

The Films Appeal Committee upholds MDA's decision to classify 'To Singapore, With Love' as Not Allowed for All Ratings (NAR)

1 The Films Appeal Committee (FAC) has heard the appeal lodged by the film director, Tan Pin Pin, against the Media Development Authority's (MDA) decision to classify the film "To Singapore, With Love" (TSWL) as "Not Allowed for All Ratings".

2 Having considered the director's representations, as well as the views of the MDA and relevant government agencies, the FAC has upheld MDA's NAR classification for TSWL. Of the 12 members present, nine members voted to uphold the NAR decision, while three members voted for a Restricted 21 (R21) rating.

3 The FAC noted the film director's explanation that the film was intended to relate the personal stories and emotions of people who have been away from Singapore for an extended length of time due to various circumstances. The filmmaker also explained that she had let the interviewees speak from their perspective, and had attempted to provide balance to their views by using inter-titles and news clippings in the film. She acknowledged that she relied on press reports, but had not sought to verify facts with the authorities.

4 The FAC considered the Film Classification Guidelines which state that *"films deemed to undermine public order, national security and/or stability will be disallowed for all ratings"*. While of commendable artistic standard, the FAC found the film to be a one-sided account with minimal attempts to provide a balanced mix of views beyond those provided by the interviewees featured in the film. As real people and events were featured in the film, the FAC felt that viewers who watch it without sufficient knowledge and understanding of the historical context would take the views presented as the truth. This would mean that acts of violence and subversion would appear justified to the uninitiated. Therefore, the FAC agreed that the film would pose a serious risk to Singapore's national security by condoning the use of violence and subversion as a means to achieve political ends in Singapore.

5 The FAC's decision has been conveyed to the film director.

This statement is issued by the Films Appeal Committee.

Tan Boon Huat
Chairman, Films Appeal Committee
12 November 2014