

## Look at WP's track record in Hougang, says Low

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Ahead of the Workers' Party (WP) unveiling its candidate for the Hougang by-election later today, party chief Low Thia Kiang has stressed that the party has not "shortchanged" Hougang residents, even after the expulsion of former WP Member of Parliament Yaw Shin Leong.

Speaking to reporters last night at the Hougang Meet-the-People session (MPS), Mr Low reiterated the by-election meant the party was prepared to give residents another choice if an MP was "not up to the mark".

While signs point to WP member Png Eng Huat as the likely candidate for the by-election, Mr Low did not confirm this when asked. He did, however, shoo reporters away from Mr Png, who was spotted at the Hougang MPS yesterday, saying that Mr Png would answer questions at today's press conference. Mr Png, who contested in East Coast GRC in the General Election last year, has been helping out at the ward since this year and flyers of him have been circulating in the constituency.

Yesterday, Mr Low emphasised that Aljunied GRC MPs have stepped up to conduct MPS for Hougang residents since Mr Yaw stepped down in February.

"(I) am satisfied to say that we done our best to serve the residents of Hougang in this period of time, that's why I am confidently saying that we have not shortchanged Hougang residents. We have served them well even without an MP," said Mr Low, who also highlighted WP's track record in Hougang for "over 20 years".

Asked if Mr Yaw's behaviour could affect how Hougang residents would vote, Mr Low said the question was better answered by the residents. But he noted that Hougang residents have always trusted the WP to produce quality candidates, and that Mr Yaw had served residents "diligently" after he was elected.

Although the party's performance in Parliament so far has drawn mixed responses, Mr Low felt they had "done well". "I wouldn't say very well," he said. "Of course there will be some people who think that we have not been up to par but we promised to do our best and we have done so."

Political watchers Today spoke to said that the People's Action Party (PAP) could put the heat on Mr Yaw's expulsion but the WP would likely focus on national issues.

The party could point to adjustments in government policies and the need for strong Opposition presence in Parliament, they said.

**"WP will focus at the national level — what's changed and if the PAP has really transformed as it has promised," said Dr Gillian Koh, senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies.**

Added Singapore Management University law professor Eugene Tan: "They will position it to voters such that if you want this to continue, you will need another opposition MP rather than PAP MP."

If the spotlight does fall on the issue of Mr Yaw, WP could stress on how they responded to the situation, said former Nominated Member of Parliament Siew Kum Hong. “They will stress on how they handled Yaw, and took strong action ... They will also focus on their track record in Hougang, and their manifesto of a First World Parliament.”

***Additional reporting by Tan Weizhen and Woo Sian Boon***