toa Payoh East Constituency Office.

It is based on an NUS study on the perceptions of residents on their role in addressing municipal issues. In the first phase of the study, which started in December 2021, researchers conducted surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with more than 1,400 participants in Toa Payoh East.

The study found that higher levels of neighbourly relations is linked to lower levels of municipal issues such as littering and noise.

It also found that residents with a stronger sense of attachment to their homes tend to give more feedback to the authorities.

Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State for National Development, said the feedback and suggestions from residents will help the Government tackle community issues more effectively. "There could be issues that residents have been thinking about, but they might not have had the chance to voice it or to take action about it. But when invited, I think residents would readily do so."

She was speaking to the media at the launch event for residents held at the Toa Payoh East Community

Club on Saturday.

Ms Sim said residents are best placed to help the authorities solve the issue of improper disposal of bulky waste, for instance, as they know the locations of the bins and litter.

Mr Saktiandi Supaat, an MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC, said: "This process with MSO and academics provides multiple pathways of feedback coming in, and provides different ways for residents to approach us in future.

"Because it goes through the grassroots and the RC (residents' committee), it also helps to make sure that we can engage residents in a more holistic way."

Associate Professor Ho Kong Chong, head of urban studies at Yale-NUS College and co-investigator of the study, said the platform provides residents with an avenue to give feedback and share ideas about persistent problems such as noise and litter, rather than leaving problem-solving to the authorities.

The NUS researchers are collecting feedback on the platform to evaluate its effectiveness. The study is expected to be completed in June 2023.

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