

## **Good Intent, Bad Impact**

**Young PAP member in viral video says public should focus on the intention behind it rather than its quality**

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He didn't know the video he was in had gone viral.

Youth counsellor Isaac Lee only suspected something had gone awry on Vesak Day, after friends bombarded him with messages.

When the Young People's Action Party (YP) member checked online, he discovered — to his surprise — that the clip had received a lot of negative feedback on public sites like YouTube.

"I realised how strong the backlash was when I scrolled through the comments," he told *The New Paper*. "People were saying we're robotic, that we had no emotions and lacked passion."

The video was screened at last year's People's Action Party's (PAP) Convention and was uploaded to YouTube late last month.

Though he said the execution was wanting, the 35-year-old defended the "good intentions behind the video".

"The person who suggested it thought it'll be a good idea to talk about some of the initiatives and causes that (youth wing members) wanted to explore," he said.

"The message is there — and the passion to serve cannot be faulted."

Mr Lee was part of the Pasir Ris-Punggol team that spoke about the need to balance Singapore's development needs with having green lungs and spaces. (See report on facing page.)

Filming took place last September to October and the clip — over four minutes long — was aired at the Party's convention later last year.

While he expected to get some flak from those who had grievances against the party, the negativity that followed still stunned Mr Lee.

"Yes, people have different viewpoints but (detractors) should look at the work that others put in, rather than just criticise and make a blanket judgment (on the perceived lack of passion)."

Among the feedback: His segment was almost inaudible, thanks to crickets chirping loudly in the background. And members could also have been more spontaneous and casual, rather than sticking to a script.

"Some (of us) could not remember the lines because the script was too long," he added.

As a solution, some of the youth activists had cues during filming, creating the impression they were reading from off-camera.

But the episode is unlikely to deter him.

He said: "I will still do this (appear in a video) if it's for a cause I believe in."

A statement posted yesterday on the PAP Facebook page said: "We did not expect that our humble (raw and unpolished) in-house production would go viral like this."

It added that the party was proud of what the YP has been doing on the ground and of "their spirit of activism" in serving the nation and caring for Singaporeans.

The YP chairman is Social and Family Development Minister Chan Chun Sing. Mr Vivian Balakrishnan, who was YP chairman for two terms, called the video "an unvarnished expression of a sincere commitment to serve all Singaporeans".

Mr Balakrishnan, who is Environment and Water Resources Minister, said on Facebook: "More important than words is the fact that our members have toiled quietly and thanklessly on the ground for so long to make life better for our fellow citizens. Actions speak louder than words, especially in the People's ACTION Party."

### **SUPPORT**

PAP member Baey Yam Keng said the episode was unlikely to deter young people from stepping forward.

"As long as they accept that negative comments will surface no matter what they do and are passionate about (their cause), they'll take such things in their stride," said Mr Baey, who is deputy chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Communications and Information.

Sociologist Tan Ern Ser, an associate professor at the National University of Singapore, said the episode highlighted the challenges politicians and would-be politicians face in convincing people about their sincerity.

"Cynical and snide remarks (are) part and parcel of the sacrifice required in politics," he added. "Young people who are truly sincere about wanting to serve the people should still step up... and press on."

The message is there — and the passion to serve cannot be faulted.

— Youth counsellor Isaac Lee (right)

FLAK: (Top and above) The video has been criticised and flamed, but YP member Isaac Lee (left) called for judgment of the content, not quality.