

real estate
responsibilities

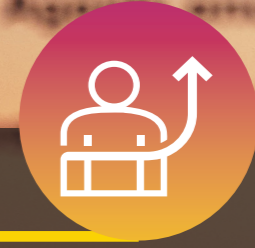


CEA Council for Estate Agencies

Engage in CEA Registered Self-regulation



Check CEA Public Register of Estate Agents and Self-regulators



Always
Connecting

Active consumer engagement

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Always Connecting

Staying connected with the consumer is essential to developing a regulatory framework that adequately safeguards consumer interest in a property transaction. CEA leverages multiple communication channels and outreach platforms to promote consumer engagement, which facilitates effective delivery of public education as well as the inflow of feedback to enrich the process of policy formation.

In FY2014, CEA strengthened its existing partnerships and established new collaborations to create greater opportunities for consumer engagement. These included outreach events, communications platforms and educational resources to enable consumers to access essential information and make informed decisions in property transactions.

OUTREACH COLLABORATIONS

As part of efforts to reach out to seniors, CEA participated in the U Live Symposium 2014 for the first time. Held on 16 August 2014 at the Devan Nair Institute for Employment & Employability, the annual symposium was targeted at senior workers and retirees aged 55 years and above. As some of them may have plans to purchase, sell or rent out their property when they reach retirement age, it would be useful to equip them with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions in property transactions. Initiated by the National Trade Union Congress, the U Live community promotes active ageing and healthy living among its members through a wide variety of activities and interest groups.

The CEA booth attracted some 350 visitors who picked up consumer tips on engaging salespersons through a simple quiz and received specially designed souvenirs bearing key messages. A talk was also conducted for visitors who were interested to gain a deeper understanding of their roles as consumers and the responsibilities of salespersons.

As an extension of the learning event, a U Live seminar was held on 27 September 2014 where CEA shared with participants tips on engaging a salesperson in property transactions and buying foreign properties.

Given the number of foreign properties marketed in Singapore, CEA collaborated with a new partner, STProperty to raise consumer awareness of the need for due diligence



U Live Symposium participants picking up consumer tips at the CEA booth

before investing in foreign properties. At each of the quarterly STProperty seminar & expo, CEA distributed its consumer guide on buying foreign properties to the participants and visitors. The guide alerts consumers to the risks and important considerations when buying foreign properties. Come April 2015, CEA will also have a greater presence at the event by setting up an exhibition booth with education posters to engage consumers.



CEA reaching out to consumers at Walk with CASE

With a common objective of safeguarding consumer interests, the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) is one of the strategic partners of CEA in consumer education. CEA collaborated with CASE on two projects in the year. On 15 March 2015, CEA participated in *Walk with CASE*, a walk cum mini-carnival organised by CASE to promote protection of consumer rights. Held at the F1 Pit Building, the event attracted 2,000 participants comprising families and senior citizens.



A CEA staff speaking at the HDB Heartland talk (Photo: HDB)

The last of the CEA-CASE Get It Right! consumer seminars was held on 24 May 2014. More than 100 participants attended the half-day seminar and learnt about the key considerations in buying new developments, leasing private residential properties, and potential pitfalls in property transactions.

The quarterly series was started in August 2013 to educate consumers on the key requirements and considerations in

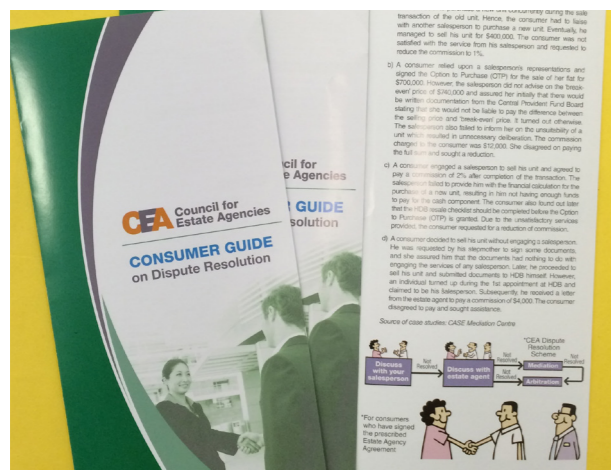
property transactions. The series was organised in collaboration with the industry associations – Institute of Estate Agents, SAEA Ltd and Singapore Institute of Surveyors & Valuers.

CEA continued to strengthen its collaboration with government agencies such as the Housing Development Board (HDB) and the Central Provident Fund Board (CPF). In FY2014, CEA participated in 20 consumer education seminars and reached out to about 1,800 consumers.

CEA fielded speakers at 16 HDB resale seminars and one HDB heartland talk on the subletting of HDB flats/rooms. The seminars were conducted in both English and Mandarin and sought to educate home buyers and owners on the responsibilities of salespersons in property transactions. CEA officers also spoke at three CPF public education seminars targeted at consumers buying their next home.

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

Since its inception, CEA has built a growing library of materials and tools to equip consumers with essential information for making informed decisions in property transactions. In line with this effort, CEA launched a new consumer guide on dispute resolution in March 2015 to raise awareness of and encourage consumers to use mediation and/or arbitration to resolve contractual disputes. The online guide introduces consumers to the CEA Dispute Resolution Scheme and provides pertinent pointers on the process of dispute resolution.



Free guide introduces consumers to the CEA Dispute Resolution Scheme

The online guide “Consumer Tips for Buying Foreign Properties”, first released in March 2014, was printed in hard copies in December 2014. They were displayed at the customer service counter for pick up by the public and distributed at various outreach events to consumers who were interested in buying foreign properties.

CEAenergy, the bimonthly e-newsletter continued to bring the latest news and updates to stakeholders and partners. These included initiatives for industry development and consumer education, positive stories of industry practitioners who have demonstrated professionalism in servicing their clients, as well as outcomes of enforcement actions.

The corporate website serves as an online gateway to e-services and all relevant resources related to CEA and the real estate agency industry. As CEA enters into the fifth year of operations, it is timely to revamp the website to give it a fresh look and improve overall user experience. Web design and development work began in November 2014 and is expected to be completed in early 2016. As part of the revamp, a new complaint management module will be added to facilitate online submission of consumer complaints. A new microsite dedicated to Continuing Professional Development requirements and courses will also be developed to serve the professional training needs of the industry.



CEA collaborated with Chinese radio station Capital 95.8FM to engage listeners

MEDIA AND PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

CEA works closely with the media and partner agencies to help raise its corporate profile and to reach out to consumers through advisories and educational messages.

To engage the Mandarin-speaking community, CEA worked with MediaCorp's news and information radio station, Capital 95.8FM, on a two-part consumer education series. Presented in a talk-show format on 26 June and 10 July 2014, the series provided listeners key tips on engaging salespersons, the professional service standards and responsibilities required of salespersons, and how to resolve contractual disputes with estate agents.

Media announcements were also issued to raise public awareness of CEA's initiatives for the industry as well as outcomes of enforcement actions. On 29 October 2014, an announcement was made on the launch of the pilot e-learning web application on ethical advertising. A press release was issued on 21 May 2014 for CEA's first prosecution case related to unlicensed estate agency work for the sale of foreign properties. On 15 September 2014, an announcement was made on the conviction of an individual for unlicensed estate agency work.



CEA-CASE Get It Right! consumer seminar organised in collaboration with industry associations

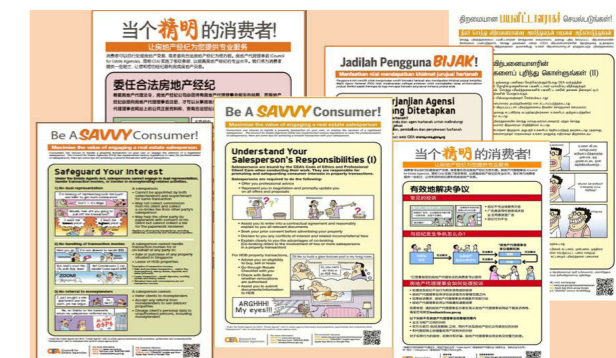
To promote awareness of the important things to note when engaging a salesperson for property transactions, CEA launched a print advertisement campaign from October to November 2014. A series of consumer education advertisements was launched in the four major newspapers – The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao, Berita Harian and Tamil Murasu. The weekly advertisements featured comic strips and illustrations to help communicate key messages to the public in an appealing and accessible way.

Consumer education advertorials were also inserted in publications with large circulation and targeted at readers who may engage in property transactions. These included lifestyle magazines such as NSMan, M Lifestyle, Prime and newsletters of the Community Development Councils.

CEA leveraged its partners' communication platforms to disseminate educational messages to a wider community. In June 2014, CEA contributed an article “Buying Foreign Property: Key considerations” to the government website, eCitizen. Articles titled “Buying Foreign Properties” and “Engaging salespersons: Get It Right!” were published in The Consumer, a publication of CASE. Challenge, a magazine for public sector employees, ran an article “7 Ways to Tell if Your Real Estate Salesperson is for Real” that offered quick tips on what to look out for when engaging salespersons. An article “A No-No for Dual Representation” was published on MyNiceHome.sg, an HDB website for first-time home owners and buyers.

The outreach and publicity generated from these initiatives contributed to increasing consumer awareness of salespersons' responsibilities and their roles in property transactions. They also helped to raise the profile of CEA and communicate the role of CEA to a wider audience.

In the year ahead, CEA will continue to seek new avenues to raise consumer awareness and expand its range of educational guides on various topics. A second Public Perception Survey will be conducted in FY2015 to assess changes in the perceptions and expectations of consumers since the baseline survey conducted in 2012. CEA will also explore more opportunities to collaborate with more partners to widen its outreach efforts.



Comic-illustrated ads in four languages help communicate key messages to different communities