

## NEWS RELEASE

### **ASCOTT AND SG ENABLE SIGN PARTNERSHIP TO ELEVATE DISABILITY INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY** *Partnership will lead to Singapore's industry-first comprehensive playbook with SG Enable to advance Ascott's disability inclusion efforts across its global portfolio*

**Singapore, 20 June 2024** – The Ascott Limited (Ascott), the lodging business unit wholly owned by CapitaLand Investment (CLI), today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SG Enable, the focal agency for disability and inclusion in Singapore, forging a long-term partnership to elevate disability inclusion and set new standards for accessible accommodation in the hospitality industry.

This partnership is the first of its scale in Singapore's hospitality industry, spearheading a range of initiatives that will deliver inclusive stay experiences through design and programming across Ascott's properties in the country. It will also serve to foster workforce diversity and contribute to capability-building, not only within Ascott but also throughout the hospitality sector. To uplift and upskill the wider industry, Ascott and SG Enable will jointly develop and deliver essential resources and disability inclusion training tailored for the hospitality industry at the Ascott Centre for Excellence (ACE), Ascott's global hospitality training centre dedicated to developing human capital for the hospitality industry. In an industry first for Singapore, the insights gained from the joint initiatives will be used to develop a comprehensive global playbook in 2025 to steer the disability inclusion efforts of Ascott's properties around the world.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Guest-of-Honour Mr Eric Chua, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth & Ministry of Social and Family Development. He said: "From accessible accommodation to inclusive hiring and upskilling opportunities, today's MOU paves the way for greater inclusion and diversity in the hospitality industry. Partnerships such as this – between corporates like Ascott and SG Enable, the focal agency for disability and inclusion in Singapore – are crucial for driving positive change in our community."

Ms Beh Siew Kim, Chief Financial & Sustainability Officer, Lodging, CapitaLand Investment and Managing Director, Japan and Korea, Ascott, said: "Marking 40 remarkable years in hospitality service, Ascott has embarked on a transformative journey to go 'unlimited' for our guests and associates. To create 'unlimited good' as a positive changemaker, we are deepening our commitment to championing inclusivity under our Ascott CARES sustainability framework. As a leading global hospitality company headquartered in Singapore, our vision is to strengthen Ascott's culture of care and respect by cultivating a more inclusive operating environment for both guests and associates. We are thus delighted to find a like-minded partner in SG Enable to jointly establish new standards for accessibility in the hospitality sector and positively impact the future of travel. This MOU will mark an integral step towards our goal of scaling up Ascott's disability inclusion efforts globally."

"We are thrilled to embark on this groundbreaking partnership with Ascott. This collaboration represents a significant milestone in our journey of championing disability inclusion and accessibility. The MOU marks the first of its scale in the hospitality sector, and we look forward to creating inclusive spaces, building

inclusive capabilities, and fostering a culture of respect and empowerment for all. Together, we can pave the way for a more accessible and inclusive future, in Singapore and beyond,” said Ms Ku Geok Boon, Chief Executive Officer, SG Enable.

At today’s signing ceremony, three persons with disabilities and their family members were also invited to share their experiences with the accessibility features of Ascott Orchard Singapore, following a stay at the property. The three groups of guests affirmed that Ascott Orchard Singapore was easy to navigate and wheelchair friendly, complemented by the warm hospitality of the service team who had gone through disability management training by SG Enable. Please refer to the **Annex** for more on their stay experiences.

Operating since 2017, Ascott Orchard Singapore is the country’s first serviced residence to be certified Universal Design Mark Platinum by Singapore’s Building and Construction Authority for its user-friendliness. It features sheltered walkways seamlessly linked to the adjacent mosque and shopping mall, complemented with clear and informative signs that are accompanied by braille and tactile maps. Accommodation options include accessible guestrooms catering to wheelchair users as well as dual-key units that facilitate multi-generational living. All its public toilets are equipped with accessibility features, the swimming pool deck is accessible via a ramp and a Kipsu messaging platform is on hand to facilitate communication with guests who have hearing loss or visual impairment. In addition, part of its service crew has completed SG Enable’s disability management course, with more associates slated to undergo the training by year-end.

### **Furthering Commitment to Disability Inclusion**

The partnership between Ascott and SG Enable will support the development and deployment of Ascott’s disability inclusion policies, frameworks, suite of products, services and offerings in Singapore, creating inclusive and accessible lodging experiences in its properties locally. Key initiatives will centre around the five pillars of the MOU: Inclusive Spaces, Inclusive Programmes, Inclusive Digital Interfaces, Inclusive Hiring and Inclusive Training.

#### **1) Inclusive Spaces**

Drawing inspiration from [SG Enable’s Design for Inclusive Spaces playbook](#), Ascott’s design and technical specialists will elevate the overall guest experience at its properties through thoughtful and intuitive design. For instance, installing nooks with soft padding to help reduce noise, which is an accessibility feature for those with autism and hearing disability. In-room amenities such as touch lamps, toilet chairs and assistive technology will also greatly enhance the stay experience for persons with disabilities. By end 2024, Ascott will formalise refurbishment plans for at least one property in Singapore to implement new accessibility features.

#### **2) Inclusive Programmes**

Ascott’s diverse range of brands each have their own set of distinct signature programmes catered to guests of varying demographics and preferences. As part of pipeline plans, Ascott will curate a series of programmes that cater to persons with disabilities, enriching their stay experience. The first inclusive programme is on track to be rolled out in Singapore this year.

In addition, SG Enable will leverage their extensive network of partners to provide Ascott with opportunities to promote disability inclusion. These include thought leadership platforms where Ascott can share and learn about best practices in the global adoption of disability inclusion, as well as volunteering opportunities to uplift people with disabilities for both associates and guests.

### 3) **Inclusive Digital Interfaces**

Digital touchpoints are an integral part of the overall hospitality experience in today's travel landscape. Recognising the importance of inclusive digital interfaces, Ascott has been enhancing the design of its website [www.DiscoverASR.com](http://www.DiscoverASR.com) in accordance with Worldwide Web Consortium's globally recognised Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, to further simplify the user experience and improve accessibility features. To enable guests with disabilities to make reservations more easily, the accessibility information of Ascott's properties in Singapore has been curated to display prominently throughout property webpages and online booking journey. The webpages and online booking journeys of Ascott's properties worldwide will be similarly enhanced to include accessibility information by year-end.

### 4) **Inclusive Hiring**

Ascott has signed the **President's Challenge Enabling Employment Pledge**<sup>1</sup>, reinforcing its commitment to adopting an inclusive mindset towards employees with disabilities, creating barrier-free workplace environments and implementing supportive employment policies in Singapore. Plans are underway to progressively increase the number of persons with disabilities hired across the properties in Singapore, redesigning job scopes and workspaces where necessary.

### 5) **Inclusive Training**

Together with SG Enable, Ascott will also co-develop a series of hospitality-specific disability inclusion training courses to be delivered at ACE, to train and equip industry leaders and professionals in Singapore. Prior to this, Ascott has already started conducting accessibility training for associates. To date, some 50 associates based in Singapore have attended disability awareness and disability management training conducted by SG Enable, with plans to have all associates based in Ascott's properties in Singapore complete similar training by 2026.

## **Recording progress in Inclusivity in The Ascott Limited 2023 Sustainability Report**

In the second edition of its annual sustainability report published recently, Ascott has detailed key achievements under each pillar of Ascott CARES: Community, Alliance, Respect, Environment, and Supply Chain for the year 2023.

In the area of inclusivity under the Respect pillar, Ascott became the first major accommodation operator to collaborate with Australia's national accessibility body, Accessible Accommodation. Over 80% of Ascott's associates in the country have completed training to better understand and implement measures to

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<sup>1</sup> The President's Challenge Enabling Employment Pledge is a commitment made by organisations in Singapore to support the employment of individuals and create barrier-free workplace environments. Read more at: [President's Challenge Enabling Employment Pledge | For Employers \(sgenable.sg\)](http://sgenable.sg).

meet the requirements of people living with disabilities. In Malaysia, Ascott redesigned workspaces and introduced visual aids and communication tools to support a graphic designer with a hearing disability in her work and facilitate seamless communication within her team.

Ascott is one of the first hospitality groups to attain **GSTC-Committed Status** by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) for the successful adoption of GSTC Criteria, with accessibility being a key criterion. More details of Ascott's sustainability achievements can be found in [The Ascott Limited 2023 Sustainability Report](#) published on [www.DiscoverASR.com](http://www.DiscoverASR.com).

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### **About The Ascott Limited**

Since pioneering Asia Pacific's first international-class serviced residence with the opening of The Ascott Singapore in 1984, Ascott has grown to be a trusted hospitality company with over 950 properties globally. Headquartered in Singapore, Ascott's presence extends across more than 220 cities in over 40 countries in Asia Pacific, Central Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the USA.

Ascott's diversified accommodation offerings span serviced residences, coliving properties, hotels and independent senior living apartments, as well as student accommodation and rental housing. Its award-winning hospitality brands include Ascott, Citadines, lyf, Oakwood, Quest, Somerset, The Crest Collection, The Unlimited Collection, Preference, Fox, Harris, POP!, Vertu and Yello. Through Ascott Star Rewards (ASR), Ascott's loyalty programme, members enjoy exclusive privileges and offers at participating properties.

A wholly owned business unit of CapitaLand Investment Limited, Ascott is a leading vertically-integrated lodging operator. Harnessing its extensive network of third-party owners and in-market expertise, Ascott grows fee-related earnings through its hospitality management and investment management capabilities. Ascott also expands its funds under management by growing its sponsored CapitaLand Ascott Trust and private funds.

This year, Ascott marks 40 years in hospitality service with the launch of Ascott Unlimited, a full year campaign that will offer Unlimited Opportunities, Unlimited Choices, Unlimited Freedom, and Unlimited Good. Navigating a future of unlimited possibilities against a backdrop of global change and evolving perspectives of travel, Ascott Unlimited marks Ascott's ambitions to break new ground, and springboard to its next chapter of growth as a global hospitality company. Find out more about Ascott Unlimited at [www.discoverasr.com/ascottunlimited](http://www.discoverasr.com/ascottunlimited).

For more information on Ascott and its sustainability programme, please visit [www.discoverasr.com/the-ascott-limited](http://www.discoverasr.com/the-ascott-limited). Alternatively, connect with us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

### **About CapitaLand Investment Limited ([www.capitalandinvest.com](http://www.capitalandinvest.com))**

Headquartered and listed in Singapore, CapitaLand Investment Limited (CLI) is a leading global real asset manager with a strong Asia foothold. As at 31 March 2024, CLI had S\$134 billion of assets under management as well as S\$100 billion of funds under management (FUM) held via six listed real estate investment trusts and business trusts, and more than 30 private vehicles across Asia Pacific, Europe and USA. Its diversified real estate asset classes cover retail, office, lodging, business parks, industrial, logistics,

self-storage and data centres.

CLI aims to scale its FUM and fee-related earnings through fund management, lodging management and commercial management, and maintain effective capital management. As the investment management arm of CapitaLand Group, CLI has access to the development capabilities of and pipeline investment opportunities from CapitaLand's development arm.

As a responsible company, CLI places sustainability at the core of what it does and has committed to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions for Scope 1 and 2 by 2050. CLI contributes to the environmental and social well-being of the communities where it operates, as it delivers long-term economic value to its stakeholders.

### **About SG Enable**

SG Enable, the focal agency for disability and inclusion in Singapore, enables persons with disabilities to live, learn, work and play in an inclusive society. We create equitable opportunities for persons with disabilities through thought leadership, sustainable social innovation and impactful partnership. Guided by our core values of professionalism, innovation and empathy, we envision a more inclusive Singapore and enabled lives. Set up by the Ministry of Social and Family Development in 2013, we are a registered charity and an Institution of a Public Character. For more information, visit [www.sgenable.sg](http://www.sgenable.sg).

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### **Important Notice**

This announcement and the information contained herein does not constitute and is not intended to constitute an offering of any investment product to, or solicitation of, investors in any jurisdiction where such offering or solicitation would not be permitted.



## **ANNEX – FEEDBACK FROM GUESTS WITH DISABILITIES**

"Ascott Orchard was as beautiful as its people. I got to enjoy comfort within luxury because Ascott stepped forward to champion accessibility! We hope many hotels will join them and say, 'We want you here'."  
– *Carole Ann, 47, a wheelchair user with physical disability*



*Carole at the wheelchair-accessible reception counter.*



*Carole exploring the ramp access to the swimming pool deck.*

"Thank you Ascott for your warm hospitality and great assurance in making my stay safe and comfortable at Ascott Orchard! A very good collaboration between Ascott and SG Enable. Ascott Orchard is a great place for persons with disabilities." – *Bernard Chew, 54, who has visual impairment*



*Ascott associates guiding Bernard around the property.*



*Bernard exploring the use of in-room amenities with a mobile application that aids persons with visual impairment.*

“The staycation experience was pleasant and memorable. The people we met were nice and always ready to help.” – *Megan Tang, 19, who has an intellectual disability*



*Megan exploring the sheltered walkway that is linked to the adjacent shopping mall.*



*An Ascott associate showing Megan the in-room amenities.*

