

# President's Message



## A NEW REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR SINGAPORE'S REAL ESTATE AGENCY INDUSTRY

I am pleased to present the first annual report of the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA). The establishment of CEA signifies the Government's commitment to strengthen and develop the real estate agency industry and safeguard consumer interests.

Nine in ten Singaporeans own the properties they live in, making our home ownership rate one of the highest in the world. Many Singaporeans turn to real estate agents for professional help when buying and selling their properties. The real estate agency industry has grown significantly, as at 31 March 2012, licensed estate agents numbered 1,493 and registered salespersons totalled 31,769.

CEA was formed on 22 October 2010, and aims to develop a professional and trusted real estate agency industry. To do this, we focus on three strategic objectives – effective regulation, industry development and consumer education.

The Estate Agents Act and Regulations, which include the Code of Practice and the Code of Ethics and Professional Client Care, have been established to govern the duties, business activities and conduct of estate agents and salespersons. A new initiative was the introduction of Key Executive Officers (KEOs) in estate agents to provide oversight and direct accountability for their business and salespersons. CEA has put in place a disciplinary

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process to handle breaches of the Act or the Codes by estate agents or their salespersons.

To enhance industry capabilities, CEA launched the Continuing Professional Development programme for KEOs and salespersons to develop their professionalism and ethics, as well as keep them updated on regulations and guidelines. We also implemented regulatory examinations with new standards.

To develop a more customer-oriented industry, CEA set up a system for complaint management and dispute resolution, and launched a Public Register of licensed estate agents and registered salespersons on our website. This provides greater transparency and confidence in the industry as consumers can now get relevant information to help them assess estate agents and salespersons before engaging them. CEA also took part in public education talks, and distributed a free consumer guide on engaging salespersons to the public.

### Looking ahead

The industry has experienced significant change under this new regulatory landscape. CEA's approach has been to regulate with a lighter touch initially, and then gradually tighten up as the market adjusts to the new standards and regulations.

We will continue to work in partnership with our key stakeholders to strengthen the industry, review the Estate Agents Regulations in response to the fast changing landscape, and develop a framework for the inspection of estate agents and a manual to guide the industry in providing professional service to consumers. CEA will also sponsor more consumer education initiatives and new public outreach programmes, and will review the use of IT to improve efficiency in administrative processes for the industry.

I would like to acknowledge and am grateful for the support of the industry for CEA's work, in particular estate agents which recognise the importance of high professional and ethical standards and are working to further improve on their performance. My fellow council members and the four committees have provided wise counsel and their voluntary contributions are much appreciated. My personal thanks also go to CEA's management and staff for their commitment, hard work and diligence in this inaugural year.

CEA is committed to this transformational journey to create a professional and trusted real estate agency industry where all stakeholders can expect professional standards in a fair and informed marketplace, and we look forward to your continued support.

**Greg Seow**  
**President**