

New mental health initiative

By Darren Boon

SINGAPORE – A soon-to-be launched charity by Caritas Singapore hopes to reach out to those who suffer from psychiatric problems.

Named “CLARITY”, the initiative will provide rehabilitation support and essential training to assist people with psychiatric problems to recover from and manage their illnesses so that they can find sustainable, meaningful employment. It especially aims to help those from low- to middle-income families.

Ms Denise Pang, vice-chairperson of CLARITY, presented the charity’s plans on Jan 29 to some 40 people including Caritas’ affiliates and associates, professionals and caregivers.

The plans include daytime rehabilitation programmes such as psychosocial education and workshops on relapse prevention, as well as occupational therapy and vocational training.

CLARITY will also have mobile teams for community outreach and job mentoring for members with employment

authorities and hopes to launch by the middle of this year.

On the criteria for persons seeking help from the charity, Ms Pang listed income level, age group and the person’s history of psychiatric illness. For example, CLARITY would not be able to cater to persons with a history of aggressive violence, she said.

CatholicNews understands from Ms Pang that CLARITY will focus on building the capabilities and capacity to cater to persons recovering from schizophrenia, depression and personality disorders. CLARITY’s services do not cater to those with intellectual disabilities such as Down Syndrome, cerebral palsy and autism. Providing support services in this area are other Catholic-based affiliates and charities such as Catholic Welfare Services, and the Faith and Light community.

In order to fully benefit from CLARITY’s programmes, members are at minimum expected to be able to care for his or herself, said Ms Pang.

At the end of the presentation, the audience asked questions and provided feedback, besides praising the new initiative

of Singapore, stressed that the admission criteria had to be clearly defined.

Several, including Ms Sherlyn Khong from youth mission group acts29, wanted to know how CLARITY could help the caregivers and children of persons suffering from psychiatric problems.

One participant who wished to be known only as Ms Tan said one way to reach out is for CLARITY to first befriend people like her brother, who is suffering from schizophrenia.

“He’s at home. Befriend him, talk to him. Maybe after a while, he might go with them to the centre,” she said. “It’s not so much about letting him go and work or anything in that sense. It’s just to keep him occupied instead of doing nothing.”

Ms Gerry Szeto from the Faith and Light community saw a need for a befriender service and support for family members including siblings of the sufferer.

Other concerns raised by participants touched on the issue of fair wages and how to get potential employers to help CLARITY’s members find



Vice-chairperson Denise Pang introduces CLARITY. Photo by Darren Boon

CLARITY would eventually be able to work more in the area of advocacy for persons with psychiatric problems rather than just seeking payment from employers.

Calling CLARITY an exciting project, Ms Cherie Tseng, a consultant for programmes and businesses in social enterprise, told CatholicNews that the initiative could address the gaps in

illnesses, she suggested that the charity nail down its focus and services so as to not to overstretch resources and also to be able to hire the right professionals for the jobs.

CLARITY is currently scouting for premises to establish the “Clarity Lighthouse”, where it will conduct programmes and activities for its members. It is also seeking candidates for the post of Executive Director for the