

## **PMO – Caring Government Agencies (3 mins)**

In the budget debate, I had spoken on the need to Administer with a Heart.

The question is perhaps how can the government show that it cares? The tone is already strongly set as relief packages and budget provisions kick in so quickly to help businesses and individuals cope with the recession.

However, how the government, through its agencies, interact and help people day to day will be just as important in showing that the government cares. This is the 'software' that will color the people's perception of the government - whether it really cares for the people or not.

So let me reiterate my call – please go about your work with a human touch and a big heart. Hence, my earlier comments on older workers being mentors to younger frontline officers in interactions with the public. Please empathize with people who seek assistance and be more sympathetic to those who find themselves in difficult situations.

For example, an unfortunate accident involving a motorcyclist and his pillion-riding wife was brought to my attention. The car in front of them braked suddenly. The motorcyclist swerved his bike and fell. The car sped off and the motorcyclist and his wife were too hurt to take the car registration number down. Not only were both husband

and wife hurt and off work, he received a fine and demerit points too. Is this fair or is it just the unthinking application of a rule that if you are hurt in an accident, you are penalized? Would this resident see this as justice? Are the officers so busy and stretched that everything is an automated reaction?

I had appealed in the Budget debate that many agencies can take a leaf from how Comcare support is delivered. If a judgment call needs to be made, why not be generous in compassion or set up a system where people closer to the situation can be relied upon for an additional point of view or judgment? Just like the roles the grassroots leaders play in the delivery of Comcare support.

In these difficult economic times, we can perhaps be more forgiving and try to go out of our way to be more understanding and sympathetic.

I had also mentioned earlier the issues faced by SILRA Home. If the officers and the volunteers are aligned in their goals to provide the best value care to the Home's residents, I'm sure they would have been able to come to some general consensus in terms of the operating budget. They need not feel that they are on opposing sides – with one playing the domineering role of a custodian and a steward.

But don't get me wrong. There are agencies that go out of their way to understand the ground in order for them to perform their roles better. These send representatives to community meetings, which

are always invariably in the evenings. They take feedback seriously and they follow up. They communicate.

If only this is common across the family of government agencies.

If we all go about our work and responsibilities in partnership, much more can be accomplished. Many helping hands make the load lighter. Many more hands would emerge – not for handouts but to hand hold. The human touch can lift many out of depression.