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Headline: Fresh out of prison, and trying to keep up with Singapore  
Link: <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore/fresh-out-of-prison-and-trying-to-keep-up-with-singapore-9488864>  
Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJ7XWOo6qvE>

## Screenshots:

The screenshot shows a news article from Channel NewsAsia. The article is titled "Fresh out of prison, and trying to keep up with Singapore" and is written by Jalelah Abu Baker. It is dated 22 Dec 2017 06:31AM. The article discusses a program called Project ReConnect that helps ex-offenders familiarise themselves with the transport system and changes in technology. A photograph shows a man, Lee Desmond Trevena, sitting at a table. Below the photo, there is a quote from him: "Most people would welcome the changes for the convenience they bring. But they are overwhelming for Lee Desmond Trevena, 47, He was released from prison on Nov 21 after spending five years behind bars. As far as he is concerned, that is 'long enough'." Another quote follows: "It may not sound like a big deal, but I'm just getting used to new apps and what they have to offer, and relying on them. I have a fear of the unknown," he said. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a video player with the title "Programme helps ex-convicts get reacquainted with society" and a subtitle "PICKING UP THE PIECES AFTER PRISON" by Hanidah Amin.

**SINGAPORE**  
Fresh out of prison, and trying to keep up with Singapore

By Jalelah Abu Baker  
@jalelahCNA

22 Dec 2017 06:31AM  
(Updated: 27 Dec 2017 05:53PM)

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### Fresh out of prison, and trying to keep up with Singapore

A programme called Project ReConnect helps ex-offenders familiarise themselves with the transport system, and changes in technology.

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Most people would welcome the changes for the convenience they bring. But they are overwhelming for Lee Desmond Trevena, 47, He was released from prison on Nov 21 after spending five years behind bars. As far as he is concerned, that is "long enough".

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Programme helps ex-convicts get reacquainted with society

**PICKING UP THE PIECES AFTER PRISON**  
By Hanidah Amin

## Text:

Singapore

### **Fresh out of prison, and trying to keep up with Singapore**

*A programme called Project ReConnect helps ex-offenders familiarise themselves with the transport system, and changes in technology.*

By Jalelah Abu Bakar



Mr Lee Desmond Trevena, 47, was released from prison on Nov 21 this year. (Photo: Hani Amin)

SINGAPORE: Much has changed in the last five years. Apps offering all kinds of services including food delivery have become part of daily life. Cashless payments have become more popular, and social media has become about more than just keeping in touch.

Most people would welcome the changes for the convenience they bring. But they are overwhelming for Lee Desmond Trevena, 47. He was released from prison on Nov 21 after spending five years behind bars. As far as he is concerned, that is "long enough".

"It may not sound like a big deal, but I'm just getting used to new apps and what they have to offer, and relying on them. I have a fear of the unknown," he said.

Before Mr Lee went to jail for drug abuse in March 2013, he had a smartphone, but he used it only for making calls and sending text messages. Mr Lee is slowly getting re-acquainted with what it takes to live in Singapore now, piecing together information from friends and family.



His wife told him about app-based food delivery services, about being able to pay bills through a bank app, as opposed to a SAM or AXS machine, and about using ATM cards without having to key in a PIN.

He also got a glimpse of Facebook when his friend busied himself with checking for updates during their meeting. He has got up to speed with Uber and Grab as a common transport option, including the ability to travel without cash, as the apps can be linked to debit and credit cards.

“It’s like nowadays, you don’t need cash to survive, as long as you have a job and a phone.”

## **HELPING EX-OFFENDERS GET BACK INTO THE GROOVE**

To help Mr Lee and others like him, the Industrial and Services Co-operative Society (ISCOS) has from April been running a programme to arm them with basic information that they would need to restart their lives. ISCOS functions under the purview of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Channel NewsAsia accompanied a group of about 10 former offenders on the one-day programme called Project ReConnect.

They were guided on how to reset their SingPass, and given forms to apply for the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS). The scheme will allow them to receive subsidised medical and dental care at participating clinics.

They were also shown the MRT map, and how to use Google Maps to navigate in Singapore.

After the briefing, they were taken by bus to Salvation Army’s biggest outlet in Upper Bukit Timah to buy items at a low price, and sign up for a discount card.



The ex-offenders on a bus to The Salvation Army in a bus sponsored by the Goldbell Foundation.  
(Photo: Jalelah Abu Baker)

The next stop was Tanjong Pagar Community Club, where they reset their SingPass using the password they came up with.

They also tried out the self-service checkout kiosks at the neighbourhood FairPrice supermarket.

Then it was off to Tanjong Pagar MRT station to get acquainted with the new train lines.

Deputy director Elvis Overee said ISCOS developed the programme based on findings and feedback from a focus group discussion on the immediate areas of needs and support required for ex-offenders.

“We received feedback from inmates during our prison briefings that they require guidance in their initial post-release days to familiarise themselves with the transport system, landscape and services offered by after-care agencies and the community.”

The organisation also relies on observations and feedback from the ongoing sessions to fine-tune and improve the programmes so that they remain relevant and practical to the participants, he added.

As of Dec 6, 172 ex-offenders had attended the weekly voluntary sessions.

## **PROGRAMME HELPS IN IMMEDIATE POST-RELEASE PERIOD**

Mr Lee found the programme helpful. “After so many years, we are not sure who to turn to, where to go, and how to start on the right foot. It helps us familiarise ourselves with how society has changed,” he said.





Ex-offenders who attended Project ReConnect visit Tanjong Pagar Community Club to reset their Singpass. (Photo: Jalelah Abu Baker)

Pastor Philip Chan, co-founder of a halfway house called The Hiding Place, said that the programme will be useful for those just released from prison, especially if they have spent a long time behind bars.

"In areas like transport and government assistance, they need help. They have been away for a long time, so they may not know where they can go for training, support and monetary assistance," he said.

ISCOS' Mr Overee said Project ReConnect is different from others.

It focuses on the initial post-release days for ex-offenders to learn skills that are essential for daily living and to stay attuned to the fast-changing world.

The other reintegration programmes tend to emphasise employment, counseling and social activities, he said.

Mr Overee said: "All these are equally important but may not address the immediate need of the ex-offenders who have lost touch with the community, particularly in the first five to 10 days after release."

Bringing them to the places in person and addressing their concerns and questions face-to-face give them a sense of assurance and confidence in navigating themselves after the session, he added.



Mr Lee at a self-service kiosk at Fairprice supermarket. (Photo: Jalelah Abu Baker)

However, he felt that more needs to be done to reintegrate ex-offenders. Community acceptance and support are crucial, Mr Overee said, suggesting more positive stories about ex-offenders to encourage a shift in mindset.

He also suggested that more needs to be done to prepare and encourage ex-offenders, especially the older ones to leverage new technology as Singapore moves towards being a Smart Nation.

“Ex-offenders who are not familiar with technology are exposed to the risk of being “left behind” at a disadvantage, for example, when they compete for opportunities in the job market,” he said.

Source: CNA/ja