

# 20 voices

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## Education, not enforcement, the way to stop litterbugs

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

Whenever a report such as “Spit, smoke, litter illegally? Soon, a volunteer might catch you” (March 17) features volunteers with the power to book litterbugs, one cannot help but raise questions and make observations about potential pitfalls.

The consistent observation that “offenders would usually comply with their requests to pick up their litter without the need for them to whip out their authority cards” makes the venture puzzling.

Even without the National Environment Agency’s (NEA) training, surely these civic-minded Singaporeans would have kept others in check?

And what is the justification for expanding their powers to target spitting, urinating and smoking? That the NEA received feedback from volunteers, as well as members of the public, “that they are keen to do more than just engage litterbugs”.

The former’s perspectives are not surprising, although I would be interested to read the opinions of average Singaporeans. Do they really believe that volunteers should be given discre-

tion in so many areas?

I am guessing that most are not as enthusiastic as the volunteers and respondents.

Defenders of the Community Volunteer Programme may claim that only litterbugs, spitters and inconsiderate smokers need fear the proposed extension of the scheme and that, regardless of the possible distrust and disputes from this, the city remains spick and span. And most importantly, that the volunteers assume this undertaking without remuneration and the programme is a healthy display of active citizenry.

To begin with, we should not rely on fear. Beyond a threshold, punitive and card-carrying enforcement strategies will yield only marginal gains in deterrence.

Has the focus on quantitative results, such as increasing the enforcement hours, engaging more offenders or issuing more tickets, undermined the prominence of education and public awareness campaigns?

With the latter, outcomes are less immediate and it takes substantial patience, but a collective culture of responsibility and ownership could emerge more organically and would be more sustainable. The right things should be done because they are right, not because of fear and policing.

Mr Liak Teng Lit, who heads the Keep Singapore Clean Movement, said it best: “I hope the day will come when, if anybody litters, somebody on the side will just remind them: Please don’t do it.” I hope so, too.

If Singapore is lazily reliant upon structures of power to remain clean and green, then it might not be that worth it.

“To begin with, we should not rely on fear. Beyond a threshold, punitive and card-carrying enforcement strategies will yield only marginal gains in deterrence.”

## Require local online sellers to enable One-Time Password

FROM WONG BOON HONG

As the One-Time Password (OTP) feature currently has to be enabled by the online merchant, in “Security measure for credit cards needs seller’s cooperation” (March 19), could the Monetary Authority of Singapore make it a requirement rather than an option for Singapore-based websites?

Security reasons aside, online merchants would then be unable to mislead consumers by, for example, showing a fee to be charged but adding another in the bill without indicating the true amount during payment.

Is it legal to do so?

Also, transaction alerts from local banks are not meaningful when the banks first hold the consumer liable for unauthorised transactions, not to mention that refunds for such transactions usually take months.

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**STEVE VAI**

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