



The Workers' Party

工人党 Parti Pekerja பாட்டாளிக்கட்சி

**EMPOWER  
YOUR FUTURE**

Manifesto  
2015

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## PREAMBLE

The Workers' Party believes the next step for Singapore lies in balanced reforms grounded in a comprehensive vision. The time has come to move beyond short-term fixes for long-standing problems. The future of Singapore lies in active investment in our fellow Singaporeans here and now. The time has come to **empower a dynamic and confident people**.

Singapore does not need blind economic growth; we need **compassionate and equitable growth**. We are tired of the myth of Singaporeans needing to bite the bullet in the hope that wealth generated at the top will trickle down eventually. This myth has resulted in severe inequality and discouraged enterprise in the past decade.

In order to tackle the challenges facing Singapore in the next decades, we need to unlock the dynamism and confidence innate in Singaporeans. Our Manifesto 2015 builds upon our vision of **focusing on Singaporeans** and calls for economic, social, urban, governance and security policies that can create the conditions where the dynamism and confidence of Singaporeans can be unleashed to achieve our aspirations together.

We believe that empowering Singaporeans entails a system of government where there are adequate checks and balances without political gridlock. The legislature must play this crucial role to check a powerful executive and push it to make **well-balanced policies and laws** that protect and advance the people's interests.

Singapore is now a mature and diverse society. We are more than ready for **a Parliament with different political voices** to engage the executive branch led by the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers. A diverse Parliament is critical in assisting the executive to make sounder judgments about policy trade-offs.

A Parliament monopolised by one party fails the test of rigorous debate and voting in forging sound policies. This grave imbalance gives free rein to the ruling party to take our country in any direction it deems fit. A Parliament that includes MPs from a **rational, responsible and respectable** opposition party compels the government to listen to the collective wisdom of the people.

A complex and uncertain future lies ahead. We have depended on a small group of talents in a single party to lead us in earlier times. This formula is no longer adequate. We need to build and revive institutions to empower Singaporeans and unleash our talents to move ahead with confidence. This can only be achieved through a balanced Parliament. Your future is in your hands. **Empower your future**, vote Workers' Party!

## OVERVIEW

The Workers' Party's Manifesto 2015 is inspired by the symbols of our beloved national flag: the crescent moon and five stars that we have seen displayed with pride everywhere during our Golden Jubilee celebrations this year.

The crescent moon on our flag represents a young nation on the ascendant. **Chapter 1 Focusing on the Singaporean Core** elaborates our vision of an independent Singapore at 50 years of age marching confidently forward. Our priorities are to adopt a Singaporean-core population policy to mitigate an ageing society and limit foreign manpower growth to grow a sustainable economy.

The five stars on our national flag represent the ideals of progress, equality, justice, democracy and peace. The Workers' Party's Manifesto 2015 is inspired by these ideals to offer over 130 policy proposals grouped thematically in five chapters each expressing one of the ideals. Our principle of focusing on the Singaporean core threads through the five chapters:

**Chapter 2** (progress) calls for economic security to foster **Confident Workers and Enterprises** that would bring Singapore to the next level of development.

**Chapter 3** (equality) seeks to strengthen our education, family, social welfare and healthcare institutions to help **Aspiring Students and Families** realise their dreams.

**Chapter 4** (justice) envisions a Singapore that is **Our City, Our Home, Co-Created** by Singaporeans with strong roots to our land.

**Chapter 5** (democracy) pursues **Governance for Solidarity** guided by political accountability, transparency, balance and responsibility.

**Chapter 6** (peace) proposes **Active Diplomacy, Confident Defence** to make Singapore a good citizen of the world promoting peace and development.

Some of our key proposals are to:

1. **Increase workers' incomes** by increasing the cash payout portion of Workfare, instituting a national minimum wage and pegging it to the Average Household Expenditure on Basic Needs, and introducing an Employment Security Fund to provide for unemployment insurance.
2. **Enhance retirement adequacy** by allowing CPF members to start receiving monthly CPF payouts earlier, linking CPF LIFE and Silver Support payouts to inflation, and paying special dividends to CPF members in years of good return on investment of CPF monies.
3. **Implement a more holistic and equitable education system** by reducing class sizes, moving away from high-stakes examinations, offering a 10-Year Through Train School

Programme from Primary 1 to Secondary 4, and introducing a Career and Life Skills Programme to raise awareness of less mainstream professions where students can realise their potential.

4. **Improve healthcare affordability and outcomes** by enhancing subsidies for preventive and primary care, improving health literacy among the population, increasing the utilisation of healthcare technologies, and setting clear performance targets for health and social care providers.
5. **Improve public transport quality and affordability** by having a government-owned National Transport Corporation own and manage rail and bus assets, audit public transport operators' performance standards, and set fares in consultation with stakeholders, with fares linked to operators' performance, service quality and reliability.
6. **Make public housing more affordable and accessible** to lower and middle income Singaporeans by pegging HDB BTO flat prices to median monthly household income of applicants, enabling them to pay off their mortgage within 20 years, and by facilitating the elderly who wish to sublet their flats to increase their retirement income.



# 1

## Focusing on the Singaporean Core

### OUR VISION

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Singapore has been facing low birth rates for nearly four decades. Declining birth rates have led to an ageing society. The Workers' Party proposes a policy approach focusing on the Singaporean core as the solution to our population challenges.

We believe that fostering *A Dynamic Population for a Sustainable Singapore* (<http://wp.sg/wp-population-policy-paper/>) will better secure our shared future by empowering the people, as opposed to the current solution of using immigration to top up shortfalls in citizen births. We call for a comprehensive approach to improving Singaporean birth rates, while prioritising foreign spouses and children of Singaporeans for naturalisation as new citizens.

To build a sustainable economy and liveable city, we aim to achieve 1% annual resident workforce growth to 2030 by improving local labour force participation rates, especially among women and senior citizens. This will result in a projected population of 5.8 million in 2030. This is in contrast to the PAP's projection of 6.9 million people, of which 3.8 million, or just 55%, are citizens.

The priorities of our approach are:

★ **A Singaporean-Core Population Policy**

- Increase birth rates in the long run by assisting all Singaporean families and children in terms of childcare, education and work-life balance;
- Prioritise foreign spouses and children of Singaporeans for citizenship as the family is the best setting to integrate new citizens;
- Maintain at least 10% of our land as reserves for future generations and commit to preserve our urban heritage to root our national identity;

★ **Limiting Foreign Manpower Growth**

- Keep foreign workforce numbers constant if 1% resident workforce growth target is achieved and aim for sustainable GDP growth;
- Invest in Singaporean workers to improve productivity and promote family-friendly work policies to encourage the elderly and women to work;
- Support Singaporean SMEs to develop an innovative and entrepreneurial economy with capital-intensive enterprises.

## 1.1 SINGAPOREAN-CORE POPULATION POLICY

We believe that for the Singaporean core to be strong and dynamic, the core must share a strong commonality of values, experiences, worldview, culture, sense of place, identity and history, and networks of friends and family that are rooted in the local community. This can only be cultivated over time in institutional settings involving family life, education, national service and community service.

### Focus on Improving Singaporean Birth Rates

The policy to top up shortfalls in Singaporean births and to rebalance our ageing society with immigrants to make up the Singaporean core is flawed. That the government has to continue to encourage new citizens to integrate into our society is indicative of the problem. Integration should be the criterion for granting citizenship and not an afterthought. Citizenship should be a quality achieved and not a quota to be filled.

The Workers' Party believes that the only way to maintain a strong Singaporean core is through a singular focus on improving Singaporean birth rates. To improve birth rates, we need to move away from the current carrot-and-stick approach. We must instead engage in structural reforms to improve the Singaporean family's quality of life.

Our education system needs to change to a less stressful system that encourages innovation. Greater financial support should be given to families with young children. Flexi-work arrangements, better family care leave, and other work-life balance policies are required to increase both labour force participation and birth rates.

Most young couples want to marry and have more than two children. We need to empower young Singaporeans to achieve these aspirations. This requires concerted efforts across a spectrum of social and work policies. We offer many proposals on education, work-life balance and support for young families in *Chapter 3 Aspiring Students and Families*.

### Community-Oriented Land Use Plan

Under the government's Land Use Plan to accommodate 6.9 million people, the population density will go up from 11,000 to 13,000 people per square kilometre in urbanised areas. The government cited this as being lower than Hong Kong's figure of 22,000. Hong Kong is known for its extreme urban population density and is a benchmark that we should not use for comparison.

Furthermore, by reducing our land reserves of 14% of the total land area to only 4% to accommodate immigrants, we are leaving precious little room for the next generation to develop the city. This is not sustainable urbanisation. We propose that 10% of the total land area should be maintained as land reserves for future generations. We need to optimise land use to ensure a better quality of life for Singaporeans.

The preservation of natural and cultural heritage is important not just for recreation, but also cultivating our Singaporean identity. Key to our vision is the development of community-oriented town centres. We also seek to strengthen grassroots institutions for the co-creation of our towns and city. Our proposals are discussed in *Chapter 4 Our City, Our Home, Co-Created*.

### Pro-Singaporean Immigration Policy

In line with our focus on the Singaporean family, we believe the best way to integrate first-generation immigrants is through the family. Foreign spouses of Singaporeans should be given priority for citizenship, as they naturally integrate with a Singaporean family.

Since the late 2000s, marriages between a Singaporean and a non-Singaporean made up close to 40% of total marriages, or about 9,000 marriages, every year. Over 70% of the foreign spouses are women and form a potential pool of resident workers ready to enter the workforce.

We should focus on supporting naturalisation in the family setting. Under the current immigration policy, citizens who marry non-citizens face constant disruptions. Our proposal would alleviate the stress such couples face, and the anxieties their children experience when they are separated from their mothers on short-term visit passes.

We propose that:

1. Foreign spouses should be given **priority for citizenship naturalisation** if they apply after 5 years on the LTVP+;
2. Other than foreign spouses, only permanent residents with **at least 5 years of uninterrupted residency** should be eligible for citizenship.

The Workers' Party is neither anti-immigration nor anti-immigrant. We believe that new citizens can integrate and become part of the Singaporean core. But such a process takes time. This is why we favour prioritisation of foreign spouses of Singaporeans and permanent



residents, instead of looking to take in foreigners “cold” and needing an intensive integration programme after naturalisation.

Furthermore, debates over the meaning of National Service in recent years have shown that the commitment to defend Singapore as our homeland is essential to our identity. Being a Singaporean citizen should not only be based on a conviction, but should also reflect a life-long commitment to defending Singapore as our homeland. Our proposals on National Service are found in *Chapter 6 Secure Identity, Dynamic Defence*.

## **1.2 LIMITING FOREIGN MANPOWER GROWTH**

The Workers' Party proposes to limit foreign workforce growth by holding steady the current level of foreign workforce numbers. Limiting foreign workforce growth does not affect workforce revitalisation. We do not seek to keep foreign workers out of Singapore, but for their numbers to be held steady, so that we can focus on growing and upgrading the Singaporean workforce.

While the government's foreign manpower-led economic policy may well build a higher-growth economy and global city, it will not build a sustainable Singapore that we can confidently leave as a precious legacy to our children. The policy is deferring economic restructuring, adaptation to population ageing and sustainable urban development to 2030 and beyond.

In the past few years, the government tried to moderate foreign workforce growth and promote productivity-led growth to restructure the economy. From 2011 to 2012, the foreign population grew from 1.394 million to 1.494 million, with an addition of almost 100,000 people, while the number of citizens increased by only around 28,000 people.

Under pressure from the people, the government has since slowed the rate of growth of the foreign population. From 2013 to 2014, the foreign population grew from 1.554 million to 1.599 million, with an addition of nearly 44,600 people. This still outstrips the growth rate of citizens, which saw an addition of only 29,500 people.

Our approach involves keeping the non-resident population constant at around 1.5-1.6 million as long as we achieve the 1% resident workforce growth target. This allows for a temporary addition of foreign workers to make up for shortfalls if we are not able to achieve the 1% target.

In the best-case scenario that we have modelled (details available in our Population Policy Paper), the trade-off compared to the government's policy would be 0.5% less in annual

GDP growth but 1 million less in population. This prioritises long-term economic stability over short-term economic growth.

### Investing in Singaporean Workers and Businesses

We propose focusing on investing in Singaporean workers to improve productivity, and growing the resident workforce through increasing labour force participation of women and older workers. *Chapter 2 Confident Workers and Businesses* discusses our proposals, which include ensuring employment security to promote labour confidence, and improving productivity.

Continued dependence on foreign workforce growth is delaying economic restructuring that is necessary but painful. Immigration serves as a palliative. It prevents us from moving away from cheap labour-intensive industries to develop an innovative and entrepreneurial economy with capital-intensive enterprises. Our proposals are discussed in *Chapter 2 Confident Workers and Businesses*.

### Promoting Female and Elderly Labour Force Participation

Promotion of labour force participation by women and mature workers could have knock-on benefits for productivity growth and would lead to faster and deeper economic restructuring. In order to promote labour force participation by women and mature workers, it is crucial to have family-friendly social and work policies along with the long-term promotion of birth rates discussed above.

We propose here additional proposals targeted at encouraging employers to employ women and senior workers:

1. **Targeted Training and Job-Matching Schemes for Female Workers.** The labour force participation rate is significantly lower for women than men from the 30-34 years old age bracket onwards. In order to encourage female workers, we propose targeted training and job-matching schemes be introduced for women 30 years of age and older. Additional cash grants and special employment credits should be offered to employers who employ or upgrade the skills of women in this bracket.
2. **Changing Government and Business Mindsets on Senior Workers.** The government continues to see an ageing population as a disaster (for example, "silver tsunami"). We believe that an ageing society marks a triumph of development: our people are living longer, healthier lives. When looking at the declining age dependency ratio, we should also be mindful that many of our seniors would bring their invaluable skills and experience to bear on productivity and innovation. We need to change mindsets on

our mature and experienced citizens, starting with the government, before educating businesses to do the same.

3. **Accelerated Workplace and Job Redesign for a Senior Workforce.** If we double our efforts to redesign jobs and work processes, we will be able to retain more senior workers and maintain their productivity levels. Under the WorkPro programme, the Age Management Grant has seen a far greater uptake by companies than the Job Redesign Grant. We need to accelerate job redesign. We propose it be made mandatory for large companies to implement workplace and job redesign for senior workers. We also propose targeted measures and incentives for SMEs.
4. **Tracking Employment Participation of Senior Workers.** We propose that annual surveys be conducted to track the employment of senior workers in various industries. This will enable us to know which sectors have an under-employment of senior workers, and facilitate the implementation of targeted measures to fill those gaps while developing Old Age Technologies in those industries. This will also allow the government to identify sectors and companies practising age discrimination against older workers.

## 2

# Confident Workers and Enterprises

## OUR VISION

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We seek an economy of confident workers and enterprises, which

- ★ Grows sustainably by balancing GDP growth with growth in the real median wage and improvements in measures of well-being;
- ★ Creates good jobs and provides **economic security**, underpinning business and labour confidence to innovate and make longer-term economic decisions;
- ★ Balances foreign direct investment and state capital with more contribution from **local enterprises** as engines of value creation and economic competitiveness.

### 2.1 ECONOMIC SECURITY

We need to foster economic security without discouraging effort and economic competitiveness, so that our workers will be confident. This confidence will enhance our capacity to take risks and make decisions with long-term payoffs. We must:

**Foster Employment and Wage Security.** We should utilise risk pooling to safeguard our workers against economic disruptions, ensure fairer competition in the labour marketplace and institutionalise a national minimum wage.

**Improve Retirement Adequacy.** We should share the benefits from transparent and prudent investment of pension funds. We should offer individuals flexibility to responsibly balance quality of life with retirement adequacy.

**Enhance Progressive Taxation.** We should make our tax system more progressive to encourage the sense of collective responsibility, while discouraging rent-seeking and speculation.

#### Fostering Employment and Wage Security

1. **Employment Security Fund (ESF).** We propose a mandatory unemployment insurance scheme similar to schemes in other developed countries. The ESF would require an additional 0.1% of basic salary to be paid into it, shared equally between employers and employees. The ESF would pay out 40% of last-drawn salary up to a monthly salary cap of the prevailing median wage for 6 months after involuntary unemployment. The

ESF would pay out approximately 80% of the scheme's revenues annually, with the surplus being rolled over into ESF reserves. The ESF will also act as a macro-economic stabiliser, helping to maintain consumer spending and prevent a deflationary spiral in times of recession by drawing on funds accumulated during times of economic expansion.

2. **Educational Credential Assessments (ECA).** We propose all Employment Pass and S Pass applicants with university degrees and diplomas earned outside Singapore be subject to mandatory ECA. The cost of the ECA should be borne by the applicant. The government should appoint an established education consultancy that is independent and has the expertise to conduct the ECA. The ECA report should be sent to the government, prospective employer and applicant.
3. **National Minimum Wage.** We propose a national minimum wage be established and pegged to the Average Household Expenditure on Basic Needs, so that workers can earn a living wage to meet the needs of their family.
4. **Make Workfare Count.** We propose that 80%, instead of the current 40%, of the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) be paid in cash so that workers can benefit immediately from the fruits of their labour and be further motivated to strive harder to improve their quality of life. The portion of workfare that goes into the CPF will then be similar to the CPF worker contribution for ordinary wages.

### Improving Retirement Adequacy

5. **Lower CPF Payout Eligibility Age.** We propose lowering the CPF Payout Eligibility Age to 60. This will give CPF members the option to start receiving CPF monthly payouts earlier if they need to, instead of having to wait until age 65. The Payout Eligibility Age should be de-linked from the Retirement Age and the Re-employment Age. This will provide members with more assurance of when they are eligible to start drawing from their CPF, regardless of their employment status. CPF should allow members to choose not to start the withdrawal at age 60, so that they can continue to earn interest on their savings and have a higher monthly payout at a later withdrawal date.
6. **Transparency in CPF Monies Investment Returns.** CPF monies are currently used by GIC for investment, while the government guarantees returns back to the CPF. We propose CPF members be given full transparency on the nature and performance of their CPF monies that have been so invested. We further propose that the difference between the investment returns of GIC and the net interest payable on CPF member balances, on a 10-year moving average basis, be reported to CPF members. The government could return one third of this difference to CPF members' Special Accounts as special dividends to enhance retirement adequacy when the difference crosses a predetermined threshold in years of high return.

7. **Inflation-linked Silver Support Scheme.** We propose Silver Support payouts be adjusted for inflation at the start of every term of government. Those receiving Silver Support should not automatically be barred from other forms of assistance like Public Assistance, as some may have exceptional needs. Silver Support payouts should be done on a monthly rather than on quarterly basis.
8. **CPF Life Inflation Protection.** We propose there be inflation protection using a Senior Citizen Consumer Price Index for CPF Life payouts. This should be financed from the issuance of inflation-indexed Government bonds to CPF. To aid this, the Monetary Authority of Singapore should be tasked with keeping senior citizen inflation manageable through inflation targeting.
9. **Enhanced Supplementary Retirement Scheme (SRS).** We call for increased publicity for the SRS to middle and higher-income Singaporeans, so that the SRS can be an effective retirement adequacy tool for the middle-to-higher income Singaporeans. Those earning a monthly income of over \$5,000 should be formally asked if they wish to join the SRS in government communication that involves their employer. The SRS contribution cap for Singaporeans should also be raised to be the same as that for foreigners so that Singaporeans will get the same tax benefits.
10. **Corporate Retirement Plans.** We call for reform of Section 5 of the Income tax Act to encourage firms to offer corporate retirement plans as an incentive when hiring and retaining employees.

### Enhancing Progressive Taxation

11. **Moratorium on GST Increase.** We propose a moratorium on increasing the GST from 7%. All other options for enhancing progressive taxation should be explored and an increase in GST should be used as a measure of last resort to maintain fiscal balance. A commission of economists should be formed to study and advise on any proposed increase and the report tabled in Parliament for debate.
12. **Progressive Top-bracket Income Tax.** We propose personal income tax be made more progressive, as our effective top tax personal income rates are significantly lower than almost all locations with which Singapore competes for offshore banking and similar economic activities. We propose further tiering above \$320,000 (currently at flat rate of 22%). This cut-off has not been adjusted for more than a decade even though incomes at the higher end have soared.

## 2.2 LOCAL ENTERPRISES

We must build a third pillar of globally competitive local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to root economic dynamism in home soil and to mitigate the risk of over-dependence on the other two value-creation pillars of Multinational Companies (MNCs) and Government-Linked Companies (GLCs). We need to:

**Set Up National Agencies to Groom SMEs.** Our government agencies should be empowered to develop, coordinate and assist SMEs toward global competitiveness. A full range of assistance should be provided to the spectrum of local businesses from micro-businesses to medium enterprises.

**Support a Conducive SME Business Environment.** We should ensure an effective capital funding system to cater to the capital needs of local businesses. We should help to keep business costs, especially rents, down and seek to distribute key resources such as technology and talent to local businesses.

**Benchmark Productivity Performance.** We should adopt a systematic productivity benchmarking system to inform and incentivise productivity raising practices. We need to unlock productivity gains and foster innovative capabilities that are deeply rooted in the local economy.

### Setting Up National Agencies to Groom SMEs

1. **National Secretariat for Enterprises (NSE).** We propose a National Secretariat be established to groom a critical mass of local firms to become globally competitive in key sunrise industries. This inter-ministerial Secretariat will coordinate programmes across all relevant agencies and periodically review progress towards targets. The NSE should develop metrics measuring job creation and multiplier effects on the SMEs sector for the industries receiving government support. These should be used for reviewing the return on investment for such support.
2. **Fast-track Programme for Internationalising SMEs.** We propose companies that have demonstrated the ability to increase global market share while delivering key economic spin-offs in Singapore gain preferential access to government schemes and capital for activities that include brand-building, research and development (R&D), market access development and mergers and acquisition (M&A) abroad. Under-performing companies should be weaned out of such a fast-track programme. Post-incentive audits should be conducted to ensure scheme-recipients adhere to the stipulated conditions and targets.

3. **Auto-inclusion of SMEs in Assistance Schemes.** Most SMEs will not be able to be globally competitive. Therefore, we propose SMEs not on the fast-track programme for internationalisation be automatically included in assistance schemes as far as practicable, as was the case with the Jobs Credit scheme formerly. This will prevent under-utilisation of existing schemes due to information gaps or lack of managerial time and skills. Schemes could be pushed to SMEs by requiring the completion of a simple questionnaire in the annual filing to Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA). This questionnaire could ask about planned investments in training, software, automation, etc., that are not receiving scheme support.
4. **Micro-business Development.** Most SMEs are micro-businesses with fewer than 10 employees. Existing economic promotion agencies cannot provide sufficient attention to micro-businesses, whose needs are very different from larger SMEs. We propose the establishment of a taskforce within the NSE to assist micro-businesses. The taskforce should focus on raising productivity, ensuring competitiveness and facilitating succession planning or divestment.

### Supporting a Conducive SME Business Environment

5. **EXIM Bank.** We propose the establishment of an export-import (EXIM) Bank, as suggested by the Economic Strategies Committee in 2010 and which has contributed to the industrialisation of countries like Japan and South Korea. This EXIM Bank would focus on providing credit for exports and foreign direct investment for promising SMEs.
6. **Venture Capital Fund.** We propose Singapore's sovereign wealth funds establish a Venture Capital Fund to provide funding to Singaporean entrepreneurs launching ventures with substantial export potential; with an initial tranche of S\$1b in funding. High-potential emerging technologies should be favoured. This new Fund should consolidate the existing Government venture capital funds.
7. **Forward Regulation for Early Adoption.** We propose a programme be launched to identify high-potential but emerging technologies and business models that require new legal and regulatory frameworks, for example, 3D printing and those associated with the new sharing economy. The Government should fast-track the development of such frameworks, so as to encourage early adoption of such technologies by local firms in Singapore. Government research centres should identify opportunities to license intellectual property to local firms with the potential to be globally competitive.
8. **Keeping Commercial and Industrial Rents Manageable.** Rental is a substantial part of the cost structure for local SMEs. Access to low-rent premises has diminished because of the corporatisation of JTC assets as well as the commercial pricing of HDB rentals. We propose special entrepreneurial zones be set aside for low-rent premises made available to local SMEs through SPRING schemes to promote start-ups. In addition, we propose the calibration of government commercial and industrial land policy to ensure that private sector commercial and industrial rental growth does not stray too far from



inflation.

9. **Enhance SMEs ability to access Government Contracts.** We propose SMEs be given access to preferential schemes to bid for government R&D projects and other projects not covered under the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA). There should be flexibility in government tender requirements to favour SMEs.
10. **Energy Efficiency Certification Scheme.** We propose a dedicated Energy Efficiency Certification scheme where local SMEs can voluntarily apply to an Energy Service Company to be audited on their energy consumption practices and be advised of energy efficiency practices and targets that could be adopted. The Scheme will subsidise the audit fees. Tax incentives should be introduced for companies that meet the recommended energy efficiency targets.
11. **Protecting Our Business Reputation.** Most mall owners and consumers are ill- equipped to undertake time-consuming or costly legal action against errant retailers. We propose the Consumers' Association of Singapore (CASE) and Singapore Tourism Board (STB) be tasked to seek Court injunction orders against errant retailers as well as providers of other goods and services under the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA), and be given sufficient resources to do so. In the area of financial products, we propose all financial product sales be permitted only if conducted by business persons and companies registered with the MAS. The MAS should also establish a Consumer Finance Protection Department to enforce standards in the financial services industry to help limit financial scams.

### Benchmarking Productivity Performance

12. **Productivity Benchmarking System.** We propose to develop a system of absolute benchmarks for “good” and “excellent” productivity by industry sector, based on studying productivity levels in other developed countries. This will help firms to improve productivity by informing them of how they compare to their global peers. Compilation and dissemination of the benchmark information should be automated between IRAS and CPF. This information could be used as a key criterion in granting access to government schemes. Companies that exceed the absolute benchmarks would be given tax credits as well as preferential access to schemes and publicity. Economic promotion agencies should develop and disseminate case studies of local firms that have exceeded the “good” benchmark.
13. **Customised PIC Scheme.** The Productivity Benchmarking System will reveal the presence of certain “platform” technologies or practices in key industries suffering from sub-par productivity in Singapore. We propose where such technologies or practices are identified, the Government should encourage the industry to adopt this innovation by raising the cap for PIC grant applications on a one-off basis to each relevant company.

14. **Productivity-linked Foreign Worker Dependency Ratios.** We propose for sectors where productivity lags global developed country norms, clear long-term targets should be set for reducing foreign worker dependency ratios. A five to ten year horizon depending on the sector and the nature of business should be adopted. These targets should be set and enforced independently of Budget and electoral cycles. At the end of the targeted timeframe, a lower dependency ratio should be mandated. Companies may apply for exemptions based on unique characteristics.



## 3

# Aspiring Students and Families

## OUR VISION

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We seek a Singapore of aspiring students and families where,

- ★ Social inequality is seen as a challenge to be tackled, and not as an inevitable outcome of globalisation;
- ★ A **holistic and equitable education** system prepares Singaporeans for the workforce and equips students with critical thinking skills and grounded values;
- ★ All possible support is rendered to help Singaporeans realise their aspirations to raise a family and achieve a **balanced family life** reasonably protected from financial insecurity; and
- ★ All Singaporeans have access to the safety harness of **enhanced social protection and healthcare** to help them achieve social mobility, regardless of age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

### 3.1 HOLISTIC AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION

We call for a holistic and equitable approach to education to develop well-rounded citizens who are not limited in aspirations and opportunities by socio-economic status. The holistic and equitable approach to education requires us to:

**Promote Excellence Through Diversity.** High-stakes testing should be dropped and the focus shifted to achieving excellence in innovation, and inculcating strong values and a love for life-long learning. Schools should broaden the imaginations of students in terms of career aspirations and educational pathways and guide them to realise their dreams.

**Mind the School Quality Gap.** Resources should be allocated to support many educational pathways that are equally viable and valued. Teaching resources should be equitably allocated to narrow the quality gap between schools and provide equal opportunities for all.

## Promoting Excellence Through Diversity

- 1. Long-term Innovation Performance.** We propose more emphasis be placed on designing a well-paced curriculum that facilitates critical thinking, and stimulates innovation and deeper exploration of humanities subjects, so as to achieve sustained excellence in the long term. This new curriculum should be accompanied by adjustments in pedagogy. The Ministry of Education (MOE) should also monitor and track students to find out if they demonstrate similar levels of achievement when they progress to higher education or move into the workforce. The goal is for students to maximise individual potential during and after formal education, where tracking the progress of students informs changes to curriculum and pedagogy.
- 2. Career and Life Skills Programme (CLS).** We propose a CLS programme in secondary schools to raise awareness of less mainstream professions where students can realise their potential. CLS will have dedicated staff in each school advising students on career opportunities, providing assistance in applying for polytechnics, arts institutions or vocational schools, and putting students in touch with practitioners and industry experts. We propose for CLS staff to liaise with higher learning institutes to create holiday programmes for secondary school students to benefit from hands-on experiences in different professions.
- 3. Learning-Based Primary School Leaving Examination.** We propose a “criterion-referenced” grading system for the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), with only letter grades refined to objectively reflect the band of scores for each subject awarded. This will better reflect how well students have learned the material, and reduce the emphasis on the PSLE as a high-stakes examination that is used as a sorting mechanism to measure performance relative to the cohort.
- 4. 10-Year Through-train School Programme (10 YTS).** To offer more diversity in the education system, we propose a 10-Year Through-train School programme from Primary 1 to Secondary 4 as an option for parents who wish for their child to bypass the PSLE. The 10 YTS programme gives students 10 years to prepare for their first major examination at Secondary 4, and will allow students to learn at a suitable pace while developing other areas of interests. The 10 YTS will pair up existing primary and secondary schools and therefore complement, not replace, these primary and secondary schools.
- 5. Smaller Class Sizes.** While the hiring of quality teachers should continue, class sizes should be reduced to not more than 30 students per class in primary and secondary schools, with the eventual goal of reducing class sizes to 20 students, which will be in line with the OECD average. This is so that quality teachers can give more attention to each student, especially weaker students, and can more effectively cultivate critical and creative thinking, as well as communication skills.

## Minding the School Quality Gap

6. **Equitable funding for schools.** There is a gap in disposable funds between elite schools and neighbourhood schools. This is because elite schools usually charge higher fees, enjoy greater economies of scale and have wealthy alumni. As a result, these schools offer more varied sports and enrichment programmes, thus producing more well-rounded students. We propose neighbourhood schools receive additional government funds in order to ensure that all schools are adequately funded to become good schools.
7. **Teach for Singapore Scheme (TFS).** We propose the Teach for Singapore (TFS) scheme to place dedicated teachers in underperforming schools. The scheme will look for individuals from the cohort of trainee and practicing teachers with strong leadership and motivation to help the underprivileged. Successful applicants will undergo an additional year of training that includes elements of social work and counselling, and will have to pledge to work for 5 years in underperforming schools. This scheme will allow motivated teachers to make a difference to underprivileged students and narrow the school quality gap. Studies of similar schemes in other countries have shown success in improving standards of underperforming schools.
8. **Student Care Support.** We propose that Student Care Centres are set up in every primary school, to provide students who require after-school care service with a convenient, structured, familiar and supportive environment. School-based Student Care Centres also allow for better supervision of students and reduce absenteeism.
9. **Multicultural and Equality Pedagogy Training.** We propose all teachers should receive special training in multicultural and equality pedagogy so that they may learn how to better engage students from different backgrounds.
10. **Comprehensive Study on Teachers.** We call for an independent comprehensive study to be conducted with teachers from all levels of the curriculum on their actual working hours, work-life balance, psychological well-being, and recommendations for narrowing the school quality gap. This study will seek to understand why teachers leave the education service, why and how they are overworked, and how to retain existing teachers. Such a study will form the basis and framework for better equitable delegation of work among teachers, better understanding of their psychological needs, and the creation of a better and supportive work environment.

## 3.2 BALANCED FAMILY LIFE

We believe households that have both financial security and a fulfilling family life are vital to the well-being of Singaporeans and the resilience of the nation. In order to achieve a balanced family life, we need to:

**Provide Equitable Support to All Families.** Social obstacles that discourage couples from starting and raising a family should be removed. A positive environment encouraging family life for Singaporeans should be provided, in which no family or child will be disadvantaged by socio-economic background.

**Support Work-Life Harmony.** Currently, the balance is tilted towards working to ensure financial security for the family to the detriment of family life. Singaporeans should be empowered to work with their employers to achieve work-life harmony without compromising their financial security.

**Fight Problem Gambling.** The gambling culture has caused many problems for families. No effort should be spared to contain the gambling culture and nip problem gambling in the bud.

### Providing Equitable Support to All Families

1. **Enhanced Child Development Account.** We propose funds be allocated to the Child Development Account (CDA) of all parents automatically and the quantum should be standardised to \$10,000 for each child, instead of the current dollar-for-dollar matching practice. This will narrow the gap between high and low-income families, while still leaving parents the option of topping up the CDA up to \$10,000 for each child to earn higher interest as a way of earmarking savings for spending on the child's education and well-being.
2. **Child Support Tax Credits.** We call for progressive tax credits and reliefs for low to middle income parents of young children up to 18 years old. We propose that tax-related support should be directed based on household income and scaled back progressively as household income increases to ensure that support is directed at those most in need of assistance.
3. **Fee Subsidy for All Kindergartens.** We propose the extension of the Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme (KiFAS) to all Kindergartens, similar to how its sister scheme, the Centre-Based Financial Assistance Scheme for Child Care (CFAC), can be used on all childcare centres. KiFAS can currently only be used in about half of all registered kindergartens, which are in centres run by Anchor Operators and MOE. This stifles competition with other operators that provide quality education but are not KiFAS-eligible, and limits parents' choices.
4. **Equitable Support for Single Parents.** We reiterate our call to grant single unwed mothers the full 16 weeks of paid maternity leave. In addition, single mothers should be made eligible for both the Working Mother's Child Relief as well as the Foreign Maid Levy Relief. Excluding single mothers from these schemes unnecessarily penalises vulnerable children and single mothers. The government should extend the same help

to single fathers.

5. **3-Tries BTO.** We propose that first-timer BTO applicants on the Fiancé/Fiancée Scheme be given priority up to their third try in selecting a flat, to minimise the waiting time for couples to buy a flat and plan for starting a family. This priority is forfeited if the first-timer BTO applicants were invited to select a flat in any one of the previous tries, but did not book a unit.

### Supporting Work-Life Harmony

6. **Flexi-work Arrangements.** We call for fair regulation of mandatory flexi-work arrangements, where companies should be obliged to cater for a work-life friendly environment for workers. Employees who work for a company with more than 20 employees for more than 6 months should be allowed to make requests for flexible working arrangements. Employers can refuse the request on reasonable business grounds, but must discuss the options available with the employee. The discussion must be duly documented, and employees may appeal the refusal if there is a dispute over the grounds for refusing a request. Tax breaks and enhanced Work-Life Grants should be made widely available to help companies accommodate the flexi-work arrangements relevant to their respective industries.
7. **Enhanced Childcare Leave.** We call for paid childcare leave to be extended to 12 days for parents of children 12 years old and under, regardless of marital status. Parents should be required to produce and submit valid medical certificates of their children, should they require the extra 6 days of childcare leave on top of the 6 days of childcare leave stipulated by MOM.
8. **Affordable and Accessible Quality Childcare.** We propose the building of larger childcare centres that can house multiple operators in a common compound for better use of resources, especially in high demand areas. This will encourage greater economic grouping and centralised resources for economies of scale, and consolidation of the fragmented childcare industry. The government should also allow private operators access to schemes such as Partner Operator (POP) that aim to promote quality care at affordable prices that can be strictly regulated. This will promote more innovation in the industry and offer quality choices for parents.
9. **More Infant Care Centres.** We propose the number of infant care centres be made more proportionate to the population demographic of the district. Since 2009, infant care centres have doubled. However, there are disproportionately fewer centres available in certain districts. We call for more centres with the necessary facilities to be available in districts where they are lacking. Fees should also be regulated to ensure that increases do not become a burden on parents, as around 90% of children are enrolled in the full-day programme.

## Fighting Problem Gambling

10. **Stop at Two.** We opposed the legalisation of casinos in 2005. We propose there be no more casinos built beyond the existing two. A permanent moratorium on new casino licences should be implemented after the current 10-year moratorium expires in 2016. Casinos should not issue annual levy passes, and the cost of entry should be kept at \$100 for every 24 hours. These annual levy passes incentivise frequent gambling, which should be discouraged.
11. **Automatic Casino Exclusions and Limits.** Both the Automatic Casino Exclusions and Limits are important tools to regulate and minimise the impact of gambling. We propose the Casino Exclusions be extended to automatically cover all identified and treated problem gamblers. To do this, greater coordination is required between the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) and counselling clinics and centres.
12. **Early Intervention for Problem Gambling.** The National Council on Problem Gambling should implement protocols for staff in the social services sector and voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) to identify problem gamblers for early intervention. Caseworkers should be equipped with early intervention powers to refer problem gamblers to the National Addictions Management Service (NAMS), and to conduct the necessary follow-up with the individual and family. Caseworkers should have the power to obtain information from NAMS on the individual's progress and family situation strictly in relation to the issue of problem gambling.
13. **Capping the Number of Betting Outlets and Jackpot Machines.** Gambling demand rises with convenience, ease of play and availability. We propose the number of licensed betting outlets be capped at the current number and no additional licensed outlets may be opened. We also propose no additional licences be issued for jackpot outlets. We call for the minimum age for entry to clubs and outlets with jackpot machines to be raised from 18 to 21 years old.
14. **Prohibition of Online and Remote Gambling.** We propose online and remote gambling be completely prohibited, with no exemptions allowed for any organisations, including Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club. Granting exemption certificates undermines the aim to eradicate the social ills caused by online and remote betting, and only serves to create a legalised monopoly of existing operators.

## 3.3 ENHANCED SOCIAL PROTECTION AND HEALTHCARE

We seek an integrated approach to protect households from the inequalities of globalisation based on the International Labour Organisation's Social Protection Framework. This entails designing an integrated set of social policies which guarantees



basic needs for children, elderly, and people with disabilities, as well as access to essential quality healthcare for all. We need to:

**Enhance Public Assistance.** We should develop measures of relative poverty for a national strategy of assistance to empower vulnerable groups to climb out of the poverty trap. We should also focus on the well-being of caregivers and enhance the nutritional security of vulnerable groups.

**Enhance the Healthcare System.** The system of preventive and primary care needs to be enhanced in order to improve healthcare outcomes. We should also focus on filling in gaps in our healthcare system such as low health literacy and low utilisation of smart-health technologies.

### Enhancing Public Assistance

1. **Social Protection Steps.** We should move towards measuring relative poverty to provide a clearer picture of low-income families who are unable to keep up with the living standards of the majority of society. We reiterate our proposal to establish Social Protection steps pegged at 30%, 50% and 80% of the annual median monthly household income per member. These steps should be used to measure, track and study the vulnerability status of households, with a view to develop a national strategy to systematically help vulnerable groups move up the Social Protection steps towards independence and self-reliance. (Note: for the full proposal, please see <http://wp.sg/faisal-social-protection-2014>)
2. **National Strategy to Address Vulnerability.** Rather than a segmented multi-layered approach, we propose the Social Protection Steps be used to develop an integrated national strategy to address vulnerability and reduce the relative poverty rate. Existing assistance schemes could be reviewed and grouped into packages of assistance using the Steps as the household income component of the qualifying criteria.
3. **Annual State of Protection Report.** We propose the government publish an Annual State of Social Protection Report that gives an account of the status of vulnerable groups. The Report should also track the progress made in helping the vulnerable groups move up the Social Protection steps to become more self-sufficient and self-reliant. These statistics will serve as the basis for key performance indicators (KPIs) which the government and the public can use to evaluate its assistance programmes in an objective manner and to set future targets.
4. **Caregivers Support Scheme.** Full-time informal caregivers who fall in the lower socio-economic stratum should be given yearly CPF top-ups to reduce the pressure of being underemployed and less prepared for retirement. More research should also be done to find out how to improve utilisation of formal care services such as senior day activity centres to augment informal care. We also propose informal caregivers with a child below 18, a family member with a serious health condition, or an elderly parent above

65 be given greater support when they exercise the right to ask for flexible work arrangements.

5. **Household Food and Nutrition Security.** We propose more research to identify the food-consumption patterns of vulnerable households and their nutritional quality, and measures, incentives and policies to promote nutritional security for vulnerable groups, especially children. This research should also include studies to understand food-consumption patterns over the long term, and contributing factors to diseases resulting from poor food-consumption habits.

### Enhancing the Healthcare System

6. **Enhanced Primary Care Subsidies.** We propose the monthly household income cap to qualify for subsidies for primary care at general practitioner (GP) clinics under the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) be raised to the median monthly household income per member. The annual and per-visit caps on the use of Medisave or CHAS subsidies under the Chronic Disease Management Programme (CDMP) should be reviewed so that patients do not disrupt the continuity of care due to high out-of-pocket expenses. Health screening under the Integrated Screening Programme and the associated doctor's consultation fees should be provided free to all CHAS cardholders every three years from age 40, to promote health literacy and improve preventive health outcomes.
7. **Family Doctor Pairing Scheme.** Pairing families with GPs encourages patients to remain with one family doctor, who would be more familiar with their background and medical history. This facilitates earlier detection of illnesses, provides more accurate diagnoses, reduces duplication of treatment, and improves coordination with other care providers. We propose all resident families be paired with a GP near their home. Individuals can be given the option to change their assigned GP. To encourage uptake of the Scheme, patients who visit their assigned GP should be entitled to enhanced CHAS outpatient subsidies.
8. **Making subsidised primary care more accessible.** To make subsidised primary care more accessible, a greater uptake of CHAS should be encouraged. The administrative work necessary for registering for and filing CHAS claims should be reduced. GPs who sign up should be offered incentives, including subsidised access to the revamped facilities of the Community Health Centres.
9. **Health Literacy as a public health goal.** Greater health literacy will equip and empower Singaporeans to make the necessary lifestyle changes to prevent illnesses and take greater ownership of their health. We propose that the government, schools, employers and GPs undertake coordinated efforts to improve health literacy by not just improving information dissemination, but also employing more participatory approaches to help citizens to develop the skills, knowledge and the efficacy to act on that knowledge in

order to maintain and restore good health.

10. **Smart-Health Programme.** Adoption of telehealth combined with nurse, pharmacist and allied health professional visits will help address the manpower crunch of care providers and reduce the waiting time and cost of care for patients and caregivers. We propose patients will have to register with the care provider(s) to facilitate billing and claims. The government should take the lead in promoting telehealth by allowing for telehealth claims under MediShield Life, Medisave and CHAS. Adoption of telehealth initiatives by private providers such as GPs and VWOs should be encouraged through partial subsidies to alleviate the cost of training, adoption, and implementation.
  
11. **Performance Targets for Care Systems.** We propose setting up clear performance targets for health and social care providers with clear parameters that need to be met. These targets must be regularly monitored and the results must be published publicly. Waiting times for key services such as hospital admissions and the utilisation rates of formal care services should be monitored. Once the Family Doctor Pairing Scheme is rolled out, the government should offer incentives to GPs who meet certain health targets for the families assigned to them.



## 4

# Our City, Our Home, Co-Created

## OUR VISION

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We seek a Singapore that is both our city and our home, in which

- ★ Land is treated as Singaporeans' heritage that the state holds in trust and manages justly and equitably for the people's benefit;
- ★ The state bears a large part of land and infrastructural costs and market risks to provide **affordable public housing and transport** to moderate the cost of living;
- ★ Singapore is seen and developed as our home city more than a global city, where Singaporeans identify strongly with **vibrant heartland towns**;
- ★ Communities are actively involved in **co-creative grassroots** to co-own and co-run our neighbourhoods and live sustainably, rooted in the land.

### 4.1 AFFORDABLE PUBLIC HOUSING AND TRANSPORT

We believe the provision of public housing and transport should maximise stakeholder value in public goods at fair cost to the public purse. Our approach involves strengthening of community through state ownership and management, with secondary private sector involvement. We must:

**Enhance Public Housing Affordability.** Public housing should be made more affordable and accessible to lower and middle income Singaporeans by clearly separating it from the private property market. Help should be given to elderly owners to use their flat to supplement their retirement income without requiring them to move out.

**Enhance Public Transport Reliability and Affordability.** We believe that the Government should build the infrastructure and pay for the initial operational equipment as a social investment, and should be responsible for its timely replacement and enhancement. The cost of public transport to commuters and its service reliability should be prioritised over public transport operator profitability.

#### Enhancing Public Housing Affordability

1. **20-25 BTO Pricing.** We propose HDB flat ownership should be delinked from land costs by adjusting the debt service ratio formula for calculating BTO selling price to 25% of median monthly household income of applicants servicing a 20-year mortgage after

the 10% down payment. There should be a discount for lower income applicants of 2-room and 3-room flats to achieve debt service ratios of 10% and 20% respectively (see table). Since the 20-25 formula takes care of affordability in a systematic way, the Additional and Special CPF Housing Grants can be removed to make for a simpler and more effective housing policy. To help the public understand the pricing, we propose that HDB give each buyer the breakdown of land sale costs, developmental costs and subsidies.

Flat type	New flat selling price	Median household income	Mortgage loan amount	Monthly loan instalment	Debt service ratio	Net price/income ratio
2-room	\$33,300	\$1,600	\$30,000	\$160	10%	1.6
3-room	\$103,900	\$2,500	\$93,500	\$500	20%	3.2
4-room	\$218,300	\$4,200	\$196,500	\$1,050	25%	4.0
5-room	\$311,700	\$6,000	\$280,500	\$1,500	25%	4.0

**Note:** Median household income is based on first-timer applicants in 2H 2014 in non-mature estates; data from HDB. Monthly mortgage instalments based on concessionary interest rate of 2.6% over 20 years. Stamp, conveyance and other fees payable to buy a flat are not included. Income is calculated as annual income based on 13 months of remuneration.

2. **1.5 First-Timer Application Rate.** We propose HDB should maintain a buffer supply of new flats to meet unanticipated rises in demand and reduce the average number of times applicants have to apply before they are successful in booking a new flat. HDB should aim to keep the current first-timer application rate at 1.5 to minimise the cost to couples trying to start a family and to prevent the building up of pent-up demand.
3. **Removing the Ethnic Quota.** As our society has now attained a level of multi-racial integration, we propose the ethnic quotas governing citizens' home ownership of HDB flats should be removed to allow all Singaporeans freedom of choice of home locations, regardless of race.
4. **Elderly Subletting Facilitation.** We propose an Elderly Subletting Facilitation (ESF) scheme, where HDB connects elderly flat owners who would like to sublet rooms with potential tenants. This could encourage up to two-fifths of elderly flat owners to sublet their flats to support their retirement. Furthermore, the ESF could be combined synergistically with the Public Rental Scheme, so that there is no need to turn away over 10,000 applicants to the Public Rental Scheme yearly.

## Enhancing Public Transport Reliability and Affordability

5. **Government Contracting Model.** The government has been moving away from the profit-based privatisation model of running public transport towards the WP's National Transport Corporation (NTC) proposal to run public bus and MRT operations on a not-for-profit basis of maintenance and cost recovery. The "Government Contracting" model, where the government owns the assets but contracts out service delivery to public transport operators (PTOs), has been implemented in the past few years. We should monitor the implementation of this model for 10 years to assess whether it drives greater cost efficiency and service quality for commuters. If there are still problems after 10 years, then we propose the NTC takes over the running of public transport services.
6. **National Transport Corporation.** The NTC should hold a key place in the Government Contracting model. Ownership and management of rail and bus assets is a dedicated and specialised operational function that should be separated from the planning, development and regulation body (Land Transport Authority, LTA) and tasked to a statutory board. NTC would be tasked to minimise costs and achieve efficiency in the management of the assets. To avoid conflicts of interest and improve transparency, the NTC should operate specialised audit systems to make sure the PTOs meet performance and service delivery standards, while LTA sets regulatory standards and collects the fines for service disruptions.
7. **Dissolving the Public Transport Council.** We reiterate our call for the Public Transport Council to be dissolved and all its functions transferred to the NTC. The NTC will closely monitor rail and bus operations to ensure affordability, reliability, efficiency and service standards. The NTC will seek to set fares fairly in consultation with all stakeholders and the public, maintaining affordability while linking fares to performance and service quality and reliability.
8. **Promoting a Competitive PTO Sector.** The Government should promote competition beyond the two existing PTOs to reduce the risk of entrenchment of an uncompetitive duopoly. We propose the LTA actively solicit at least two other PTOs to join in the next competitive tender to run an MRT line, which could be a new line or one of the existing lines. We also propose the license period for operating the MRT lines be reduced from the current 15 years to 10 years to promote competition for licences. The licence charges should cater for higher maintenance expenditures in order to provide for greater service reliability.
9. **Acquisition of Operational Assets of Current PTOs.** The NTC should acquire the operational assets of the current PTOs, but at fair cost to the public purse. Public transport assets currently under the care of PTOs should be turned over to the NTC in good condition. We propose the price to be paid by taxpayers for the acquisition

should be suggested by a panel of independent third parties with expertise and experience in public transport economics. All proceedings should be made public.

## 4.2 VIBRANT HEARTLAND TOWNS

We should foster vibrant HDB heartlands, where small businesses thrive, hire local residents, and form the nucleus of township and neighbourhood communities. Thriving heartland economies have produced many of Singapore's iconic brands and enterprises, and have fostered durable place identities, heritage town centres and markets and powerful community ties. We need to:

**Revive Local HDB Economies.** Meeting the everyday needs of residents and promoting community life should take precedence over the unlocking of value of property assets in HDB towns. HDB should plan for a competitive mix and directly manage commercial leases to improve quality, cap rental costs and keep the costs of living affordable.

**Promote Green Towns.** We should promote green infrastructure in our towns such as the use of renewable energy, development of cycling and walking towns, and facilitation of sharing economies. We should promote local and urban farming using advanced agro-technology and local food marketing techniques leveraging the local economies of the HDB Heartlands.

### Reviving Local HDB Economies

1. **Building Amenities Ahead of Demand.** We propose the HDB build commercial centres in neighbourhood clusters ahead of the critical mass of demand so that pioneering residents are not deprived of amenities as they move in. Town centres should be developed from the launch of the new town and in different phases in anticipation of demand, with business owners charged reduced rents until the town is occupied. We also propose the HDB plan for and build infrastructure for amenities such as senior activity and eldercare centres, student care centres, and preschool centres at the same time as the building of new flats in every precinct, so that operators may move in to meet the residents' needs in a timely manner and in anticipation of demand.
2. **Management of HDB Shopping Plazas.** We propose the HDB continue to build and manage shopping plazas for neighbourhood clusters with diverse retail mix favouring small businesses and micro-enterprises. To prevent over-commercialisation and differentiate the shopping plazas from private shopping malls in town centres, HDB should not outsource the management of these plazas to Managing Agents or should set concrete guidelines for the Agents to manage the plazas if direct management is unfeasible.



3. **Reviving the HDB Shophouse.** We propose town centre developments in newer HDB towns incorporate private shopping malls and low-rise HDB shophouse complexes with a competitive retail mix to meet the wider needs of residents, and allow each town to develop its local culture and identity. HDB should increase shophouse supply to increase the proportion of shops owned and leased out by HDB to privately-owned HDB shops. HDB should also seek to buy back shops in areas affected by persistent poor business in mature towns, and revitalise the physical environment before leasing them back out.
4. **Reviving the Hawker Centre.** We propose the government manage hawker centres directly to keep business costs low; social enterprises and commercial entities should not be tasked with management of hawker centres. As hawker centres are a key feature of Singapore's unique culture and heritage, they should be built in all town centres. Bidding for hawker centre stalls based on tendered rent should be removed. Rental should be set as a percentage of market rent to ensure stability of costs. Hawkers should not be allowed to sublet their stalls. Bidding and continued leasing of stalls should be based on considerations of retail diversity, use of healthier ingredients, and proposed price of food. Every hawker centre should have an adequate allocation of stalls providing for halal and vegetarian food.
5. **Anchor and Partner Care Operator Schemes.** We propose the current Anchor Operator Scheme and Partner Operator Scheme for preschools be used for senior activity and eldercare centres, student care centres and other care centres. Other than non-profit organisations, commercial operators with experience and expertise should be invited to join the schemes to encourage competition to provide quality care services and programmes. The government would provide rental subsidies and per-head grants to keep costs and fees affordable for residents.
6. **Reviving the Convenience Shop and Coffee Shop.** We propose the HDB allocate a portion of void deck space for at least a convenience shop and a coffee shop for every two precincts. Other than providing convenience for residents to meet every day needs, convenience shops and coffee shops are community haunts where residents foster their neighbourliness. They are also an integral part of our heartland culture and living heritage, and should be kept alive. HDB should directly manage the leasing of these shops and keep rental costs low.

### Promoting Green Towns

7. **Renewable Energy and Recycling.** We propose a target of 15% of electricity consumed in HDB towns by households and commercial properties be generated by renewable energy by 2030. The HDB's Solar Capability Building Programme should aim to provide solar panels on the roof of every suitable flat by 2030. We also propose grants be given to Town Councils to promote residential waste recycling and food waste recycling at hawker centres and commercial food establishments. Clear performance targets on recycling should be set for the Town Councils.



8. **Promoting Cycling Towns.** We propose the introduction of cycling lanes on selected trunk roads without additional widening of the roads as far as possible. Public education for motorist and cyclists should be increased, and appropriate signage should be put up along those roads. Along roads which are too narrow for dedicated cycling lanes or where cycling lanes have not yet been built, we propose bicycle signs be painted to clearly indicate to motorists and cyclists that these are shared lanes. We also propose for the Highway Code to be amended to educate motorists on the rights of cyclists to share the road and in ensuring their safety. Theory and practical tests should include and highlight this section.
9. **Promoting Bicycle Sharing and Car Sharing.** We propose a bicycle-sharing scheme to be developed for short journeys where bicycle-docking stations can be set up between residential areas and transport nodes, and within heritage trail and park connector routes. The scheme should be integrated with mobile applications and EZ-Link cards for registration and payment purposes. We propose for the number of locations with car-sharing facilities to be increased from over 100 to more than 300 by 2025. The government should lead the public education of car sharing together with the car-sharing operators. Prime parking lots in HDB estates and commercial properties in town centres should be assigned to car sharing.
10. **Walkable HDB Towns.** To enhance the walkability of existing HDB estates and towns, we propose speed limits be further reduced in areas where pedestrian traffic is heavy. Roads leading into these zones with reduced speed limits should be clearly demarcated with the use of road surface paint and made narrower. Traffic signals along minor roads should be replaced with well-lit zebra crossings, stop lines, and stop/give way signs. Removing traffic signals puts the onus on drivers to slow down and be on the lookout for pedestrians and cyclists. Where traffic signals are necessary at main crossings and major roads, countdown timers should be available for pedestrians and right-turn signal lights should be installed. Where possible, street-level crossings should be prioritised over overhead bridges or underpasses.
11. **Enhanced Food Fund.** We propose AVA's Food Fund should be enhanced to provide incentives for local food producers who meet measurable outcomes, such as amount of food produced per unit of land. The Food Fund should be expanded to assist community farmers achieve successful cultivation of their plots and sell their produce in local markets.

### 4.3 CO-CREATIVE GRASSROOTS

We envision a Singapore where Singaporeans are keenly involved in the continuous co-creation of our community and society, where our heritage is preserved because we want to uphold the strength of our identity as a nation. We need to:

**Promote Co-ownership of Towns.** We should reform our outdated grassroots institutions to better enable citizens of the 21st Century to own our community in concrete ways and be involved in creating our common future. Having done so much to tackle the ethnic, religious and cultural divisions to allow Singaporeans to seek unity in diversity, we should now address political diversity.

**Protect Natural and Cultural Heritage.** We must preserve our built heritage to protect our national and community identity. We should also protect and preserve our natural heritage and habitats for our future generations and foster a green consciousness necessary for the 21st Century.

### Promoting Co-ownership of Towns

1. **A Unifying People's Association.** The People's Association (PA) should be depoliticised and reorganised to serve as a unifying institution. We propose for the PA to come under the direction of the President of Singapore, who shall be the PA's Chairman. The Chairman of the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony shall be the Vice-Chairman of PA. The system of Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCCs) and Resident Committees (RCs) should be abolished. Government grassroots serving as eyes and ears of the ruling party cripple the growth of natural community leadership and hinder the development of community living.
2. **Community Hubs.** Community Centres and Clubs should be enhanced as Community Hubs. Community Hubs should be opened every day, offer low-cost meeting rooms and halls for community groups and non-profits, partner community groups and non-profits to organise activities and events for residents.
3. **Multicultural Help Centres.** We propose the relevant manpower and knowledge resources of the race-based self-help groups be housed under local Multicultural Help Centres based in Community Hubs to provide mutual help and educational support to all underprivileged children in each town. Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circles (IRCCs) should be enhanced to operate as programme providers at the Centres. We also propose a coordinating secretariat be set up within MCCY to be the main coordinator overseeing the work of the Centres. This coordinating secretariat should take over the existing CDCs and turn them into regional offices for multicultural programme resources and services. The office of District Mayors should be discontinued.
4. **Sports Connector Network.** We propose low-cost sports facilities be developed in HDB estates and integrated with park connector networks so that youths and residents can easily access them. Vacant state land should be utilised for field sports as much as possible, so as to revive our local sporting culture at the neighbourhood and town level. The Community Hubs should take charge of managing the maintenance of the fields and their booking by neighbourhood sporting groups.

## Protecting Natural and Cultural Heritage

5. **Preserving Heritage Identity Nodes.** We propose a continuous process of identifying key identity nodes to protect local culture or natural surroundings. Developments of identity nodes should ensure that their charm and culture are preserved. Every district should have its own identifiable character and the drawing of electoral boundaries and naming of constituencies should not undermine the identity and character. The government should support the preservation of heritage in older districts and foster identity in newer estates.
6. **Mandatory Impact Assessments.** We propose Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), Social Impact Assessments (SIAs), and Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) should be made mandatory by law for all development projects affecting green areas, existing infrastructure and the building of new infrastructure before those projects are approved. The impact assessments should also accompany the land use Master Plan and made permanently accessible in their entirety to members of the public via the websites of the relevant agencies.
7. **Public Inspection and Hearing of Planned Projects.** We propose all planned projects be made available for public inspection over a period of time appropriate to the scale of the project. This should be reinforced with mandatory public hearings on the plans and relevant impact assessments. For local developments, the inspection and hearing should be done at a local site accessible to the affected local communities. This fosters citizen participation and allows adequate time to reassess the plans when reasonable concerns are raised.
8. **Promoting Sporting Excellence and Heritage.** To keep political parties from using sports as a vehicle to promote their agenda, we propose the leaders of national sports associations should only be elected from among the sporting fraternity and politicians should be barred from these positions. It is also timely to consider the establishment of a National Sports Museum to promote our sports heritage. Special consideration should be given to our sporting heritage and legacies in the programming of the National Heritage Board. We should better honour our past sporting heroes for inspiration and nation building.
9. **Climate Change Risk Assessment.** We propose a Climate Change Risk Assessment should be performed and regularly updated by the National Climate Change Secretariat to understand the risk posed to Singapore by climate change. Challenges and adaptation policies should be communicated to citizens to raise public awareness and promote environmentally sustainable policies. As part of this, a task force needs to perform scenario planning for adverse and extreme weather changes. Contingency plans should be drawn up in response to these scenarios.

## 5

# Governance for Solidarity

## OUR VISION

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We seek a robust governance system for Singapore that promotes solidarity and trust among citizens, in which:

- ★ Power is not concentrated in any arm of government, and is delegated to elected representatives of the people as much as possible;
- ★ Being elected to political office in an **accountable democracy** is seen as the highest honour in the service of the people;
- ★ The constitutional rule of law is paramount and protected by a **balanced legal and judicial system**;
- ★ Opinions are freely and rationally debated in a **responsible public sphere**, with minimal regulation, and where prejudice and discrimination is not tolerated.

### 5.1 ACCOUNTABLE DEMOCRACY

We believe democratically elected political leadership must be grounded in a strong sense of public service and mission to all Singaporeans. We need to:

**Enhance the Democratic Process.** Members of Parliament should be made fully and clearly accountable to Singaporeans, while partisan gerrymandering and gaming of the electoral system should be eliminated and guarded against.

**Strengthen Parliamentary Sovereignty.** The powers of Parliament should be enhanced to strengthen its oversight over the Executive, especially in the areas of the scrutiny of bills, checks on governmental expenditure and public education on parliamentary work.

#### Enhancing the Democratic Process

1. **Single Constituency Members of Parliament.** We propose Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) be abolished, as they dilute the individual voter's voice. Instead, the elections should be run on single seats, with individual MPs fully accountable to constituents. The Non-Constituency MP (NCMP) scheme would then be unnecessary. The Nominated MP scheme should be abolished.

2. **Fixed-Term Parliaments.** We propose the term for Parliament between elections be fixed. The Prime Minister should not have the unfettered discretion to dissolve Parliament and call for elections before the end of the fixed term. Early dissolution of Parliament should be allowed under special circumstances such as a vote of no confidence or with the assent of a two-thirds majority in Parliament.
3. **Strengthening the Franchise.** We propose lowering the voting age from 21 to 18. This will encourage young people to have an early interest in political governance. It will bring Singapore in line with many countries in the world which have voting ages below 21, and be consistent with other local laws which set 18 as the benchmark age, for example, to be conscripted to defend Singapore in military service. We further propose that all registered electors overseas should be entitled to vote and should have their vote facilitated by Singapore Overseas Missions and postal voting.
4. **Independent Election Commission.** To ensure political neutrality, parliamentary elections should not be organised by the Prime Minister's Office. Instead, we propose an independent Election Commission appointed by the Chief Justice and reporting directly to him be in charge of organising parliamentary elections. Commission members must not belong to any political party.
5. **Independent Electoral Boundary Review Committee.** To ensure political neutrality, the delineation of electoral boundaries should not be done under the Prime Minister's Office. We propose an independent committee appointed by the President and reporting directly to him be in charge of delineating parliamentary electoral boundaries in a non-partisan manner, open to public scrutiny. Committee members must not belong to any political party. Electoral boundary changes should take into account existing and historical township identities. The committee should strive to have constituency electorate sizes that are as equivalent as possible. Electoral registers should be revised annually and the electoral boundaries updated every 5 years independent of elections.

### Strengthening Parliamentary Sovereignty

6. **Ceremonial President.** We propose the Office of Elected President be abolished and the Presidency reverted to its former ceremonial position. The power of Parliament as the people's representatives should be unfettered.
7. **Standing Select Committees.** We propose Standing Select Committees be set up for each government ministry to examine each ministry's spending, policies and administration. These Select Committees should be empowered to call for hearings, expert opinions and reporting by senior officials. They should each consist of MPs from all parties represented in Parliament, and be supported by a full-time secretariat. Only Standing Select Committees should have privileged access to ministry briefings and hearings. Important bills should be sent to the relevant Standing Select Committees for

review.

8. **Enhanced Gateway Process.** We propose the current threshold of \$500 million threshold of the Gateway Process to monitor capital expenditure for public infrastructure projects be reduced to \$100 million. The results of these approvals should be made public, as should regular reports and updates after approvals. Non-infrastructure projects with budgets of more than \$100 million, such as the Youth Olympic Games and the SEA games, should also go through the Gateway Process.
9. **Office of Ombudsman.** We propose the independent Office of Parliamentary Ombudsman be established. Any citizen aggrieved by the action of any public servant may, instead of commencing an expensive lawsuit, lodge a complaint with this office. The Ombudsman will be empowered to investigate with full cooperation of the civil service, at nominal cost to the citizen, with powers to advise on corrective actions and recommend prosecutions. This process will enhance government accountability and give more options for citizen redress.
10. **Public Consultation Select Committee.** We propose Parliament establish its own cross-partisan Public Consultation Select Committee (PCSC) supported by a Secretariat. Public consultations on prospective legislation should be transferred from REACH to the PCSC. After the conclusion of the public consultation, the PCSC should table a report in Parliament for the Cabinet to respond to. We also propose the PCSC be given the power to decide whether a bill should be sent to a Select Committee for scrutiny.
11. **Live Parliamentary Broadcasts.** We propose the live broadcast of parliamentary sittings and selected public hearings of parliamentary committees with live translation into English. The government should establish an independent non-profit organisation funded by cable television companies to run dedicated television and internet channels for parliamentary live broadcast and broadcast of other public affairs events such as the National Day Rally and public consultation forums.

## 5.2 BALANCED LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM

We believe our legal and judicial system should be independent, efficient, trustworthy and balanced to ensure due process, safeguard the interests of stakeholders and be accountable for Executive actions. We need to:

**Entrench Judicial Independence.** We believe the independence of the judicial system should be entrenched to ensure judges act without fear or favour and with the widest discretion possible.

**Strengthen the Criminal Justice System.** We should strengthen trust in our criminal justice system by adopting due process to balance crime control as the focus of the system.

### Entrenching Judicial Independence

1. **Strengthening Judicial Review.** While discretion must be given to civil servants to make decisions, such discretion should not be absolute and should be subject to either judicial review for rationality (not on merits) or review by the independent Office of Ombudsman. There should not be laws that make the decisions of the Executive unreviewable. We propose any such existing laws should be reviewed.
2. **Appointment of Judges.** We propose the Constitution be amended to extend the retirement age of Supreme Court judges from 65 to 70 years with no prospect for further extension. The present provisions for the appointment of fixed-term Judicial Commissioners and short-term Senior Judges should be removed. Extensions and short-term appointments weaken the protective wall that upholds judicial independence.
3. **Judicial Discretion for Capital Cases.** We propose trials for capital cases should be conducted by a tribunal of two judges whose decision to impose the death sentence must be unanimous. On appeal, the death sentence should be upheld only if all three judges in the Court of Appeal confirm it unanimously. For capital offences, discretion should be given to judges to decide whether the death penalty or a lesser penalty is justified for each case. Parliament can set limits on the degree of discretion, depending on the offence.

### Strengthening the Criminal Justice System

4. **Review of the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act.** We propose the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act allowing detention of suspected criminals without trial be re-examined, and its necessity and use closely scrutinised, with the goal of abolishing its use in favour of having the usual trial process.
5. **Dedicated Anti-Terrorism Law.** We propose the Internal Security Act, which provides for detention without trial in cases of alleged subversion, be abolished. Singapore shall be brought in line with international practices to try such cases, including espionage, with modified procedures to protect official secrets if necessary. In cases of alleged terrorism, the government should be enabled by a dedicated anti-terrorism law to make swift arrests and detain suspects without trial. However, these suspects must be afforded real avenues to challenge the legality of their arrests through the courts and an advisory board. These bodies should be empowered to order the person's release if not satisfied as to the legality of the detention.
6. **Due Process Criminal Procedures.** We propose arrested persons should be told their legal rights upon arrest, especially the constitutional right to counsel under Article 9 and



the right against self incrimination. An arrested person's Constitutional right to consult legal counsel should be protected by allowing early access. All interviews and the taking of statements should be videotaped to ensure that statements have not been extracted by way of inducement, threat or promise. Persons in custody for investigations by law enforcement agencies should only be detained beyond 48 hours by order of a court made in the presence of the suspect.

7. **Independent Police Conduct Review Commission.** We propose the setting up of an independent Commission to oversee complaints about the police. A higher degree of oversight can help prevent the overstepping of authority and the excessive use of force. Over time, this will encourage greater adherence to due process and enhance public trust in our Police Force. The Commission should have the authority to call for disciplinary proceedings or bring legal proceedings against any member of the Police Force.
8. **Increasing and Retaining Manpower.** Due process policing requires greater manpower and better training. We propose police manpower not be outsourced as far as possible. Our focus should be on allocating more resources and support for recruitment and retention to the Police Force. Rules and the mode of conduct of police investigations, arrests or interrogations should be published for public information and education, while police officers should receive intensive training in following and taking pride in due process rules.

### 5.3 RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC SPHERE

We believe a responsible, informed public rooted in government transparency and accountability is the key to having a people empowered to take ownership of their governance. A free and independent mass media is a bulwark that promotes good governance by allowing citizens to communicate with the different arms of government.

1. **Free and Competitive Local Newspaper and Broadcasting Companies.** We propose the Newspapers and Printing Presses Act be amended to abolish clauses giving the government powers to approve the holders of management shares and to control the shareholdings and voting power of newspaper companies. Similarly, the Broadcasting Act should be amended to do the same for broadcast companies. We propose the development of a free and competitive mass media sector by opening up the licensing regime to allow private and commercial media, especially for television and newspaper, with majority local ownership to operate in Singapore.
2. **Internet Regulation.** We propose the repeal of the Broadcasting (Class License) Notification – which requires websites that report regularly on Singapore to register and post a bond of \$50,000 subjecting them to government regulation of content – that was gazetted in 2013 without public consultation. The amendments create an



environment of uncertainty, dampen the development of local content, and ignore the fact that existing legislation such as sedition laws, defamation laws and the maintenance of religious harmony law already provide safeguards against harmful speech.

3. **Review of Public Order Act.** We call for the repeal of the sections of the Public Order Act (POA) that govern the right to public assembly, issuance of move-on orders, and restrictions on filming of law enforcement operations, to remove obstacles to the promotion of an active citizenry. We propose peaceful demonstrations be allowed subject to prior notification to the police to ensure minimum disruption to traffic and public convenience. There should be no extended occupation of public space or intentional harassment of passers-by and commuters. Laws against preaching hate and intolerance should still apply to guard against the spreading of such messages. Peaceful demonstrations are important and natural outlets for ordinary citizens to express their views.
4. **Independent Body for Arts Licensing.** We propose an independent body with representation from the arts community should be set up to oversee arts licensing. We should create a vibrant infrastructure under which proper support and a more conducive environment be provided for the arts to flourish with minimal state interference and direction.
5. **Declassification of Archives.** We propose a structured de-classification system for archived material where material in the National Archives will be automatically declassified after 25 years of the date of record. In the interest of national security, material marked "Secret" will still be subject to requests and approval. All cabinet papers should be automatically released after 40 years. A panel of experts should be set up to consider requests for early declassification.
6. **Hate Speech Act.** We propose the enactment of a Hate Speech Act to replace the Sedition Act. The Act should regulate all forms of public expression that incite, espouse, or promote physical violence toward or harassment of individuals or groups of people. Individuals that engage in hate speech would be liable for criminal prosecution under the act. Organisations, including the government, should not be protected under the Hate Speech Act.



## 6

# Active Diplomacy, Confident Defence

## OUR VISION

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We seek peaceful domestic and external conditions, where

- ★ Ensuring the peace, safety, security, and defence of our nation is consistent with being a democratic society based on the principles of justice and equality;
- ★ Singaporeans are confident about our place in the world and engage in **active diplomacy** to cooperate with others to protect our interests abroad;
- ★ Singaporeans strongly identify that we are a united community ready to engage in **confident defence** of our country.

### 6.1 ACTIVE DIPLOMACY

We believe that Singapore should adopt an active diplomacy to protect its autonomy and interests abroad while acting as a responsible global and regional citizen. An active diplomacy seeks to:

**Cooperate to Safeguard Regional Stability and Prosperity.** Being located at the major international crossroad in Southeast Asia, a peaceful Asia is crucial for our economy. Singapore has to proactively work with our neighbours and partners, especially ASEAN, to safeguard regional stability and prosperity.

**Work toward a Rule-Based World.** Singapore should adhere to international agreements we are party to and work to strengthen international institutions, law, and regulations that protect smaller countries. We should also enhance the Foreign Service's capacity to protect the increasing number of Singaporeans overseas.

#### Cooperating to Safeguard Regional Stability and Prosperity

1. **Bolstering the ASEAN Secretariat.** We support efforts to work with our neighbours to bolster the coordination, research, outreach, administrative, and support functions of the ASEAN Secretariat as well as its ability to support the work of the ASEAN chair and assist with ASEAN events. A united and well-coordinated ASEAN can provide assistance

to its members in enhancing regional stability.

2. **South China Sea Code of Conduct.** We support the establishment of effective mechanisms through ASEAN to manage regional disputes and prevent the escalation of tensions. Singapore should work through ASEAN to develop a South China Sea Code of Conduct and propose arrangements to improve communication, manage differences, avoid accidents, and prevent escalation among stakeholders.
3. **ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).** We propose to seek deeper and more multifaceted relations with our neighbours, as outlined in the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Blueprint. They include facilitating cultural exchanges, interaction among non-governmental organisations and civic groups, educational interactions, people-to-people contact, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and development assistance. Such contact improves mutual understanding, moderates social tensions, and fosters cooperation.
4. **Technical Cooperation to Enhance Institutions and Infrastructure.** We propose a more coordinated effort to partner with neighbouring governments to actively identify areas for targeted international development. The government could act as a facilitator for investments and collaboration between Singaporean firms and other partners to provide capacity-building services and start-up grants to assist with these projects in partner countries or in Singapore. Efforts in this direction help stabilise our neighbourhood and demonstrate that Singapore is a regional good citizen and reliable partner. These initiatives in technical cooperation would also open up opportunities for Singaporean businesses.

### Working toward a Rule-Based World

5. **Good Global Citizenship.** We support strengthening efforts to support and participate in initiatives by the UN and other major international organisations that are consistent with our national interests and within our means. Singapore can contribute by supporting projects such as public health initiatives by the World Health Organisation, UNESCO educational and cultural programmes, World Bank development programmes, and International Labour Organization programmes on worker protections, anti-discrimination, and work safety. This would help Singapore build international support for our foreign policy goals.
6. **Assisting Singaporeans Abroad.** The growing number of Singaporeans living, working, studying, and travelling overseas means a greater need for representation abroad. We propose the Ministry of Foreign Affairs further expand its diplomatic and consular representation overseas accordingly. MFA can accredit more honorary consuls-general in addition to enhancing diplomatic and consular presence in areas where there are larger overseas Singaporean populations. Singapore should work out reciprocal arrangements with our ASEAN partners to allow Singaporeans to seek

consular assistance with other ASEAN embassies and consulates in areas where Singapore has no permanent official presence.

7. **Foreign Policy Public Education and Transparency.** We propose the Ministry of Foreign Affairs publish annual reports and quadrennial policy reviews that chart out the general direction of our foreign policy. The quadrennial review should include assessments on challenges, priorities and goals, and recommendations. Annual reports can detail the extent to which objectives set in the policy reviews are being met, areas that require further improvement, and proposals to address any shortcomings.
8. **Participation in Internationally-Sanctioned Overseas Operations.** We support greater participation in internationally sanctioned overseas missions, especially under United Nations (UN) auspices. Since these missions involve national assets such as the SAF, SPF, and SCDF, they must be clearly consistent with our national interests and within our means to execute. Participation in anti-piracy operations can safeguard Singapore's maritime trade and contribute to the global commons. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and UN Peacekeeping Operations can bolster stability and build goodwill for Singapore. Such action puts Singapore in a stronger position to mobilise international support, while giving our forces valuable operational experience.
9. **Controlling Weapons Proliferation.** We propose Singapore should take further steps to address weapons proliferation that build on our participation in arrangements like the Container Security Initiative and Proliferation Security Initiative. Doing so would signal that Singapore is aware of its responsibilities as a major international shipping and logistics hub. MINDEF, MFA and the Customs should further coordinate to oversee Singapore's arms export and counter-proliferation policies. Singapore should also accede to the Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel mines in this light, since we already officially support international efforts to resolve humanitarian concerns relating to such weapons.

## 6.2 CONFIDENT DEFENCE

We believe that the government should promote greater public confidence in our security services and armed forces, and greater public support for National Service. The government needs to:

**Maintain Confident Total Defence.** We should have the readiness to deal with a variety of security contingencies in a fast-changing world, even though we believe that the use of force is not the preferred solution. A confident Total Defence must involve public participation and oversight.

**Strengthen Meaningful National Service.** Security and defence are public goods that everyone in Singapore enjoys. Meaningful sharing of the responsibilities is important

for sustaining long-term public support for security and defence.

### Maintaining Dynamic Total Defence

1. **Managing Cyber-Security Vulnerabilities.** We propose the Cyber-Security Agency (CSA) under the PMO take the lead in coordinating with and supporting other agencies and businesses to constantly identify and repair vulnerabilities in our communications infrastructure in order to guard against the risks and costs of disruptions to government services and business. The CSA should publish regular advisories on cyber-security for businesses and government, and annual public reports to highlight key cyber-security risks, steps taken to address them, as well as efforts to protect personal privacy.
2. **Freedom of Communication, Navigation and Overflight.** Singapore is a trading nation. Keeping communication links safe and open is key to our survival. We call for the SAF to continue developing the capability, training, equipment, and logistics support to guarantee the freedom of communication, navigation, and overflight both on our own as well as in coordination with regional and international partners.
3. **Interoperability.** Given today's complex and fluid environment, the SAF needs to not only be able to operate as integrated force, it needs to have the capability to work effectively with other Singapore government agencies as well as the armed forces and agencies of our partners. We call for the SAF to develop greater interoperability through joint exercises and development of shared technical, planning and operational frameworks with domestic and international partners.
4. **Affordability and Parliamentary Oversight.** We call for MINDEF and MHA to provide the Parliamentary Standing Select Committees for Defence and Home Affairs with a confidential and more detailed annual report on spending on defence and security that includes some classified information, with a declassified version available to the public. This is to ensure that investments in defence and security do not become overly burdensome on the public purse and are made accountable to the public.

### Strengthening Meaningful National Service

5. **Broadening National Education.** We propose National Education familiarise citizens with our Constitution and political system in addition to providing information about potential threats and risks. Emotional and psychological defence comes with an understanding of the shared ideals of democracy, justice, equality, peace, and progress that undergird our society.
6. **Responsive Management of NS Personnel.** We call for the streamlining of the call-ups and unit placement processes for operationally ready National Servicemen (NSmen) to

ensure that citizens are treated even-handedly and do not face long lag times before their deployments and call-ups. NSmen should be deployed to a unit and start their first year of operationally ready national service stint within two years of leaving full time national service. In this way, Singaporeans will start and complete their national service obligations as promptly as possible and not be subject to inconsistent administrative discretion.

7. **National Service for First Generation Citizens.** We propose first generation male citizens between 21 and 40 years of age who have not served full time national service should be required to serve up to 40 days a year over 10 years in the SAF, SPF, SCDF, public hospitals or the social services. Including first generation male citizens can buttress the personnel shortage facing our uniformed and social services. The longer requirement improves the quality of training received by the servicemen. Such experiences also help integrate first generation citizens.
8. **Meaningful Recognition of National Service.** Singaporeans who have fulfilled their full-time national service or volunteer service should receive meaningful recognition of their efforts and sacrifices. NSmen who actively served in the previous year should be eligible for an additional, non-expiring SkillsFuture credit of \$1000, which they can apply to their own participation in courses with accredited institutions of higher learning or vocational training.