

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First Apprenticeship Programme to Place and Train Singaporeans as Creative Craftsmen

Tripartite partners set aside \$3.5 million to transform furniture industry through job redesign

Singapore – 6 Feb 2014 - The SFIC Institute, National Trades Union Congress' e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and The Polytechnic of Western Australia (PWA), with the support from the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), today jointly launched a comprehensive apprenticeship programme to develop a pool of skilled local carpenters for the Singapore furniture industry.

Known as the **Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme**, \$3.5 million has been set aside to place and train 180 Singaporeans through a six-month structured apprenticeship programme. By helping employers to redesign the job from “Carpenter” to “Creative Craftsman” and putting in place a Progressive Wage Model for this profession, the apprenticeship programme aims to attract and grow a pool of local skilled workforce.

A total of seventeen employers have signed up to participate in this apprenticeship programme. They are mainly hospitality contract furniture manufacturers. The companies include Arthur Zaaro, Cathay Interiors, Cheng Meng, Complexart, Danovel, Design Studio, DHdecor, Ewins, Facility Link, Home Fix, J-Plan, Kitchen & Kitchen, Mu-dian, Serrano, Sitra, Sunray Woodcraft Construction and Yang Ah Kang & Sons.

“As an institute supporting the Singapore furniture industry, we are proud to mark our 4th year of operations with this landmark partnership,” says Mr Neo Sia Meng, the Vice President of SFIC and Chairman of SFIC Institute. “We have received exceptional support from our partners, designers, and manufacturers and will continue working closely with them to facilitate the training and mentorship of potential craftsmen in Singapore. Through this tripartite effort, we hope to see more interested Singaporeans come forward to find out more about this incredibly fulfilling career path, allowing the local furniture industry to grow from strength to strength.”

Mr Gilbert Tan, CEO of e2i, said, “e2i is committed to create better jobs and better lives for workers in Singapore. Through the Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme, local workers interested in Carpentry will now have opportunities for sustained career and wage

progression based on their skill levels and work experience. This new initiative will also support the furniture industry to continue to have a competitive presence in Singapore.”

Mr Ng Cher Pong, Chief Executive of WDA, said, “WDA’s partnership with e2i and SFIC Institute to launch the Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme is a first for the furniture industry. This programme will equip Singaporeans with the skills to become qualified craftsman and help them find gainful employment in the furniture industry. With job redesign and their involvement in training apprentices, employers will be able to meet their manpower needs. We urge individuals with a keen interest in this trade to seize this opportunity.”

The Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme is designed for Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents who wish to pursue a career in the furniture industry. Eligible candidates are matched with participating employers and trainees will be paid a recommended starting salary of \$1,500 per month during the six-month structured apprenticeship programme. The syllabus comprises a 12-day induction programme and a 10-week carpentry skills workshop interspersed with on-the-job training and mentorship sessions with their new employers, to ensure a seamless eventual transition to the workforce.

Upon successful completion of the programme, participants will receive

- SFIC Institute’s Apprentice Certificate in Creative Craftsmanship;
- WDA’s WSQ Certified Operations Specialist; and
- PWA’s Record of Result and Certificate of Participation.

The trainee’s course fees and salaries will be fully borne by the employers, with funding support from e2i and WDA to encourage employers to hire more locals.

For more information, please visit www.sficinstitute.com.

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About e2i (Employment and Employability Institute)

As THE leading organisation to create solutions for better employment and employability, e2i exists to create better jobs and better lives for workers. Since 2008, we have helped 200,000 workers through providing better jobs, developing better skills through professional development, and improving productivity for companies. An initiative of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), supported by the Workforce Development Agency (WDA), the Singapore Labour Foundation (SLF), and the Singapore National Employers' Federation (SNEF), e2i serves all segments of workers, from rank-and-file to professionals, managers and executives. For more information, please visit www.e2i.com.sg

About SFIC Institute

SFIC Institute, a subsidiary of the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), was formed as a training and development initiative for the furniture industry in 2004. Privatised in October 2010, SFIC Institute ensures that the furniture industry's long-term viability and sustainability goals are met through a holistic range of offerings comprising product design and development, retail, human resources, sales and marketing production technology, customised programmes and consultancy services, logistics, and green initiatives. SFIC Institute partners various governmental agencies such as the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA), SPRING Singapore and NTUC's e2i for funding support and to ensure that the Institute offers valuable, relevant programmes and initiatives to clients. For more information, please visit www.sficinstitute.com

About Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC)

Singapore Furniture Industries Council was established in 1981 as the official representative body of Singapore's furniture industry. It currently represents 95% of established furniture manufacturers in Singapore, of whom 65% have subsidiary manufacturing plants in the region including China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Its primary role is to promote the interests of its members and the Singapore furniture industry. Many of its initiatives aim to facilitate members' exposure to the world market, develop local talent and encourage entrepreneurship.

Through SFIC Institute, its training and education arm, the SFIC offers development courses to ensure its graduates remain competitive and relevant to the latest industry developments. It also manages the International Furniture Centre and organises SingaPlural, the annual design week, held in conjunction with International Furniture Fair Singapore/ASEAN Furniture Show, The Décor Show and Hospitality 360°.

To ensure the industry's growth and viability, SFIC continues to forge close partnerships with the government and trade-related agencies to harness technology, knowledge and information for effective strategic planning. For more information, please visit www.singaporefurniture.com

About Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)

The Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) enhances the competitiveness of our workforce by encouraging workers to learn for life and advance with skills. In today's economy, most jobs require not just knowledge, but also skills. WDA collaborates with employers, industry associations, the Union and training organisations, to develop and strengthen the Continuing Education and Training system that is skills-based, open and accessible, as a mainstream pathway for all workers - young and older, from rank and file to professionals and executives - to upgrade and advance in their careers and lives. For more information, please visit www.wda.gov.sg

About The Polytechnic of Western Australia

Polytechnic West (PWA) is Western Australia's largest government funded provider of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Higher Education. Over 30,000 students study at five major campuses each year, in one of more than 350 VET qualifications and 9 higher education programs spread across a wide range of technical, trade and professional disciplines.

As the training provider of approximately 40% of Western Australia's apprentices, Polytechnic West maintains strong links with employers and industry, designing training to cater to specific industry needs, producing graduates with the job-ready skills they will require in the workplace. Polytechnic West has been consistently recognised as a leading provider of education and training in Western Australia. Awards such as 'The Premier's Award for Developing the Economy' in 2009 and 'WA Large Training Provider of the Year' in 2006 and 2011 affirm Polytechnic West's commitment to the provision of an exceptional education experience to all clients. For more information, please visit www.polytechnic.wa.edu.au

APPENDIX A

Chinese Names and Terms 中文名称与词汇

Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme	创意工艺师培训计划
e2i (Employment and Employability Institute)	就业与职能培训中心
National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)	全国职工总会(职总)
Place-and-Train programme	先就业再培训计划
Progressive Wage Model	渐进式薪金模式
SFIC Institute	SFIC 学院
Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC)	新加坡家具工业理事会
Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA)	新加坡劳动力发展局
Mr Lim Swee Say, Secretary-General, NTUC	职总秘书长林瑞生先生
Mr Ernie Koh, President, SFIC	新加坡家具工业理事会会长许志恩先生
Mr Neo Sia Meng, SFIC Vice President and Chairman of SFIC Institute	新加坡家具工业理事会副会长和SFIC 学院 主席
Mr Gilbert Tan, CEO, e2i	就业与职能培训中心总裁陈财喜先生
Mr Ng Cher Pong, Chief Executive, WDA	新加坡劳动力发展局局长黄子鹏先生

APPENDIX B

List of employers currently participating in the Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme

1. Arthur Zaaro Design LLP
2. Cathay Interiors Pte Ltd
3. Cheng Meng Furniture Co Pte Ltd
4. Complexart Pte Ltd
5. Danovel Pte Ltd
6. Design Studio Furniture Manufacturer Ltd
7. DHDeco Pte Ltd
8. Ewins Pte Ltd
9. Facility Link Private Limited
10. Home Fix DIY Pte Ltd
11. J-Plan Associates Pte Ltd
12. Kitchen & Kitchen Pte Ltd
13. Mu-dian Pte Ltd
14. Serrano Holdings Pte Ltd
15. Sitra Holdings (International) Limited
16. Sunray Woodcraft Construction Pte Ltd
17. Yang Ah Kang & Sons Pte Ltd

APPENDIX C

Quotes from partners

Ewins Pte Ltd

Mr Mark Yong, Marketing Director of Ewins Pte Ltd. said, "It has been challenging for employers in this industry to hire local skilled carpenters. By taking part in this programme, Ewins can get suitable workers and equip them with the right skills and tools. The presence of a structured career progression and development pathway would mean that workers can advance to each stage of their career, look forward to skills upgrading and attain higher wages in a progressive manner."

Sitra Holdings (International) Limited

Mr Steven Chew, Deputy CEO, Sitra Holdings (International) Limited said, "Majority perceives carpentry work as challenging as the working environment is dusty, requires long working hours and is a profession without advancement opportunities. But this is not true. Through the efforts of SFIC Institute and e2i to redesign the job, the Creative Craftsmen with good workmanship acquired through the structured apprenticeship programme will be valuable and well sought after by Sitra and many employers. SITRA is supportive of the Creative Craftsman Apprenticeship Programme."

The Polytechnic of Western Australia

"We are delighted at the opportunity to contribute our training expertise and industry experience to provide candidates with an all-rounded curriculum and industry-standard teaching aids," commented Ms Jill Jamieson, Managing Director, The Polytechnic of Western Australia. "Our expertise will provide SFIC Institute with the ability to develop and deliver a programme based on the Australian Qualifications Framework and the Australian Quality Training Framework in Singapore."