

# Crowdfunding for mum's funeral

BY ADRIAN LIM

**A**N INDIEGOGO crowdfunding project by two sisters in Singapore to raise money to pay for their dying mother's funeral and medical bills has struck a chord with donors here.

Since it went live on Sunday with an initial target of US\$9,000 (S\$11,240), the campaign, called Goodbye Beautiful Mummy, has raised over US\$18,000 as of 9pm yesterday, with 30 days to go. **Donations** were received from more than 250 people.

The financial assistance rendered to Sarah and Deborah Emmanuel for their mother, Sandra, 50, who is suffering from cancer, is a growing trend in which the community has given amply in response to appeals for help for individuals in need.

Other instances include funds raised for injured naval serviceman Jason Chee by his neighbour, Mr Ho Boon Sim, via a Facebook page appeal.

When pastry chef Al-Matin Mohamed was hit by a getaway car while cycling in New York, friends also set up a Facebook page to seek financial assistance to pay his medical bills.

Acknowledging the trend, the Office of the Commissioner of Charities (COC) launched an exercise on Friday to seek feedback on a review of the regulations on fund-raising appeals for individuals.

COC said it is looking into whether donations to such appeals can be seen as private gifts instead of charitable donations, relieving individual beneficiaries and families of certain regulatory **obligations**.

Such obligations include the need to keep detailed records and to seek donors' or the COC's consent for alternative use of donations.

While the Emmanuel sisters are tapping on a crowdfunding website based overseas – Indiegogo is headquartered in the United States – the regulations still apply to such **fund-raisers**.

A COC spokesman told My Paper that “anyone in Singapore conducting fund-raising appeals, including those conducted on (an) overseas website, to any member of the public in a community here for charitable, benevolent or philanthropic purposes, is regulated”.

The spokesman said the “regulations spell out the duties...of fund-raisers, which include the need for disclosure of

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A SPOKESMAN FOR THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF CHARITIES

clear and accurate information; proper management and usage of donations; as well as keeping accounting records of donations received and disbursed”.

Singapore Management University law professor Tang Hang Wu said he did not see any major issues with money being raised for individual needs on a crowdfunding website. He said that rather than it being for a vague social cause, there is a “**specific** purpose” for the fund-raising.

However, Prof Tang said that there needs to be accountability to the donors in how the money is used, should the amount raised far exceed what was targeted.

Charity Council of Singapore member Ramasamy Dhinakaran said that some form of regulation should still apply to such fund-raising appeals for individuals, so a “balance” is created and scams do not become commonplace.

On fund-raisers, the COC spokesman said that donors are advised to “practise caution and to donate to causes and individuals or organisations that they know”.

“They should be discerning and not feel pressurised to give if they have any doubt,” he added.

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