

TRANSFORMATION IN MOTION

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018



CONTENTS

Vision and mission	01
Joint message	02
Council members	06
CEA committees	07
Who we are	10
Organisational chart	11
Boosting efficiency and professionalism	12
Fair regulation and firm enforcement	17
Enhancing our outreach and touchpoints	23
Improving processes, developing our people	26
Financial statements	30

OUR VISION

A professional and trusted real estate agency industry

OUR MISSION

To raise the professionalism of the real estate agency industry and safeguard consumer interest

THREE BROAD STRATEGIES

- 1 Regulate effectively to foster a well-disciplined real estate agency profession
- 2 Collaborate with the industry to spearhead industry development
- 3 Educate consumers so they can make informed decisions in property transactions involving the services of property agents

JOINT MESSAGE



The real estate agency industry embarked on a new chapter in FY2017, heralded by the launch of the Real Estate Industry Transformation Map (ITM).

If we cast our minds back eight years ago to October 2010, the first wave of transformation for the real estate agency industry began when Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) was first formed to regulate and raise the professionalism of the industry.

Since then, we observe that the industry has made marked progress. We see more agents doing their work professionally and taking a client-centric approach when facilitating property transactions.

Consumer satisfaction with the service provided by the industry have remained high at around 80 per cent as shown in CEA's 2012 and 2015 Public Perception Surveys.

That is not to say that the industry has arrived. There is still room for improvement.

For instance, we still receive a high number of complaints from consumers and property agents against errant agencies and agents, with figures hovering between 700 to 900 cases each year.

Blueprint for a future-ready real estate industry

At the same time, the real estate industry is facing various challenges from technological innovations, new and nimbler business models offered by existing and new players in the industry, as well as rising consumer expectations.

The Real Estate ITM thus marks the second wave of transformation that aims to advance the industry and help them navigate through the evolving, dynamic ecosystem and to better meet consumers' expectations.

In February 2018, Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee unveiled the Real Estate ITM to provide a roadmap for the transformation of the real estate industry.

Prior to the launch of the Real Estate ITM, the Ministry of National Development, with the support of CEA, held more than 50 engagement sessions in 2017 with stakeholders from the entire real estate value chain.

Representatives from property agencies, industry associations, conveyancing lawyers, valuation firms, facility managers, property developers, property technology firms, and unions were involved in these sessions.

These sessions culminated in the development of the roadmap that aims to transform the industry into a sector that is resilient to disruption and one that continues to provide good jobs for Singaporeans.

The Real Estate ITM focuses on two areas - property transaction services and facilities management. These sub-sectors were identified as having immense potential for transformation.

Focus on the property transaction services sector

For the property transaction services sub-sector, CEA is leading a Digital Property Transaction Workgroup to move the industry towards seamless, end-to-end, efficient and secure transactions for consumers.

This cross-industry and inter-government agency workgroup is reviewing property transaction processes, developing templates, checklists, as well as common protocols to streamline property transaction processes.

At the same time, CEA is working with the industry to strengthen professionalism and enhance the competencies of industry practitioners to remain competitive and relevant through a review of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework and promoting transparency of agents' transaction records.

CEA will work with the industry to implement the initiatives under the Real Estate ITM.

Our common goal is to transform the industry so that it will be better-positioned to take on the challenges of today and seize future opportunities when they arise.

We are very encouraged by the more forward-looking industry players who have already taken the leap of faith in embracing technology and raising the bar for their peers.

Some have embarked on new business models to cater to changing consumer behaviours while others have rolled out portals that display the track records of and consumer ratings for their agents.

There are, however, still some agencies, KEOs, and agents who have yet to appreciate that technological disruption is at their doorstep, and have not made moves to transform themselves and their teams to face these challenges. They fail to comprehend that the responsibility to stay current and competitive lies with them, and not with CEA. A few have even mistaken CEA as their industry association.

We urge these agencies and individuals to rouse themselves out of their comfort zones, and be inspired by their more progressive peers to improve or create new ways of working more productively, and ultimately provide better transaction experiences for clients.

There are also agencies, in particular the smaller ones that are aware of the challenges but are unsure of how best to help themselves or lack the resources to do so. We encourage these agencies to approach the industry associations.

Working with industry

Apart from the Real Estate ITM engagement sessions, CEA continued its regular engagements with the industry throughout the year.

We invited Key Executive Officers to dialogue sessions to clarify and address misconceptions that the industry might have about CEA's role, as well as to better understand the concerns and challenges property agencies and agents encounter.

During the year, we discussed with the industry associations the broader issues of the industry's relevance in the face of technological disruptions, evolving consumer expectations, plus consolidation and increasing competition in the industry. We also worked closely with the associations to gather their input for the ongoing review of the CPD framework.

CEA continued to work with the industry to support the government's efforts to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism. We conducted review sessions with property agencies to ensure that their procedures for property transactions comply with regulations.

On the whole, these sessions have helped us to take the pulse of the increasingly complex environment in which the real estate industry operates.

We will continue with this flow of open communication with the industry to ensure that our policies and regulations evolve with this dynamic ecosystem.

Enhancing our outreach

To help consumers manage their property transactions in this dynamic environment, CEA embarked on an integrated outreach campaign that spanned out-of-home and online channels to reach a wide audience.

Through videos, banner ads, advertorials and bus shelter posters, our *Happy Consumer* campaign endeavoured to reinforce key tips about engaging property agents.

The campaign sparked some concerns from agents but also offered us the opportunity to clarify with the industry CEA's mandate to educate consumers in addition to our role as the industry regulator.

Our post-campaign surveys showed that the campaign helped in raising awareness of CEA and our role, but more importantly, aided in bridging consumers' knowledge gaps about working with property agents for a smooth transaction.

With the information gleaned from the surveys, we will continue our consumer education efforts in 2018 and beyond to help foster good working relationships between property agents and consumers.

Strengthening our fundamentals

The fast-evolving environment has not only put pressure on the industry players but also on CEA's mission to help raise the professionalism of the industry and safeguard consumer interests.

During the past year, we focused on strengthening CEA's fundamentals, and continued to ensure effective enforcement and prosecution of offences and ethical breaches. We also continued to refine our regulatory regime to maintain effective enforcement and prosecution.

CEA introduced a data analytics competency framework to build up our organisation's capabilities in data analysis for CEA officers.

Building new competencies within the organisation and improving our own processes to be nimbler will be even more important as we navigate a complex and evolving environment together with the industry.



Quek See Tiat
President

Advancing together

CEA has enjoyed the good working relationship with the industry and we look forward to continue promoting understanding, achieving common goals, and collaborating with one another in raising the industry to the next level of professional expertise and consumer-centric innovation.

Only by working together can we – CEA, industry, and the public – uplift the industry, build consumer confidence, and improve efficiencies.



Lee Kwong Weng
Executive Director

COUNCIL MEMBERS

As at 31 July 2018

PRESIDENT

Quek See Tiat

MEMBERS

Lee Kwong Weng

Executive Director
Council for Estate Agencies

Ms Pauline Goh

Chief Executive Officer,
Singapore & South East Asia
Key Executive Officer
CBRE Pte Ltd

Harrif Bin Hambali

Consultant
Asian Leaders Institute Pte
Ltd

Loy York Jiun

Executive Director
Consumers Association of
Singapore

Ng Boon Yew

Executive Chairman
Raffles Campus Pte Ltd

Mrs Deborah Ong

Partner
PwC Singapore

Sin Lye Chong

Group Director, Land Sales &
Administration Group
Urban Redevelopment
Authority

Michael Tan

Executive Director & Key
Executive Officer
OrangeTee & Tie Pte Ltd

Ms Tan Pei Shan

Director, Energy Division
Ministry of Trade and
Industry

Derrick Wong

Consultant
Third Wind Consultant

Mike Chan Hein Wah

Deputy Chief Executive
Officer (Estate)
Housing and Development
Board

CEA COMMITTEES

As at 31 July 2018

Audit Committee

CHAIRPERSON

Mrs Deborah Ong

Partner

PwC Singapore

MEMBERS

Mike Chan Hein Wah

Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Estate)

Housing & Development Board

Ms Tan Pei Shan

Director, Energy Division

Ministry of Trade and Industry

Human Resource & Finance Committee

CHAIRPERSON

Quek See Tiat

President

Council for Estate Agencies

MEMBERS

Lee Kwong Weng

Executive Director

Council for Estate Agencies

Sin Lye Chong

Group Director

Land Sales & Administration Group

Urban Redevelopment Authority

Select Committee

CHAIRPERSON

Quek See Tiat

President

Council for Estate Agencies

MEMBERS

Lee Kwong Weng

Executive Director

Council for Estate Agencies

Mrs Deborah Ong

Partner

PwC Singapore

Ng Boon Yew

Executive Chairman

Raffles Campus Pte Ltd

Harrif Bin Hambali

Consultant

Asian Leaders Institute Pte Ltd

Derrick Wong

Consultant

Third Wind Consultant

Disciplinary Panel

As at 31 July 2018

HEAD

Derrick Wong

Consultant
Third Wind Consultant

MEMBERS

Dr Tan Tee Khoon

Managing Director
KF Property Network
Pte Ltd

Yong Kwet Leong

Key Executive Officer
Assets Consultancy
Enterprise Pte Ltd

Victor Lee Chay Pin

Senior Partner
Chambers Law LLP

Ms Yashodhara

Dhorausigam
Advocate & Solicitor

Tan Hee Joek

Partner
Tan See Swan & Co

David Huan

Principal Trainer
Benchmark Realpro Pte Ltd
Associate Group Division
Director
SLP Scotia Pte Ltd

Assoc Prof Chin Tet Yung

Faculty of Law
National University of
Singapore

Prof Teo Keang Sood

Faculty of Law
National University of
Singapore

Felix Chua

Key Executive Officer
Cyberhomes Estate
Agencies Pte Ltd

Dennis Yeo Huang Kiat

Managing Director
Asia (Industrial and
Logistics)
CBRE Pte Ltd

B Rengarajoo, PBS, C. Arb

Principal
B Rengarajoo & Associates
Advocates & Solicitors

Michael S Chia

Managing Director
MSC Law Corporation

Peter Koh Hock Guan

Key Executive Officer
Gateway Property
Consultants Pte Ltd

Goh Peng Thong

Director
AWP Pte Ltd

Er. Jacqueline Chan

Managing Director
DSCO Group Pte Ltd

Er. Ling Shiang Yun

Partner
Tham & Wong LLP

A.P.M. Ferlin Jayatissa

Associate Professor, Law
Programmes
School of Law
Singapore University of Social
Sciences
Head of Litigation & Consultant
Lexcompass LLC

Ter Kim Cheu

Retired Principal Senior State
Counsel/ Parliamentary Counsel

Tan Hong Boon

Regional Director
Capital Markets, Singapore
Jones Lang LaSalle Property
Consultants Pte Ltd

Professional Development Committee

As at 31 July 2018

CHAIRPERSON

Ng Boon Yew

Executive Chairman
Raffles Campus Pte Ltd

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

Michael Tan

Executive Director & Key Executive Officer
OrangeTee & Tie Pte Ltd

MEMBERS

Prof Tang Hang Wu

Director
Centre for Cross Border
Commercial Law in Asia
School of Law
Singapore Management University

Assoc Prof Sing Tien Foo

Deputy Head
Administration and Finance
Department of Real Estate
National University of Singapore

Ms Catherine Thoo Sin Ling

Course Chair (Real Estate Business)
School of Design and Environment
Ngee Ann Polytechnic

Ms Edith Tay

Executive Director and
Key Executive Officer
PropertyBank Pte Ltd

Er. Lim Peng Hong

Managing Director
PH Consulting Pte Ltd

Sieow Teak Hwa

Key Executive Officer
Teakhwa Real Estate Pte Ltd

Mrs Ong Choon Fah

Chief Executive Officer
Edmund Tie & Company (SEA) Pte Ltd

Ms Quek Lee Kiang

Business Editor
Lianhe Zaobao

Darius Cheung

Chief Executive Officer
99.Co

Augustine Tan

President
Real Estate Developers' Association of
Singapore (REDAS)
Executive Director
Property Sales & Corporate Affairs
Far East Organization

Eugene Lim

Key Executive Officer
ERA Realty Network Pte Ltd

WHO WE ARE

The Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) was established as a statutory board on 22 October 2010 to regulate and develop the real estate agency industry.

In pursuit of its mission to raise the professionalism of the real estate agency industry and safeguard consumer interest, CEA focuses on three strategic thrusts: effective regulation, industry development, and consumer education.

For effective regulation of the industry, CEA administers the licensing of property agencies and registration of property agents, and regulates the practice of property agencies and agents in property transactions. It also conducts industry compliance checks and investigations, as well as disciplinary proceedings in respect of offences and unsatisfactory conduct or misconduct in relation to estate agency work.

CEA works close with the industry to raise professionalism, expand capabilities, and promote business excellence. It administers the mandatory examination and continuing professional development framework as well as appoints course providers.

It identifies opportunities and fosters collaborations with strategic partners in industry development programmes to achieve business productivity.

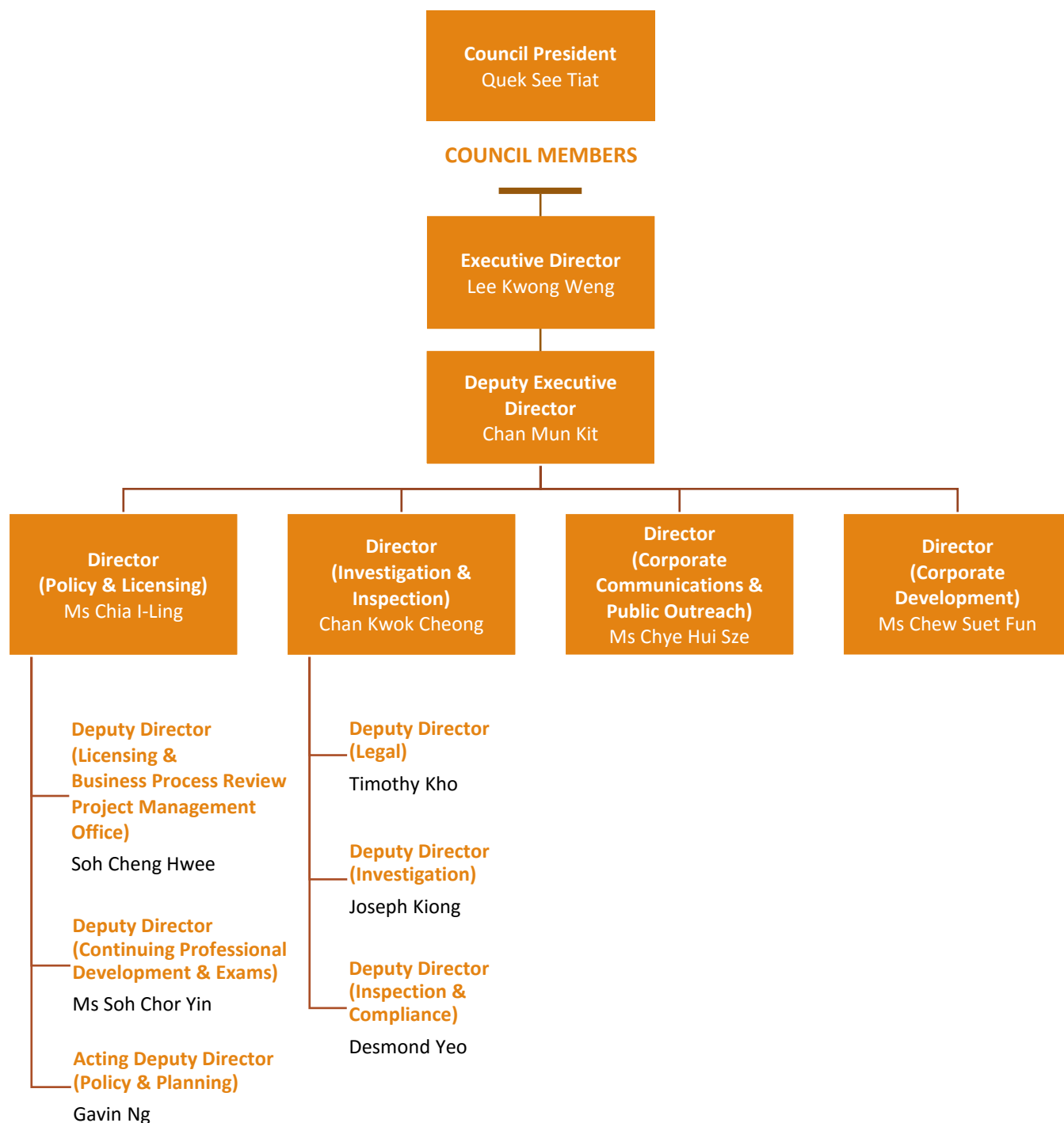
To protect the interests of consumers, CEA plans and implements public education programmes to equip consumers with the necessary information to make informed decisions in property transactions involving the services of property agents. It facilitates access to consumer resources and provides channels for complaints and dispute resolution.

CEA is governed by a Council that comprises professionals and academicians from sectors related to the real estate agency industry, as well as representatives from government agencies involved in the administration of the property market.

The Council advises and provides strategic guidance to the management of CEA to meet its objectives. The Council is assisted by five Committees – Audit Committee, Disciplinary Panel, Human Resource & Finance Committee, Professional Development Committee and Select Committee.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

As at 31 July 2018



BOOSTING EFFICIENCY AND PROFESSIONALISM



Photo credit: Ministry of National Development

Launch of the Real Estate Industry Transformation Map

After extensive collaborative efforts between the industry, union, academia, and Government, the Real Estate Industry Transformation Map (ITM) was launched on 8 February 2018 to transform the industry into a future-ready sector that will be resilient to disruption and will continue to provide good jobs for Singaporeans.

For more than a year since the start of 2017, the Ministry of National Development and Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) conducted over 50 engagement sessions with stakeholders across the real estate value chain. These sessions helped to shape the details of the plan that aims to take the real estate sector to the next level.

In his speech at the Real Estate ITM launch, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development, Mr Desmond Lee, encouraged the industry to embrace innovation and technology, and explore ways to leverage digital tools to boost productivity, maintain competitiveness, and offer better value to customers.

Minister Lee also highlighted the need to invest in the upskilling of the workforce in order for the Real Estate ITM to succeed. He stressed the importance of a strong ecosystem of industry players, Institutes of Higher Learning, government agencies, industry associations, and unions to realise this transformation.

The Real Estate ITM initiatives focused on transforming the property transaction services and facilities management sub-sectors as they were assessed to hold the greatest potential for transformation.



For the property transaction services sub-sector, the aim of the Real Estate ITM initiatives is to offer seamless, efficient property transactions delivered by a professional, productive, and technology-enabled workforce.

Amongst the initiatives for this sub-sector that CEA is leading include:

(a) Formation of a Digitalised Property Transaction Workgroup

The Digitalised Property Transaction Workgroup was among the first of the series of initiatives to be rolled out under the Real Estate ITM.



This cross-industry and inter-government agency workgroup was established in January 2018 to move the real estate industry towards providing seamless, efficient, and secure transactions from end to end. Led by CEA, the workgroup is working with various government agencies to facilitate access to property-related Government data. This will enable firms to automate time-consuming due diligence checks, thus freeing up agents and agencies alike to provide more value-added service to their clients.

The workgroup will also review property transaction processes and develop standard contract templates, checklists, and common protocols for e-contracts and e-payments so that consumers can be assured of a smooth and secure transaction.

(b) Publishing of property transactions closed by property agents

CEA is working with the industry to first publish property agents' HDB resale transaction records from end 2018.

In the longer term, CEA also plans to work with the industry to collate and publish consumer ratings of agents.

This initiative aims to help property agents showcase verified records of their experience and professionalism, while offering greater transparency to consumers to boost their confidence in engaging agents.

(c) Review of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework

By end 2018, CEA will complete a review of the CPD framework for property agents. The CPD framework ensures that real estate professionals upgrade themselves and keep abreast of the latest changes in policies and procedures related to real estate transactions. This will help property agents remain competitive and relevant in the changing business environment and equip them with skills to handle digitalised processes.

The review will also include the development of a more structured approach to guide agents in achieving deeper technical knowledge and skillsets to perform duties in different segments of the property market.

(d) Introduction of SkillsFuture for Digital Workplace programme

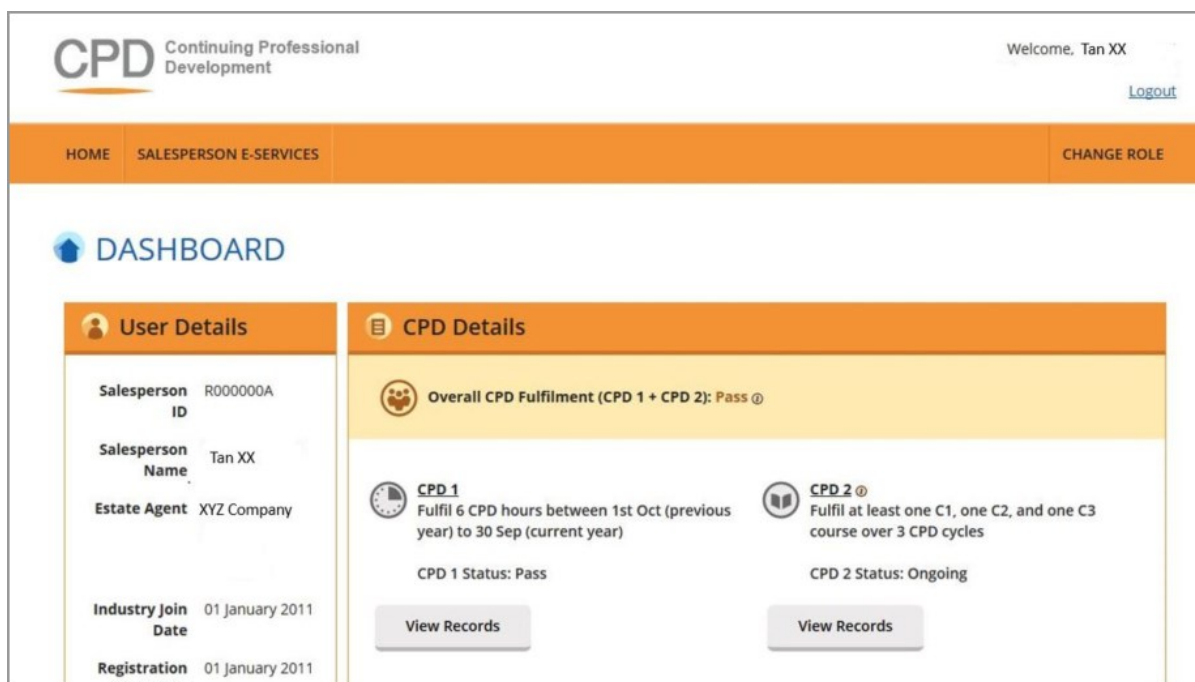
CEA worked with NTUC LearningHub to introduce a SkillsFuture for Digital Workplace programme contextualised for the real estate industry.



This foundation programme aims to help real estate professionals understand current and emerging technologies in the real estate industry. It also gives a flavour of some relevant digital tools to help real estate professionals to be more productive and efficient.

The first run of the programme was conducted in January 2018. Through the programme, we hope to imbue industry professionals with a positive mind set for change, innovation and resilience in the face of an industry that is undergoing technologically disruptive changes.

Other initiatives under the property transactions services sub-sector are the development of the HDB Resale Portal, which was launched by HDB in January 2018, and various government grants that real estate businesses and industrial associations can tap to reduce manual and time-consuming processes through the application of technology solutions.



Efficiency-enhancing initiatives

Over the past year, CEA has launched several initiatives to improve our services to the industry, making them more efficient and user-friendly.

- **More features for *My CPD Portal***

CEA rolled out the *My CPD Portal* last year for property agents as a convenient platform for them to plan and manage their own professional training.

CEA first launched the portal to Key Executive Officers (KEO) in late March 2017 after consulting several property agencies, CPD course providers, and industry associations on the features that should be included in the portal.

We continued to fine-tune the portal based on the feedback received from KEOs and proceeded to roll out the portal for use by property agents in August 2017.

With the portal, agents can check their CPD fulfilment easily as well as search for upcoming courses to help them plan their training needs.

The portal also made it easy for course providers to add new CPD courses and perform course administration. It is a convenient, end-to-end course management platform for course providers, who have been using the portal to submit attendance records of and feedback from CPD course participants.

- **Paperless submission of salesperson registration application**

On 1 February 2018, CEA implemented paperless registration applications for property agents. Where previously a hard copy of the application had to be printed, signed, and submitted through their agency, property agents can now complete the entire process online, eliminating the need to handle hard copy documents.

This new process cuts down the number of steps for application submission, thus saving time for property agents.

Since the launch till the end of the financial year in March 2018, we have

processed a total of 352 property agents' registration applications using the paperless submission.

KEOs from several agencies have expressed their satisfaction with this paperless initiative, and offered feedback on ways to further improve the application process.

- **New salesperson registration application forms**

In addition to streamlining the application process, CEA reviewed the registration application forms to improve clarity on the information to be submitted.

The forms now include clear instructions to reduce ambiguity in the declaration requirements, thus aiding property agencies and agents alike in providing accurate information.

- **Application Programming Interface (API) for Public Register**

CEA has made available all information in the Public Register at Data.gov.sg, the Singapore Government's one-stop portal to access all publicly available datasets from 70 public agencies.

The entire dataset in CEA's Public Register is uploaded to Data.gov.sg thrice daily and can be downloaded either through an API or in excel format.

This allows direct access by companies such as property portals to do automatic checks on the validity of property agencies' licences and agents' registrations.

Number of property agents and agencies			
	As at 1 Jan 2016	As at 1 Jan 2017	As at 1 Jan 2018
Number of property agents	29,262	28,397	28,571
Number of property agencies	1,369	1,286	1,269

Breakdown of property agencies by size			
Size of property agency	No. of property agencies as at 1 Jan		
	2016	2017	2018
>500 agents	11	9	7
51-500 agents	22	23	18
31-50 agents	16	10	14
11-30 agents	65	58	64
1-10 agents	1,255	1,186	1,166
Total	1,369	1,286	1,269



Combating money laundering and terrorism financing

Singapore continues to be an active and committed member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an inter-governmental body that develops standards for combating money laundering, terrorism financing, and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.

This commitment is shared by the real estate agency industry, which plays an important role in helping to counter the global threat of money laundering and terrorism financing through property transactions.

To reinforce the awareness and diligent administration of the compliance requirements, CEA issued a practice circular - Checklists for Estate Agents and Salespersons on Prevention of Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism.

Industry feedback has helped us to refine these checklists, which are aimed at helping property agencies conduct self-assessment on their compliance, as well as providing a systematic approach for property agents to conduct their due diligence checks on their customers and guidelines on the lodging of Suspicious Transaction Reports.

CEA also conducted four group assessment sessions with property agencies to assess if they have put in place procedures to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.

Forty-four small and medium-sized property agencies were assessed and found to be generally in compliance with the regulations. However, the agencies could improve by having more stringent checks in the areas of identification and documentation of transactions with higher risks of money laundering and terrorism financing, as well as tighter enforcement in the area of compliance management.

Besides conducting more of these assessment sessions in the coming year, CEA is also working on enhancing our anti-money laundering and prevention of terrorism financing regime, bringing it further into alignment with FATF's requirements. This will entail working with the industry to identify areas of improvement, as well as reviewing the practice circulars to ensure sufficient coverage.

In response to the continuing trend of property agents placing "copied" advertisements to mislead buyers and tenants with the intention to generate leads for potential clients, CEA conducted a spot check 'blitz' on 143 advertisements placed by 130 property agents.

Forty-two agents were found to have breached CEA guidelines and were warned for advertising properties without the property owners' consent.

Clearer guidance on management of business and supervision of agents

As part of CEA's efforts to ensure that property agencies comply with the Code of Practice for Estate Agents (COPEA), and in response to feedback from the industry for clearer guidance, we issued a practice circular setting out guidelines on the standard operating procedures (SOPs) that agencies are required to put in place for proper management of their businesses and supervision of their property agents.

The circular detailed the areas in which agencies have to establish SOPs, including the dissemination of information to their agents; handling, processing, and retention of transaction documents; complaints management; among others. This ensures that the industry maintains a certain level of professionalism and due diligence.





Taking firm action

In FY2017, CEA successfully prosecuted all Court prosecution and Disciplinary Committee cases. The following are three noteworthy cases.

Failure to provide written advisory message

In December 2017, CEA sentenced Dennis Wee Realty Pte Ltd (DWR) to a total financial penalty of S\$66,000 for six charges of failing to provide a written advisory message to six sets of investors about the risks involved in purchasing foreign properties. The Disciplinary Committee also imposed a condition on DWR's licence that it is not allowed to transact or market foreign properties for 12 months with effect from 24 November 2017.

This was the largest fine meted out thus far to a property agency for failing to abide by regulations related to estate agency work involving foreign properties, and the second such case involving the

failure to provide a written advisory to investors about the risks involved in purchasing foreign properties.

DWR had conducted seminars in Singapore to market units in the Ibis Budget Hotels located in Lymm and Knutsford, Cheshire, United Kingdom (UK).

Throughout the property marketing process, which resulted in six investors purchasing a total of 13 units in the Lymm project and five units in Knutsford, DWR did not provide the investors with a written advisory message stating that the investors must conduct due diligence, nor did they highlight risks that the transaction is subject to foreign laws and to any change in the policy and rules in the UK.

Dual representation

In January 2018, property agent Wong Yeh Yee Steven was convicted of one charge of dual representation, having represented both the prospective landlord and prospective tenant of an HDB flat and collected commissions from both parties.

Wong met a landlord who was looking to rent out a room in her flat. A week later, he received a call from a potential tenant whom he subsequently brought to view the space.

The tenant agreed to rent the room for a year, and both the landlord and tenant paid Wong \$300 each as commission for his services.

Wong failed to carry out proper due diligence checks on the tenant's work permit. The tenant was later found to be an illegal over-stayer in Singapore, and the landlord was convicted and fined for harbouring this individual.

Wong was convicted in court of the dual representation charge, and received a fine of \$7,500 for contravening the Estate Agents (Estate Agency Work) Regulations 2010.

Handling of monies related to transactions

In November 2017, property agents Syed Omar Bin Syed Hassan and Sharifah Sofiah Binte Syed Ali were convicted of handling money related to a property transaction, in contravention of the Estate Agents (Estate Agency Work) Regulations 2010.

Syed was representing the landlord in a rental transaction, while his wife, Sharifah was representing the tenant.

Upon signing the tenancy agreement, the tenant passed the security deposit in cash to Sharifah, who subsequently passed the cash to Syed. Syed failed to hand this sum over to the landlord.

When collecting the house keys, the tenant passed the advanced rent as well as Sharifah's commission in cash to Sharifah. The latter passed the rent to Syed, who then pocketed the money instead of handing the cash to the landlord. Syed also failed to communicate to the tenant that subsequent rental payments were to be made via bank transfer directly to the landlord.

For each of the next two months, Syed collected the rent from the tenant but pocketed the sum again. The landlord lodged a police report, and it eventually came to light that Syed had used the money to pay for his late father's medical bills.

CEA prosecuted Syed and Sharifah, who were fined \$25,000 and \$3,600 respectively, for having handled multiple sums of money when facilitating the lease of an HDB flat.

Complaints management

CEA regularly reviews our complaint management system to ensure that all substantiated cases are properly addressed and receive the appropriate attention.

In FY2017, we fine-tuned the categorisation of the complaints received to better reflect the nature of the cases we handle.

Service-related complaints are now even more finely categorised to identify cases involving unprofessional service as opposed to unsatisfactory professional conduct by agents, the difference being that the latter is primarily attributable to negligence or lack of knowledge.

Conduct-related cases, which were previously categorised based on the nature of the complaint, are now reclassified to reflect the severity of the misconduct.

These re-categorisations help CEA channel our resources more effectively to investigate and resolve complaints received. It also aids both CEA and the property agencies in addressing and resolving these complaints in a timely manner, signalling our joint commitment to uplift professionalism in the industry.

Our experience in the past year has shown that property agencies are generally prompt in addressing the issues raised, and some agencies have put in place extra measures to ensure greater accountability for their agents' actions. This service-oriented, customer-centric approach will help to restore trust and confidence with consumers.

To further enhance convenience for users, CEA embarked on integrating the *MyInfo* service into the complaint form on our website. This enhancement saved users time by auto-populating their personal information, such as their NRIC, name, and address from *MyInfo* to the form.



Nature of Complaints	Number of Complaints as at 31 Dec		
	2016	2017	
ADVERTISEMENT/FLYER (e.g. misleading / missing information / improper distribution of flyers)	236	208	
SERVICE-RELATED CASES			
Unprofessional service (e.g. service-related lapses such as not complying with applicable laws, failure to abide by duties / obligations related to documents and agreements)	124	151	
Failure to provide good service to clients (e.g. service-related lapses such as punctuality issues, no-show at appointments, tenancy, property management and commission disputes)	174	294	
CONDUCT-RELATED CASES*		General Misconduct	Serious Misconduct
Misconduct (e.g. use of threatening words / harassment / misrepresentation)	99	101	103
Unregistered property agent/unlicensed property agency	38		
Others (e.g. dual representation, fraud, money lending, handling transaction monies)	20		
NOT ACTING IN CLIENT'S INTEREST (e.g. conflict of interest / refusing to co-broke / failing to convey offer)	47		
Total	738	857	

*From 2017, all conduct-related cases are classified according to their severity instead of form.

Categories	Investigation Outcome	Number of Complaints as at 31 Dec	
		2016	2017
Substantiated	Letter of Advice/ Warning served	259	213
	Disciplinary action[#]	17	16
	Prosecution[#]	18	18
Unsubstantiated Refers to cases with insufficient evidence to substantiate claims, assessed to have no wrongdoing on the part of the property agent, baseless / frivolous complaints		253	255
Others Refers to non-CEA regulated cases that are referred to other government agencies/organisation or property agencies for resolution		78	394
Total		625	896

These figures refer to the conclusion of the case before the Disciplinary Committee or Court.

ENHANCING OUR OUTREACH AND TOUCHPOINTS



CEA embarked on an integrated outreach campaign in FY2017. The *Happy Consumer* campaign aimed to address the knowledge gaps that were identified in our 2015 Public Perception Survey and our pre-campaign survey amongst consumers.

The themed campaign reinforced six key points for consumers to be aware of when engaging a property agent, namely:

- Check CEA's Public Register to ensure the property agent is registered with CEA
- Negotiate your agent's commission before he starts work
- Sign CEA's prescribed estate agency agreement and the Customer Particulars Form with the property agency
- Your agent should only represent you in a property transaction
- Handle your own money related to the transaction. Pay the payee directly using verifiable payment modes
- If you are familiar with property transactions, you can handle yours on your own. If you are not familiar with the procedures and regulations, it is advisable to engage a property agent to help facilitate your transaction

CEA ran the outreach campaign in two phases – in October 2017 and February 2018 – and it comprised both broad-based and targeted approaches to reach out to our audience.

Leveraging new digital platforms

We engaged a number of new digital platforms to articulate our messages to consumers. These platforms included YouTube and websites on the Google

Display Network. We also expanded our reach by tapping on the large follower base of online lifestyle portals, like SGAG and The Smart Local, to extend our messages to a wider audience than ever before.

To reach those already looking to conduct property transactions, CEA advertised on property portals with a mix of banner ads, advertorials, and a short video. The content ran the gamut of direct educational and informative ads to human interest pieces that highlighted our key messages through a more creative narrative.



Addressing misconceptions

As part of the campaign, we ran advertisements on two radio stations, and in about 200 bus shelters to reach the general public. These ads generated buzz when some property agents took issue with the phrasing of the content, mistaken that CEA was encouraging more do-it-yourself transactions.



Be a happier consumer...and don't be like Mdm Tan hor!

305,679 views

Like Comment Share

CEA responded by issuing a clarification to all KEOs, explaining the reasons for and intent behind the phrasing of statements in the advertisements.

The messages in our consumer outreach efforts are not new. CEA has been sharing these messages with the public in our various outreach efforts since 2011.

Regarding whether consumers can handle property transactions on their own, CEA shares this message with the public as we regularly receive queries on whether consumers would run afoul of the Estate Agents Act if they choose to do so.

Hence, we inform consumers that they can handle transactions on their own if they know how to, or to engage a property agent if they are not familiar with the processes and regulations.

Other common queries posed to us include whether commission rates are fixed, and whether an agent can represent both parties in the same transaction.

Our post-campaign surveys showed that the campaigns helped to increase awareness of CEA and aided in reinforcing the key messages with our target audience. We also gleaned interesting insights into the consumption habits of our audience, which will help us in planning our future outreach campaigns.

We are mindful that the majority of agents are doing their utmost for their clients. Our outreach efforts therefore aim to educate the public on their responsibilities when working with property agents, to achieve the best outcomes for the benefit of all parties.

Sustaining outreach and publicity efforts

This campaign complements our regular outreach efforts that include collaborating with our partner agencies, such as the Housing & Development Board, the Central Provident Fund Board, and the Ministry of National Development on talks and seminars, and social media posts to educate consumers.

Our quarterly newsletter, *CEAenergy*, is another channel through which we continue to offer information to property agents on the latest industry news and lessons from recent cases, and provide consumers with helpful tips.

As for media coverage, a key highlight of the year was the launch of the Real Estate Industry Transformation Map where we partnered the Ministry of National Development and the Building and Construction Authority to publicise the initiatives.

During the year, we also continued to publicise the disciplinary actions CEA took against errant property agencies and agents, to remind the industry to act professionally and ethically when they perform estate agency work.

Virtual help

CEA handles a high volume of queries from property agencies, agents, and the public on a daily basis.

In 2017, we reviewed our frontline operations under our business process re-engineering process to improve efficiency. Our review resulted in the launch of a call routing system in April 2017.

This automated routing system directs customers to the relevant parties

expediently, thus reducing the waiting time for callers looking to get their queries answered.

CEA's website received a new addition with the introduction of our virtual assistant "Ask Jamie" on 22 May 2017. This chatbot is able to answer specific questions by providing a quick and informative response, and helps to reduce the time spend searching for relevant information by directing visitors to webpages within the CEA website.



This redesign to our customer service approach has allowed us to raise our productivity and focus on providing more value-added support to the industry and consumers.

In the pipeline

In the coming year, CEA will be conducting its third three-yearly Public Perception Survey. The survey enables CEA to gauge consumers' perceptions towards the services rendered by property agencies and agents. This in turn allows us to understand and support the progress of the industry in delivering professional service to consumers.

We will also be able to gain insights into consumers' awareness of key industry practices and regulations involving property agencies and agents in the property transaction process. These insights will help guide CEA's continued efforts to raise consumers' awareness on how they can work effectively and harmoniously with their property agents.

IMPROVING PROCESSES, DEVELOPING OUR PEOPLE



New office, new chapter for CEA

In March 2018, CEA moved to our new office in HDB Hub East Wing. The new office, though smaller in square footage, enabled us to house all CEA officers under one roof and improved organisational efficiency. It also provides a more conducive environment for the public and industry to interact with CEA.

We have also been able to reap cost savings with lower rental and conservancy charges, as well as by consolidating common office equipment. This move marks a new chapter for CEA as we align with the Singapore Government's efforts to transform our public service into a more efficient and future-ready institution.

Future ready, data ready

Being future-ready means having a team that is able to keep up with both the industry's and public's demands for more

responsive and customer-centric offerings. That, in turn, requires data, and the requisite skillset to manage and understand the data.

To that end, CEA introduced a data analytics competency framework to build capabilities in data interpretation.

We identified four tiers of training that ranged from general awareness to advanced data analytics. These were then rolled out to all divisions and officers were sent on courses to develop this necessary skillset.

With an enhanced understanding of data analytics, CEA officers are now better equipped to use data to design effective policies and make decisions.

Improving internal efficiencies

CEA piloted an enhanced payment process in September 2017 to increase our efficiency in managing payments.

This new process allows for better monitoring of each stage of the payment life cycle, and offers transparency and effective payment controls.

In line with the revised Government Instructional Manual on Management of Public Records, CEA introduced a records management policy for the organisation.

CEA's policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of every officer in managing records and filing emails. CEA also went through a round of digitisation of existing hard copy documents for knowledge management and as part of our business continuity plan.

We enhanced our Digital Document Repository system to facilitate the easy filing and retrieval of records, and conducted user training on the system to ensure proper archival of documents.

In September 2017, CEA implemented a single sign-in centralised SingPass / CorpPass gateway solution to offer a seamless experience for users across our e-services. This centralised solution is used for authenticating the SingPass and CorpPass logins to both the Estate Agency System e-Service and Continuing

Professional Development portal, and is scalable to incorporate other new e-services and systems in future.

Corporate governance



In 2017, CEA continued the work we had begun in 2016 on risk management. Back then, the risks identified were operational in nature. In 2017, we reviewed our current risks to better align them with our strategic objectives, and developed a set of key risk factors.

This annual risk identification exercise aims to ensure that we mitigate the potential repercussions from these risks being realised. It also helps to safeguard our organisation against ambiguities in our processes and procedures.



Delivering excellence

Our staff's constant pursuit of excellence was recognised last year.

CEA's Licensing team received two awards, with Mohammad Firdhaus Bin Baharom being awarded the PS21 Star Service Manager Award, and Kelvin Tan Zhong Kai receiving the PS21 Star Service Award for excellent service.

Business Process Re-engineering team member Quek Szy Wee received the Commendation Medal for his contributions to the Public Service. The awards are an affirmation of our officers' significant contributions.

The Business Process Re-engineering team received the Minister's Team Award for their review and redesign of work processes to improve our service responsiveness, organisation effectiveness, and productivity.

The redesign of the complaint management processes, as well as the introduction of the complaints classification and customer services rectification protocols earned them the award that recognised innovative team-based projects that contribute to the Ministry of National Development's vision of transforming Singapore into "An Endearing Home, a Distinctive Global City".

All for one, and one for CEA

Team CEA works hard and plays hard too. Throughout the year, we participated in several memorable activities that nourished our hearts, minds, and bodies, allowing us to reflect on our role in the larger national building narrative.

The Jubilee Walk was one such activity that enabled us to learn about the story of our resilience as a country and how we navigated the challenges of nation building over the past five decades of independence.

Our hearts were also moved to give generously to support charitable causes. We raised \$4,555 for the 2017 President's Challenge, which contributed to the Ministry of National Development's adoption of three Heart Buses to help the less fortunate.

Team CEA got active as we engaged in activities to promote a healthy lifestyle. A bowling tournament and cycling along the Punggol Park Connector and Coney Island got our staff moving to a healthy beat.



We also participated in the HDB's Housing Management Group's interagency futsal tournament, and though we did not bring back a trophy, we did return with lots of smiles (and sweat).

