

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Commissioner of Charities bars Ashlee Chua Jermaine from conducting fund-raising appeals for charitable purposes**

The Commissioner of Charities (COC) has issued a prohibition order under Section 39B(1)(a) of the Charities Act to bar Ashlee Chua Jermaine (Ashlee) from conducting any fund-raising appeal, online or offline, for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes with effect from 29 June 2018. The Singapore Police Force's (SPF) investigations against Ashlee are ongoing.

#### **Ashlee Chua Jermaine**

2. Ashlee, also known as "Ashley Lee" or "Ian Ian", is linked to a Facebook closed group known as "Ian Free Milk Blessing". The group is known to reach out to needy families that do not have the financial means to purchase sufficient formula milk or have children suffering from chronic or congenital illness. The COC had issued an order under Section 41A of the Charities Act to Ashlee earlier this year in relation to the "Ian Free Milk Blessing" Facebook group and she failed to furnish the requisite information, which amounts to an offence under the Charities Act.

3. Ashlee was alleged to have cheated at least three beneficiaries of fund-raising appeals conducted on the GIVE.asia crowdfunding platform. In these three cases, the beneficiaries reported that Ashlee became uncontactable after they transferred money to her.

4. Ashlee was also alleged to be behind a fund-raising appeal conducted by the "Ian Free Milk Blessing" Facebook group hosted on the GIVE.asia crowdfunding platform. The funds raised from the fund-raising appeal were purportedly transferred to Ashlee, who has not provided any accountability on how these funds have been used. Ashlee is an undischarged bankrupt. She is also being investigated by SPF for suspected criminal offences.

5. The COC is satisfied that Ashlee is not a fit and proper person to conduct fund-raising appeals for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes and that it is in the public interest to prohibit Ashlee from conducting such fund-raising appeals. The COC has therefore decided to prohibit Ashlee from conducting any fund-raising appeals with effect from 29 June 2018.

## **Public Advisory**

6. When members of public come across appeals for donations on social media or crowdfunding platforms, they are advised to find out more about the charitable cause before deciding to donate. Members of public should ask how their donations will be used, who the beneficiary is and how the fund-raiser will transfer the donation to the beneficiary. When donating online, do read all the information provided by the fund-raiser carefully and check if there are transaction fees or additional terms and conditions applicable. Always get the full picture before giving.

7. In the case of social media platforms, it is important to note that where there is a representation that the whole or any part of the proceeds will be used for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes, such representation whether made expressly or impliedly is considered a fund-raising appeal by law. As such, organisers of such activities are required to comply with the Charities (Fund-Raising Appeals for Local and Foreign Charitable Purposes) Regulations 2012. The requirements prescribed in the Regulations include:

- (a) keeping of accounting records; and
- (b) disclosing clear and accurate information on, amongst others:
  - i. the name of the charity or person to which the donation will be given;
  - ii. the purpose for which the donation will be used; and
  - iii. whether any commercial fund-raiser has been engaged.

8. The Commissioner of Charities, Dr Ang Hak Seng, would like to emphasise that: “All fund-raising appeals for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes, whether online or offline, are subject to regulation. We take a serious view of violations of requirements of the Charities Act and will not hesitate to take action if there is reason to believe that the appeal has been improperly administered.”

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION - CHARITIES ACT – SECTION 39B (1)**

### **Power of Commissioner to prohibit or restrict fund-raising appeal**

**Section 39B.** — (1) Notwithstanding any exemption or permit granted under section 39A, the Commissioner may, at any time, by order published in the *Gazette* —

- (a) prohibit or stop the conduct of any fund-raising appeal by any charity or person;  
or
- (b) restrict the conduct of any fund-raising appeal by any charity or person by imposing conditions,

if he is satisfied —

- (i) that any fund-raising appeal conducted by the charity or person has not been conducted in good faith for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes;
- (ii) that any of the persons who have conducted a fund-raising appeal, or any persons associated with any such appeal, are not fit and proper persons to administer, or to be associated with, a fund-raising appeal for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes;
- (iii) that any fund-raising appeal has been improperly administered;
- (iv) that, in connection with any fund-raising appeal conducted, the provisions of this Act or the regulations or the conditions imposed by the Commissioner were not complied with by any person conducting or participating in the appeal; or
- (v) that, in the public interest, the fund-raising appeal should not be conducted.