



21 August 2012

The Editor
My Paper
Forum Page

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Dear Editor,

Public officers guided by service principles

We thank Mr See Leong Kit for his suggestions in “5 ways for Civil Service to boost responsiveness” (My Paper, 10 Aug 2012).

We agree with Mr See on the need to ensure responsiveness and accountability in the Public Service. Every agency has service standards which guide the staff in replying to feedback in a timely manner.

In instances involving complex matters, agencies may need more time to study the feedback carefully. This may involve discussion and development of new policy. For straightforward matters, we empower our officers to respond directly to the public. Regardless of the person responding, the head of the agency is accountable for the answer given, and more generally, remains answerable for the agency’s deliverables and outcomes.

Mr See suggested publishing details for leaders of ministries and statutory boards. Some agencies already do provide information on their senior management on their websites. We recognise that this is useful.

As for the term “spokesman”, this is a well accepted international and corporate practice to identify the person authorised to speak on behalf of the organisation. Some agencies have additionally and where appropriate, elected to use the name and designation of the person quoted, especially when the subject matter is technical. This approach provides consistency in the agency’s statements to the public while giving flexibility to suit different situations.

We also agree with Mr See that having a motto helps our officers serve the public well. We are guided by our Service Principles of Courtesy, Accessibility, Responsiveness and Effectiveness (CARE), to which we recently added three more:

- People-centricity – we are committed to understanding the public better
- Shared responsibility for public good – we seek to work with the public for good outcomes for Singapore
- Mutual courtesy and respect – we ensure that courtesy and respect are present in all our interactions with the public.

These principles demonstrate that the Public Service takes good service delivery seriously. If there are specific instances of staff or agency unresponsiveness, we invite the public to email us at psd_ps21@psd.gov.sg with details. Thank you.

Tay Choon Hong
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