

ERC/PR/2015

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## **NMP Thomas Chua's speech in Parliament on August 17 2015**

### **Ministry of Manpower**

### **Employment (Amendment) Bill**

Madam Speaker, the amendment to the Employment Bill seeks to make it mandatory that from next year onwards, local companies should issue itemised payslips to their employees, and moreover during the process of recruitment, they should also clearly state the employee's job scope, working hours, salary, bonus, annual leave and benefits. These are all positive moves to help enterprises streamline their human resource management practices. Thus, I support the Ministry of Manpower in amending the Employment Bill.

Generally, these are practices already adopted by larger local companies, and implementation should not be a problem for them. Last year, when the Ministry of Manpower announced this plan, the Chamber immediately joined hands with SIMTech to develop a simple e-Payslip software for SMEs to download free of charge. In order to encourage even more enterprises to use the e-Payslip, the Chamber specially conducted 12 workshops, some of which were jointly conducted with trade association members. At the same time, SME Centre@SCCCI also proactively promoted the ePayslip to small businesses; to date it has concluded 100 advisory cases.

During the outreach period, we realised that some small business owners were not really adept in using computers, or felt that it was troublesome to print from computers. Now, the Ministry of Manpower has designed a simple paper payslip template for easy input of

figures. However, the current template is only available in English, and we suggest that the Ministry of Manpower could provide the payslip in different languages to cater to the needs of small businesses.

MOM's request for small businesses to clearly state the employee's job scope is relatively harder to implement. Small businesses are strapped for manpower, and it is not possible to delineate the job scope in such detail. Teamwork is even more important within small companies, where everyone works together to complete the task at hand. Moreover, as we keep stressing on raising productivity, work arrangements should be more flexible, with employees taking on more work. If the business does well, salaries can be adjusted accordingly.

When I first joined Teckwah, the company only had around 20 staff. Every time there was a major event, colleagues would help each other willingly. My mother would cook delicious food at home and bring it to the office to share amongst the staff. It was like a happy family. Later, as the company expanded the staff numbers also increased, with different departments like Administration and Human Resource being set up. The division of labour between departments became more apparent. Whenever there were major activities we could only rely on catered food. However, colleagues still remembered fondly the food cooked by my mother. This is the eco-system of a small company.

Delineating clear job scopes is procedurally correct. However, it may not be that functional for small businesses. I totally understand the rationale of Ministry of Manpower, as it hoped to roll out the itemised payslip for the sake of upholding staff benefits. During this process, however, we need to consider the nature of small businesses.

While we may rear fish, not every type of fish is suitable for the aquarium. Some bosses

are worried that once they make the employee's job scope very clear, it could be even more troublesome. For instance, the boss may suddenly need the employee to help out in other areas, or cover work handled by colleagues who have taken leave. Some colleagues may be reluctant to do so if it was not specified within the job scope. This too is my concern.

May I ask this of the Minister: once the Employment Bill has been amended, do start-ups also need to clearly state the job scope of their employees?