

**CITATION BY PROFESSOR ROBBIE GOH,
DEAN, NUS FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
PUBLIC ORATOR FOR
MR GERARD EE, RECIPIENT OF HONORARY DOCTOR OF LETTERS**

**NUS COMMENCEMENT 2017, MAIN CEREMONY
THURSDAY, 6 JULY 2017, NUS UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE**

NUS Chancellor, President Tony Tan Keng Yam, and Mrs Mary Tan

Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills), Mr Ong Ye Kung

Excellencies

NUS Pro-Chancellors

NUS Chairman, Mr Hsieh Fu Hua

NUS President, Professor Tan Chorh Chuan

Distinguished Guests

Graduates

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a privilege for me to read the citation for Mr Gerard Ee Hock Kim. Although a very humble man, his significant contributions to society have justly been in the public eye for many years, and have been a cause for admiration and respect from observers like myself.

Mr Ee became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in 1972. In 1974, he began working life as an accountant, becoming a practicing auditor in 1976. Through a series of firm mergers, he became Partner of Ernst and Young until his retirement in 2005.

That retirement was only to liberate him to devote himself more fully to the social causes about which he was so passionate. Even before his retirement he had been actively involved in charity work. He was heir to a rich and proud legacy, that of his father Dr Ee Peng Liang, popularly known as the "Father of Charity", who among other things had established the Community Chest in 1983.

Some of the many causes Mr Gerard Ee championed with passion and commitment include the Assisi Home and Hospice, Action for Aids, Mount Alvernia Hospital, the Canossian School for the Hearing Impaired, the National Kidney Foundation, the Council for Third Age, Changi General Hospital, St Joseph's Institution Board of Governors, the Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund Trust, and many others. He was also a Nominated Member of Parliament from 1997 to 2002, President of the National Council of Social Service from 2002 to 2006, and has been a Justice of the Peace since 2000. To all of these positions, Mr Ee brought impactful and transformative leadership: for example, during his time as President of the National Council of Social Service, the Code of Governance and Management for voluntary welfare organisations

was launched, the Social Service Training Institute was founded, and the VWO Capability Fund was established.

Mr Ee also has deep ties with the National University of Singapore (NUS), having served as a member of the fundraising committee for the S R Nathan Professorship in Social Work, as advisor of the fundraising committee for the Ee Peng Liang Memorial Fund which awards scholarships to students who have demonstrated both academic excellence and leadership potential in the social service sector in Singapore, and as a member of the Resource Committee for the NUS Centre for Social Development Asia.

It is a breathtaking list in and of itself, but it does not adequately reflect the transformative role and value added by Mr Ee. To understand this dimension of his service to society, it is necessary to understand the courage and integrity that he brought, in roles that were at times extraordinarily challenging. There are a number of high-profile examples of this amongst his storied list.

Two weeks into his retirement in 2005, then-Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan asked him to help with the National Kidney Foundation (NKF), which was in crisis after being rocked by a corruption scandal that shook the public trust in that institution. In July 2005, Mr Ee became Interim Chairman and Acting CEO of the NKF. This was despite his awareness of the delicacy of the situation, and his own personal fears about how to handle it. As he says,

“When I walked into the NKF, I had no idea how I was going to tackle the situation. And as I have told many people, after I was shown to my room, I asked to be left alone, and I spent almost an hour just praying for guidance before I even had the courage to step out of my room, and walk around and find out about the situation.”

Today, Mr Ee is widely credited for restoring the public faith in the NKF and bringing the organisation back on track as one of the major healthcare charities in Singapore.

That was far from the only difficult task of social service Mr Ee willingly took on. He was the Chairman of the Public Transport Council from 2005 to 2012, a position that has been described as “one of the hottest seats in town”. Mr Ee had to deal with the important but difficult task of recommending periodic fare reviews for public transport, for which he received criticism from various parties. In January 2012, he chaired the Ministerial Salary Review Committee, right after the 2011 General Election where public discontent with ministerial salaries had surfaced. Mr Ee recommended a downward revision for ministerial salaries, and the removal of the pension scheme for all political appointment holders. The impact of Mr Ee’s work on this committee is perhaps best understood in the words of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

In a letter to Mr Ee of 4 January 2012, the Prime Minister acknowledged that:

“This is a complex and politically difficult issue with major implications for the future of Singapore. I am grateful that the Committee has invested the time to undertake a comprehensive and careful review, based on fundamental principles and the long-term interests of our country. You have sought and considered a wide range of feedback from Singaporeans with diverse views and expectations. Your final recommendations have benefitted from these inputs, as well as the experience and judgment of you and your Committee members. You have had to strike a balance between attracting capable and committed leaders of integrity, strengthening links with our socio-economic progress, and reinforcing the ethos of political service.”

Over the course of his career to date, Mr Gerard Ee has personified a selfless and tireless devotion to the people of Singapore, and has carried out his many high-level contributions to society with courage, faith and integrity. He has lived out his principle “to mean what you say,

and say what you mean, and have a clear conscience over it”, regardless of the difficult situations he has often faced. He has embodied the ethos of giving back rather than taking, of the successful helping the disadvantaged, of caring for others rather than for oneself. Although often receiving criticism rather than gratitude, and admittedly being discouraged at times, he has persisted unwaveringly in his course to help his fellow man – and he will no doubt continue to do so, to contribute selflessly to society with humility but enduring impact.

Mr Chancellor, may it please you to confer on Mr Gerard Ee the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.