

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

SINGAPORE

OFFICIAL REPORT

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TRAFFIC DIVERSION PLANS TO HANDLE MAJOR TRAFFIC JAMS

1 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for Transport (a) what are the traffic diversion plans to handle events of major traffic jams caused by road accidents or incidents; and (b) whether LTA will consider putting mobile columns as road dividers that are similar to the movable potted plants placed along ECP so that traffic diversions and U-turns can be made in such events.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: Traffic diversions are managed by the Traffic Police, with support from the Land Transport Authority. Typically, the Traffic Police would deploy officers to divert traffic away from the accident site and ensure that motorists continue to drive safely. The Land Transport Authority would facilitate the traffic diversion by adjusting traffic light timings along diversion corridors, and disseminating incident information on the Expressway Monitoring and Advisory System (EMAS) and various online and radio channels.

The Member suggested the use of mobile columns like those in ECP as road dividers so that in the event of an accident, they could be flexibly removed to allow for traffic diversion. However, these mobile columns cannot be easily reconfigured at short notice.

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MRT LINE TO CONNECT PUNGGOL, SENGKANG, FERNVALE, BUANGKOK, YIO CHU KANG, NEE SOON AND SEMBAWANG

2 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for Transport whether the Government will consider constructing a MRT line to connect the estates of Punggol, Sengkang, Fernvale, Buangkok, Yio Chu Kang, Nee Soon and Sembawang.

Mr Khaw Boon Wan: One of the MRT lines that the Government is currently studying is the Cross Island Line (CRL). If and when it is completed, the CRL will, among other benefits, connect the estates in Punggol, Sengkang, Fernvale and Buangkok. In the meantime, commuter travel between the north and north-east regions is being supported by public buses.

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UPDATE ON DEPENDANTS' PROTECTION SCHEME

3 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) what has been the claims experience of the Dependants' Protection Scheme in the last five years; (b) how many CPF members have opted out of the scheme since its inception and what are their income profiles; (c) whether there are plans to review the scheme so that lower-income Singaporeans are protected in view of its opt-out nature; and (d) whether the scheme can be extended beyond the current age cap of 60 years to 67 years.

Mr Lim Swee Say: The Dependants' Protection Scheme (DPS) is a term insurance scheme that mitigates the impact of a loss of future income, in the event of the member's untimely permanent incapacity or death. It provides his dependants with a sum of money to tide over the initial period.

In the last five years from 2011-2015, the average number of claims approved under DPS was about 2,800 per year. The corresponding claim amount paid was about \$141 million per year.

On average, less than 1% of eligible CPF members opted out of DPS each year since its inception in 1989. About half of those who opted out were younger members aged 30 and below, and may have done so because they did not have dependants. Of the members who opted out, about 40% were not working, 40% with monthly income of more than \$2,000 and remaining 20% with monthly income of less than \$2,000.

Today, DPS coverage stops at age 60. The need for DPS is expected to decline as the member approaches retirement. This is because the member's children are more likely to have attained financial independence and the member would have accumulated more savings to support his dependants in the event of his untimely demise or incapacitation. Extending DPS coverage beyond age 60 will provide longer insurance protection but will also mean much higher premiums because of higher mortality. We will review the DPS age limit periodically, bearing in mind the need to strike a balance between providing insurance protection for the CPF members' dependants and preserving their CPF savings for their own retirement needs. CPF members who wish to have life insurance coverage beyond age 60 may consider obtaining it from private insurers.

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LABOUR FORCE PROFILE

4 **Mr Patrick Tay Teck Guan** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) as at 31 December 2015, how many people in the labour force are self-employed and working as full-time freelancers; (b) what sectors/industries are they from; and (c) what is their educational breakdown in terms of numbers of those who are (i) diploma holders and (ii) those with qualifications of degree and above.

Mr Lim Swee Say: As of June 2015, 7.9% (or 169,500) of employed residents were own account workers. Own account workers are self-employed persons who operate their own business or trade without employing any paid worker.

93.1% (157,800) of own account workers were in the Services sector. In particular, this group of workers was most highly represented in the Transportation and Storage sector. Table 1 captures the detailed breakdown of own account workers by industry.

Table 1: Own Account Workers Aged 15 Years & Over by Industry, June 2015

Industry (SSIC 2015)	Own Account Workers	
	Number ('000)	Distribution (%)
Total	169.5	100.0
Manufacturing	3.9	2.3
Construction	7.0	4.1
Services	157.8	93.1
Wholesale & Retail Trade	20.8	12.3
Transportation & Storage	50.8	30.0
Accommodation & Food Services	9.2	5.4
Information & Communications	3.7	2.2
Financial & Insurance Services	15.0	8.9
Real Estate Services	15.6	9.2
Professional Services	11.0	6.5
Administrative & Support Services	5.8	3.4
Public Administration & Education	13.5	7.9

Industry (SSIC 2015)	Own Account Workers	
Health & Social Services	2.5	1.5
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	2.1	1.2
Other Community, Social & Personal Services	7.9	4.7
Others¹	0.8	0.5

Source: 2015 Comprehensive Labour Force Survey,
Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:

- (1) 'Others' includes Agriculture, Fishing, Quarrying, Utilities and Sewerage & Waste Management.
- (2) Data may not add up due to rounding.

16.4% (27,900) of own account workers hold diplomas and professional qualifications, while 21.4% (36,200) of these workers hold degrees and above. The proportion of own account workers with diplomas and above is 37.8%, compared to 53.3% (with diploma and above qualifications) amongst workers who are employees.

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FREELANCERS AND SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS IN WORKFORCE

5 **Mr Ang Hin Kee** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) how many freelancers and self-employed workers are there currently in the workforce; (b) what is the number of freelancers and self-employed workers that make regular contributions to their Medisave accounts; and (c) whether the Work Injury Compensation Act can be extended to workers who are freelancers and self-employed.

Mr Lim Swee Say: As of June 2015, 300,500 (or 14%) of employed residents (2,147,800) were self-employed persons (SEPs)¹. Of these SEPs, 169,500 (or 8% of employed residents) were own account workers, who operate their own business or trade without employing any paid worker².

¹The share of employed residents who were SEPs has decreased slightly from a decade ago in 2006, when SEPs accounted for 15% of the resident workforce.

²SEPs also comprise employers and contributing family workers.

Today, SEPs are required to contribute to their Medisave Accounts so as to save for their healthcare needs. As of December 2015, 82% of SEPs have made regular contributions to their Medisave accounts. To encourage more SEPs to make timely and regular Medisave contributions, the CPF Board reaches out to SEPs via annual mailers and road shows, and allows SEPs to make their Medisave contributions via instalments. The CPF Board also works with various Licensing Authorities to ensure that self-employed licensees make regular Medisave contributions.

The Work Injury Compensation Act (WICA) requires employers to compensate their employees who have work-related injuries. As self-employed persons operate their own business or trade, there is no employer-employee relationship between them and their clients. As such, they are not covered under the WICA. Nonetheless, we encourage self-employed persons to purchase adequate insurance to protect themselves in the event of a work injury. I am heartened to note that NTUC's Freelancers and Self-Employed Unit (FSEU) has been engaging various freelancer groups, such as taxi drivers and sports coaches, on this matter.

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ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR RETRENCHED PMETS TO RETRAIN AND UPGRADE FOR REEMPLOYMENT

6 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Manpower whether there will be any additional assistance, besides the \$500 SkillsFuture grant, available for retrenched PMETs to re-train and upgrade themselves for re-employment.

Mr Lim Swee Say: The Ministry of Manpower is committed to actively support retrenched workers, including Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMETs), to secure new employment. Besides helping them to improve skills through the SkillsFuture Credit, the Government also offers the SkillsFuture Mid-career Enhanced Subsidy for Singaporeans aged 40 and above to receive up to 90% subsidy of course fees for WDA-supported courses and at least 90% of programme cost for MOE-subsidised full-time and part-time courses.

PMETs, including those retrenched, who wish to undergo skills conversion and change their professions, can tap on Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs). Salary support of up to 70% of the monthly salary (subject to a cap of \$2,000) is given to employers who hire them, with enhanced funding support for mature and long-term unemployed PMETs.

To help match job-seeking PMETs with suitable positions in SMEs, the P-Max programme supports SMEs in the recruitment, training and management of PMETs with job-matching services, workshops, and an Assistance Grant of \$5,000.

In addition, the Career Support Programme (CSP) launched in October last year, helps Singaporean PMETs aged 40 and above to have better access to mid- and higher-level jobs while learning on-the-job. Under this programme, employers are given wage support for employing mature PMETs who have been actively searching for jobs for at least six months with a monthly gross salary of at least \$4,000.

Above all, WDA and e2i also help connect retrenched and at-risk PMETs to potential employers through platforms such as the Jobs Bank portal, job fairs, recruitment and networking events. The Ministry is also monitoring the current economic and labour market situation closely, and stands ready to strengthen employment support for all workers.

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COMPLAINTS OF UNAUTHORISED SALARY DEDUCTIONS

7 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) how many complaints of unauthorised salary deductions have been registered every year from 2010 to 2015; and (b) in how many of these cases are the complaints found to have been justified.

Mr Lim Swee Say: MOM received and investigated an average of 50 complaints per year from 2010 to 2015 involving allegations of unauthorised salary deductions under the Employment Act (EA). About a third of these cases were found to have contravened the EA following MOM's investigations.

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STATISTICS ON FOREIGNERS GIVEN DEPENDANT PASSES AND LETTER OF CONSENT TO WORK IN SINGAPORE

8 **Mr Chen Show Mao** asked the Minister for Manpower (a) from 2011 to 2015, what is the number of foreigners given Dependant Passes; and (b) what is the number of Dependant Pass holders who are given the Letter of Consent granting them permission to work.

Mr Lim Swee Say: The increase in Dependant Passes (DP) and Letters of Consent issued

to DPs from 2011 to 2015 are as follows:

Table 1: Change in DP and DP LOC stock

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
DP	17,300	14,000	8,700	7,900	9,900
DP LOC	1,400	1,300	1,100	2,400	1,700

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UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR NATIONAL DAY PARADE'S RETURN TO NATIONAL STADIUM

9 **Mr Vikram Nair** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide an update on the preparations for the National Day Parade's return to the National Stadium and the Government's estimated total expenditure on the National Day Parade 2016.

Dr Ng Eng Hen: In response to separate but similar Parliamentary Questions on 29 February 2016, the Minister for Defence has provided an update on the preparations for the National Day Parade's return to the National Stadium and the Government's estimated total expenditure on the National Day Parade 2016. Please refer to that reply. [Please refer to Questions No *14 and No *15 in the Oral Answers to Questions section on 29 February 2016.]

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TEENAGER HOLDING DUAL CITIZENSHIP SEEKING EXEMPTION FROM NATIONAL SERVICE

10 **Mr David Ong** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs whether the Ministry has entered into discussions with New Zealand on the issue of the teenager holding dual citizenships of Singapore and New Zealand who is seeking exemption from National Service and, if so, what is the progress of these discussions.

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan: The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (NZ

MFAT) made a request for Singapore to provide a point of contact on the case of a teenager who holds dual citizenship. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has informed NZ MFAT of the point of contact from the Ministry of Defence.

MFA has conveyed our citizenship laws and the principles underlying our National Service (NS), to MFAT. Pursuant to the Enlistment Act, all Singapore Citizens and PRs above the age of 18 years are required to serve NS. As the teenager in question is a Singapore Citizen, he has to fulfil his NS obligations. Even if he were to subsequently apply for renunciation of his citizenship after he attains the age of majority, he would still remain liable for any breaches of the Enlistment Act. He is advised to return to Singapore as soon as possible to resolve the matter.

Singapore adheres to the fundamental principles of universality and equity for NS. All Singaporeans are expected to fulfil our NS obligations as citizens. It would not be fair to allow citizens to avoid NS just because they reside overseas.

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PERMANENT RESIDENTS RENOUNCING PR STATUS BEFORE AGE 21

11 **Mr David Ong** asked the Minister for Home Affairs whether the Ministry will consider allowing permanent residents to renounce their PR status before the age of 21 years especially if they are not residing in Singapore.

Mr K Shanmugam: There are currently no age restrictions imposed on Permanent Residents (PRs) who intend to renounce their PR status.

Being a PR is a step towards citizenship and only those who intend to take up Singapore Citizenship should apply for PR.

Male PRs who renounce their PR status before fulfilling their National Service obligations will face serious adverse consequences when they subsequently apply to study, work, or live in Singapore. Any subsequent PR or citizenship applications will be affected. In addition, any renewal of Re-Entry Permits (REPs) by PR's parents and immediate family members may be affected.

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NUMBER OF PERSONS' CRIMINAL RECORDS RENDERED SPENT

12 **Mr Ang Wei Neng** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) since the Registration of

Criminals (Amendment) Act 2005 came into operation, how many persons have had their criminal records rendered spent as of 31 December 2015, with breakdowns by year; and (b) of these persons, how many are Singaporeans.

Mr K Shanmugam: The annual breakdown of persons who have had their criminal records rendered spent from 2005 to 2015 is provided in Table 1.

Under the Registration of Criminals Act, sections 7B and 7C provide that a record in the Register of Criminals will automatically be marked as spent if the ex-offender satisfies certain criteria.

To qualify for a record to be spent, the ex-offender must not have been sentenced to an imprisonment term exceeding three months or to a fine exceeding \$2,000. The ex-offender must also satisfy a five-year crime-free period, among other criteria.

Based on these criteria, those who have had their records spent since 2005 include ex-offenders who committed minor offences, such as shop theft. They also include foreign offenders, the majority of whom are immigration offenders.

Of the 157,369 persons who have had their criminal records rendered spent as of 31 December 2015, 68,792 persons are Singaporeans and Permanent Residents (PRs). Of the 88,577 foreigners who have had their criminal records rendered spent as of 31 December 2015, more than half (47,836 persons) were convicted for entering or attempting to enter Singapore without a valid pass; or in other words, illegal immigrants.

All of these illegal immigrants have been repatriated. Their convictions were recorded in the Register of Criminals and their criminal records would be automatically rendered spent after a five-year period. Notwithstanding the spent records, they are still required to seek prior written permission from the Controller of Immigration if they wish to enter Singapore.

Table 1: No. of persons with criminal records rendered spent, 2005 to 2015

Year	No. of persons with criminal records rendered spent
2005	112,094
2006	7,618
2007	6,443
2008	5,160
2009	4,298

2010	4,148
2011	3,920
2012	3,460
2013	3,935
2014	3,405
2015	2,888
Total	157,369

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NUMBER AND PROFILE OF STATELESS PERSONS LIVING IN SINGAPORE

13 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Minister for Home Affairs (a) as of January 2016, what is the number of stateless residents living in Singapore; (b) what is the gender profile of these residents; and (c) what is the number of such residents who are aged 50 and above.

Mr K Shanmugam: As at 31 January 2016, there were 1, 411 stateless persons living in Singapore.

Of these, 59% are male and 41% female.

One thousand and forty-eight or 74% of them are aged 50 and up.

The majority came from other countries to live and work in Singapore. Others were born in Singapore but were not eligible for Singapore Citizenship (SC) at birth as their parents were not Singapore Citizens at the time of their birth and did not obtain foreign citizenship for them from their home countries.

Many of the stateless persons have since become Permanent Residents (PRs). As PRs, they can enjoy the various benefits such as healthcare, housing and education, that are accorded to

PRs. Stateless PRs can also acquire SC if they meet the requirements for the grant of SC.

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APPLICATIONS FOR LEGAL AID

14 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Minister for Law (a) what is the number of persons who applied to the Legal Aid Bureau for legal aid in each year from 2010 to 2015; and (b) what is the number of successful applicants in each of those years.

Mr K Shanmugam: The Legal Aid Bureau monitors the number of applications it

receives and the number of cases which qualify for legal aid on a Financial Year (FY) basis, that is, from April to March the following year. The data for FY 2010 to FY 2014 are set out in the following table:

Financial Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
No of Applications for Legal Aid	9,755	9,775	10,031	10,072	9,485
Number of Cases who qualified for Legal Aid	8,920	8,948	9,035	9,167	8,504

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PLANS FOR PAEDIATRIC AND NEONATOLOGY SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS IN NORTHERN SECTOR

15 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for Health (a) whether there are plans to offer paediatric and neonatology services for residents living in the northern sector; and (b) if so, whether there is a timeframe as to when residents can expect these services to be ready.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: Paediatric services are provided at various levels ranging from primary to tertiary care. At the primary healthcare level, general practitioners (GPs) and polyclinics manage common paediatric and neonatal conditions as well as provide well child services such as developmental assessment and childhood vaccinations. There are already existing healthcare facilities in the north providing care for women and children at the primary care level, including the two polyclinics at Yishun and Woodlands and some General Practitioner (GP) clinics, out of around 130 GP clinics in the north. In addition, there are nine specialised clinics that provide Obstetrics & Gynaecology and Paediatric services in the community in the north.

Over the next few years, residents in the north can look forward to new service developments and healthcare facilities. We will be opening Woodlands Integrated Healthcare Campus (WIHC), which includes a new acute hospital, in phases from 2022 to complement the existing Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in Yishun. MOH is currently in the process of planning the clinical services for WIHC.

Services planning for this new campus will be based on both regional healthcare needs and the optimisation of clinical expertise and manpower resources across the national healthcare

system. We will ensure that good quality healthcare services are accessible to patients.

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MEASURES TO RETAIN NURSING GRADUATES IN PUBLIC SECTOR

16 **Ms Cheng Li Hui** asked the Minister for Health (a) for the last three years, what have been the percentages and numbers of nursing graduates who remain in the public sector after five years; and (b) what measures are there to retain them in the public sector in terms of their salaries, working hours, career opportunities and social recognition.

Mr Gan Kim Yong: Among nursing graduates from the 2008, 2009 and 2010 cohorts who joined the public sector, 76% remained in the public sector after five years.

Since 2014, we have been progressively implementing the "Care" package recommended by the National Nursing Taskforce (NNT) to strengthen the development of the nursing profession in the areas of Career, Autonomy, Recognition and Education.

As part of the package, nurses in public healthcare institutions and MOH-subvented intermediate and long-term care sectors have received base salary increases of between 3% and 10% each year in 2014 and 2015, as well as a Nurse Special Payment of 0.5 month of their monthly base salary in December 2014 and 2015.

To better enable nurses to balance their work with other family commitments, the public healthcare institutions are striving to make flexible and part-time work arrangements more accessible. After successful pilots of more flexible shift start times at Changi General Hospital, KK Women's and Children's Hospital, Singapore General Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, we are working to scale up the innovations across all public hospitals.

To enhance the career progression of nurses in the public sector, the eligibility criteria for Enrolled Nurses (ENs) to undergo bridging studies has been revised. This has provided ENs with more opportunities to upgrade to become Registered Nurses, in line with the SkillsFuture initiative. In 2015, close to 180 ENs have enrolled in the bridging courses at NYP and NP as compared to 45 in 2014. In addition, we have introduced the Assistant Nurse Clinician role in 2015 to enable experienced Senior Staff Nurses to take on a clinical leadership role. We are nurturing more Advanced Practice Nurses through greater support for their training. We are also increasing funding support to the public healthcare sector to provide more opportunities for nurses to undergo skills upgrading for their professional development.

Beyond salaries, working hours and career opportunities, another important area is for all of us, as a society, to continue to show appreciation, recognition and support for our nurses, not only on Nurses' Day but every day.

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PAYMENTS MADE TO SPORTS HUB PARTNER PER YEAR FOR BUILDING, MAINTAINING AND OPERATING FACILITY

17 **Ms Sylvia Lim** asked the Minister for Culture, Community and Youth (a) to date, how much payments has the Government made to the Sports Hub partner per year for building, maintaining, and operating the facility; and (b) what is the estimated total amount that will be paid at the end of the 25 years.

Ms Grace Fu Hai Yien: Sports Hub Pte Ltd (SHPL) was contracted to design, build, finance and operate the Sports Hub for 25 years under the public-private partnership (PPP) arrangement.

Under the PPP arrangement, Sport Singapore is contracted to pay SHPL an annual availability payment of \$193.7 million (subject to inflation) from the commencement of operations.

The Government began making the full annual availability payments to SHPL in July 2014. At the end of the concession period, SHPL is required to hand back the facilities to the Government.

The availability payments under the PPP arrangement help to spread the total project cost evenly over the duration of the contract. It also requires the private partner to bear the construction and operational risks of the project. For instance, SHPL had to manage at its own cost, the challenges of poor soil conditions during the construction phase, as well as rectify early issues with the National Stadium pitch and roof.

Sport Singapore closely monitors the performance of SHPL to ensure that they remain accountable for the goals of the project and seek to maximise the value of the Sports Hub for Singaporeans.

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EFFICACY OF SOCIAL SERVICE OFFICES

18 **Miss Cheryl Chan Wei Ling** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) what has been the efficacy of the Social Service Offices since their inception; (b) what are the top five support schemes provided; and (c) whether there is a stable trend observed in the social assistance and services sought.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: MSF established the Social Service Offices (SSOs) in 2013 to bring about more accessible and coordinated social help for Singaporeans. The SSOs provide financial assistance to low-income families who need help. They also work with Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) and community partners to coordinate social services within each HDB town.

With the full network of 24 centres up, some 95% of SSO beneficiaries living in HDB towns can access an SSO within 2 kilometres of where they live or work. Based on a 2015 MSF survey, nine in 10 SSO beneficiaries were satisfied with the SSOs' location and service quality.

The SSOs are also working with community partners such as the Family Service Centres to better coordinate help for families with more complex needs. This is a work in progress. Part of it includes piloting new service delivery models. For example, the SSOs at Taman Jurong and Kreta Ayer offer financial assistance, employment assistance and family services under one roof.

When delivering financial assistance, the SSOs adopt a needs-based approach. The assistance can be classified into a few categories. In order of decreasing number of beneficiaries, these would be (i) short-to-medium-term assistance for those looking for work or temporarily unable to work; (ii) long-term assistance for those permanently unable to work; and (iii) interim assistance for those who require immediate or one-off assistance.

With better accessibility and greater awareness, the SSOs have helped more Singaporeans. For example, the number of households that received ComCare short-to-medium term and long-term financial assistance has increased from 23,992 in FY2012 to 31,307 in FY2014.

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EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPEECH DELAY, AUTISM AND AT RISK OF MODERATE TO SEVERE DISABILITIES

19 **Mr Louis Ng Kok Kwang** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) how many children below the age of 7 years with speech delay, autism and at risk of moderate to

severe disabilities are currently receiving and awaiting early intervention services at Government-funded voluntary welfare organisations; and (b) what is the current waiting time for these early intervention programmes.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: The Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) serves children with moderate to severe disabilities with speech delay, Autism and other developmental needs. Subsidised by the Government, EIPIC services are available at 17 Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWO) located across Singapore. About 2,600 children benefited from EIPIC in 2015. Of these, 6%³ were diagnosed with speech and language delays, and 47% were diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

Children currently have to wait an average of five to six months to enrol in an EIPIC centre. Some centres have a longer wait time due to parents' preferences. MSF will continue to work with VWOs expand capacity to meet the demand. There will be 28% more EIPIC places, or a total of 3,200 places, by 2018.

As children are best served in their natural settings, children with milder needs are served in mainstream preschools that offer the Development Support Programme (DSP). In 2015, about 1,200 children benefited from the DSP. The capacity and capability of these preschools will be further developed to meet demand.

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DISBURSEMENTS FROM OPEN DOOR FUND

20 **Mr Leon Perera** asked the Minister for Social and Family Development (a) how many awards under the Open Door Fund have been disbursed each year since the fund was launched; (b) what is the average quantum of the disbursement; and (c) what results have been reported in terms of the number of persons with disabilities hired in cases where the funds have been applied.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin: In 2014, the Open Door Fund (ODF) was enhanced, and renamed the Open Door Programme (ODP). The ODP is supported by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and Ministry of Social and Family Development, and administered by SG Enable. It

³Percentage of children whose primary diagnosis was speech and language delay.

encourages the employment of persons with disabilities, through a range of initiatives, including apprenticeships, training, job and workplace re-design. Since 2014, 140 companies have applied for ODP support for the employment of persons with disabilities. The average claim per company is \$3,000.

Besides the ODP, there are other initiatives to promote the employment of persons with disabilities. For example, SG Enable works with Voluntary Welfare Organisation partners to provide job placement and support services for persons with disabilities. Collectively, they have placed about 650 persons with disabilities in employment over the past two years, some with the support of the ODP.

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CHANGE IN INCOME PROFILE AND CONSUMPTION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES BY HOUSING TYPE

21 **Mr Gan Thiam Poh** asked the Minister for National Development for the past 10 years (a) what has been the change in (i) average income per household and (ii) per capita income for each housing type of 2-room, 3-room, 4-room, and 5-room or more in public, private and landed properties; and (b) what has been the average consumption of public utilities (water and electricity) for each housing type.

Mr Lawrence Wong: Based on data published by the Department of Statistics, the change in average monthly household income for each housing type over the past 10 years is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Change in Average Monthly Household Income from Work among Resident Employed Households

Type of Dwelling	Annualised Nominal Change from 2005 to 2015
HDB 1- & 2-Room Flats ¹	4.8%
HDB 3-Room Flats	5.5%
HDB 4-Room Flats	6.0%
HDB 5-Room & Executive Flats	5.3%
Condominiums & Other Apartments	4.8%
Landed Properties	5.1%

¹ Includes HDB studio apartments

Notes:

1. A resident employed household refers to a household headed by a Singapore citizen or permanent resident and with at least one working person.
2. Household income from work includes employer CPF contributions.

The change in average monthly per capita household income over the same period for each housing type is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Change in Average Monthly Per Capita Income from Work among Resident Employed Households

Type of Dwelling	Annualised Nominal Change from 2005 to 2015
HDB 1- & 2-Room Flats ¹	4.2%
HDB 3-Room Flats	5.4%
HDB 4-Room Flats	6.6%
HDB 5-Room & Executive Flats	5.1%
Condominiums & Other Apartments	5.2%
Landed Properties	5.4%

¹ Includes HDB studio apartments

Notes:

1. A resident employed household refers to a household headed by a Singapore citizen or permanent resident and with at least one working person.
2. Household income from work includes employer CPF contributions.

The Household Expenditure Survey provides data on the average consumption of water and electricity for each housing type. This does not account for Government rebates on utilities, which would have helped to reduce household expenditures. The consumption data is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Average Monthly Household Expenditure on Utilities (Water and Electricity) among Resident Households

Type of Dwelling	2002/03	2012/13
HDB 1- & 2-Room Flats ¹	\$46	\$71
HDB 3-Room Flats	\$79	\$107
HDB 4-Room Flats	\$105	\$146

HDB 5-Room & Executive Flats	\$125	\$173
Condominiums & Other Apartments	\$155	\$203
Landed Properties	\$261	\$378

¹ Includes HDB studio apartments

Notes:

1. The Household Expenditure Survey is conducted once every five years. The last one was conducted in 2012/13.

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IMPLEMENTATION OF REVERSE MORTGAGES FOR HDB FLATS

22 **Er Dr Lee Bee Wah** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the progress of HDB's study on implementing reverse mortgages for HDB flats; (b) what are the benefits of this mortgage scheme over the current HDB Lease Buyback Scheme; and (c) whether HDB will consider allowing owners to make use of reverse mortgages on a case-by-case basis especially for those who find this more suited for their needs.

Mr Lawrence Wong: MND has completed its study on reverse mortgages for HDB flats. A reverse mortgage is a loan taken up by a property owner using his property as collateral. However, unlike a conventional mortgage, the borrower does not need to make cash repayment during the loan tenure. He only needs to repay the loan with accumulated interest upon loan termination or death, typically from the sales proceeds of his property. A reverse mortgage thus allows the property owner to unlock some equity while retaining the financial upside from any appreciation in property value.

A reverse mortgage is a complex financial product with inherent risks. First, as it does not require periodic cash repayments, the loan balance grows with interest. Second, the flat owner has to bear property risks. If the market value of the property becomes less than the outstanding loan, the owners may have to sell the property prematurely to repay the loan, resulting in them having to look for alternative accommodation at an old age.

We note that NTUC Income offered reverse mortgage for HDB flats in 2006. As only 24 households signed up, NTUC Income has since stopped offering the product. The take-up overseas is also not high.

There are various other monetisation options for HDB flat owners today, such as the Lease

Buyback Scheme (LBS). The LBS is an equity sale scheme where flat owners sell the tail-end lease of their flat to HDB and retain a shorter lease. This enables elderly households to receive a lifelong stream of income to supplement their retirement income. As compared to reverse mortgage, while LBS owners cannot sell their flat in the open market, they do not face any property equity risks. We recently enhanced the LBS in April 2015, and this was well received.

Besides LBS, elderly flat owners may take up the Silver Housing Bonus if they right-size to a 3-room or smaller flat. They also have other options of subletting either a bedroom or the entire flat, and staying with their family members.

Thus, MND has no plans to introduce reverse mortgage for HDB flats for now. MND will continue to regularly review and adjust our various schemes to meet the needs of our elderly.

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REVIEW OF PROPERTY COOLING MEASURES

23 **Mr Christopher de Souza** asked the Minister for National Development whether he will consider reviewing the property cooling measures by removing the Additional Buyers Stamp Duty (ABSD) for Singaporeans but retaining the ABSD for foreigners.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The property market cooling measures are intended to keep the market stable and sustainable. It is too early to relax the measures now. Doing so could result in a market rebound.

The Additional Buyer's Stamp Duty (ABSD) was introduced to moderate the demand for residential property from investors, non-citizens and corporate entities. Singapore citizens who do not own any residential property do not need to pay ABSD.

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UPGRADING UNDER HOME IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

24 **Mr Pritam Singh** asked the Minister for National Development (a) how many flats have yet to be announced for upgrading under the Home Improvement Programme (HIP) for each Town Council; and (b) whether HDB is on track to complete the announcement of all eligible flats for HIP by 2018.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Home Improvement Programme (HIP) was introduced in 2007

with about 300,000 eligible flats.

To date, HIP has been announced for slightly over 200,000 flats. The remaining 100,000 or so flats have not been selected or announced. All Town Councils would be aware of the blocks in their constituencies which would meet the HIP nomination and selection criteria.

HDB is still working to complete the selection of the remaining HIP-eligible flats by FY2018. But as with all publicly-funded programmes, this will be contingent on the Government's fiscal position and budget availability.

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HDB FLATS ELIGIBLE FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL PROGRAMME

25 **Mr Pritam Singh** asked the Minister for National Development how many flats are eligible for the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (NRP) for each Town Council and whether HDB plans to increase the tempo of this programme.

Mr Lawrence Wong: The Neighbourhood Renewal Programme (NRP) was launched in 2007 and will benefit about 200,000 eligible flats. In September 2014, the age criteria for the NRP was extended to include blocks built up to 1995, increasing the number of eligible flats by another 100,000. Thereafter, HDB had informed all Town Councils of the blocks that are eligible for the NRP. The pace of the NRP is dependent on the availability of resources to fund these programmes, and also the ability of the Town Councils to effectively implement and manage these projects on the ground.

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APPLICATIONS BY HOMELESS SINGAPOREANS FOR HDB RENTAL FLATS

26 **Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap** asked the Minister for National Development (a) from 2013 to 2015, how many applications have been made by homeless Singaporeans for a flat under (i) HDB's public rental scheme and (ii) HDB's interim rental housing scheme; (b) how many of such applications are successful; and (c) what follow-up measures are being put in place to ensure that unsuccessful applicants have a roof over their heads.

Mr Lawrence Wong: From 2013 to 2015, the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) provided shelter to about 900 individuals and families. Among them, 400

applied for a public rental flat. Around half of these applications were successful. This includes several who were provided with Interim Rental Housing (IRH), which is offered on a case-by-case basis and is not open for public application.

Those who were unsuccessful in their rental flat applications mostly had other housing options when they applied, such as being able to afford a flat or having family support. Some were existing owners, tenants or authorised occupiers of HDB flats, but who were no longer living in their current homes for a variety of reasons, for example, due to family disputes. For those who have no place to stay, MSF will work with the social service agencies to provide temporary shelter while they find alternative accommodation.

HDB, MSF and the social service agencies also work together to help individuals and families address the underlying causes of their housing instability. This may include counselling, financial assistance, employment support, and advice on their housing options. HDB will continue to exercise flexibility to provide rental flats for deserving cases.

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FLATS AVAILABLE UNDER HDB'S INTERIM RENTAL HOUSING SCHEME

27 **Mr Muhamad Faisal Bin Abdul Manap** asked the Minister for National Development (a) what is the number of rental flats that are presently made available under HDB's Interim Rental Housing Scheme (IRH); (b) how many families can the existing IRH scheme accommodate; and (c) whether the present number of rental flats is adequate to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society has a roof over their heads.

Mr Lawrence Wong: There are currently about 500 IRH flats which provide housing for 1,000 families on a flat-sharing basis.

HDB reviews its rental flat supply regularly to ensure that there are sufficient flats. This is why HDB has progressively increased the public rental flat supply from 42,000 in 2007 to the present 53,000 units, with the aim of reaching 60,000 by 2017. In addition, HDB evaluates applications carefully to ensure that rental flats are safeguarded for the lower income and vulnerable households.

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STATELESS PEOPLE LIVING IN PUBLIC RENTAL FLATS

28 **Mr Png Eng Huat** asked the Minister for National Development as of January 2016, what is the number of stateless people who are living in public rental flats.

Mr Lawrence Wong: As of January 2016, there are 613 stateless persons living in HDB public rental flats. Most live with their Singapore Citizen (SC) family members or another SC single.

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UPDATE ON PILOT MOE KINDERGARTEN PROJECT

29 **Dr Lim Wee Kiak** asked the Acting Minister for Education (Schools) if he will provide an update on the Ministry's pilot MOE Kindergarten project and the response to the Ministry's recruitment of pre-school educators.

Mr Ng Chee Meng: The MOE Kindergartens (MKs) were first set up in 2014 with the intent to provide quality and affordable pre-school education (PSE) to Singaporeans and catalyse quality improvements in kindergarten education. To date, there are 15 MKs of which 12 are located within our primary schools and the remaining three in community sites. All are situated in HDB heartlands for accessibility to children from a variety of backgrounds. The MKs currently serve a total of almost 1,700 children.

The MK positions, comprising Centre Heads, Deputy Centre Heads and teachers, have attracted the interest of both trained teachers from the sector, as well as fresh graduands from early childhood and care education courses. To better meet the manpower needs of the MKs and other providers in the pre-school sector, MOE has also partnered Singapore Polytechnic to pilot a full-time place and train programme to select suitable candidates and put them through the Diploma in Kindergarten Education. MOE will continue its efforts to attract and retain good MK educators.

Over the past two years, we have received consistent favourable feedback from parents that their children enjoy the learning activities and are eager to attend the MK. They shared that their children are better able to express themselves and are more independent, and conveyed their appreciation for the dedication of the teachers in providing a fun and engaging learning environment for their children.

MOE will continue to monitor the progress of the MKs in delivering a quality curriculum

that is relevant to the Singaporean child and work towards sharing good practices with the pre-school sector.

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CRITERIA FOR EDUSAVE MERIT AWARD

30 **Mr Zainal Sapari** asked the Acting Minister for Education (Schools) (a) what is the number of students in 2015 who are eligible for the Edusave Merit Award but who did not qualify because they exceeded the income eligibility criteria; and (b) whether the Ministry can consider giving these certificates to the students to affirm their achievements for being in the top 25% of the cohort stream.

Mr Ng Chee Meng: In 2015, about 47,000 students who met the Edusave Merit Bursary (EMB)'s academic criterion, i.e., they were in the top 25% of their level and course in school, did not apply for the EMB, likely because their families exceeded its income criterion.

All students who are eligible to apply for the EMB based on its academic criterion are currently issued a Certificate of Academic Achievement to recognise them for their good performance, regardless of whether they meet the income criterion. They receive this certificate when they are informed of their eligibility to apply for the EMB. Furthermore, students who perform well in various academic and non-academic domains can also strive for other Edusave Awards, which have no income criterion, such as the Edusave Scholarship, Edusave Good Progress Award, Edusave Character Award, and Edusave Award for Achievement, Good Leadership and Service (EAGLES).

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AVAILABILITY OF STUDENT CARE PLACES

31 **Mr Dennis Tan Lip Fong** asked the Acting Minister for Education (Schools) (a) how many student care places are currently available at schools; (b) how many places are available at places outside of schools; (c) what is the mean and median waiting list for student care places; and (d) what are the Ministry's plans to gauge demand and adapt supply to fit demand in future.

Mr Ng Chee Meng: The Ministry of Education (MOE) recognises that Student Care Centres (SCCs) provide important after-school support for students. Over the last four years, we

have steadily increased the number of school-based SCCs from fewer than 50 to 127, and the overall student enrolment from around 3,000 to more than 15,000.

Amongst SCCs registered with the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), around 300 are in community spaces, with a combined enrolment of over 12,000 students. These centres complement school-based SCCs in the provision of after-school care.

The average and median number of waitlisted students in school-based SCCs is smaller than 10. However, the waitlist situation varies from school to school. MOE will continue to work with MSF to monitor the demand for SCC places both in our schools and in the community. We will also work with our schools to facilitate the setting up of new SCCs as well as expanding enrolment for existing ones, at a pace that does not cause quality to be compromised.

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NUMBER OF JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS NOT PROCEEDING TO UNIVERSITIES AFTER GRADUATION

32 **Dr Lim Wee Kiak** asked the Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) for the past five years (a) how many junior college students do not go on to universities after their graduation; and (b) of these students, how many are male students who do not go on to universities after completing their national service.

Mr Ong Ye Kung: About three in 10 A-Level students who graduated from junior colleges from 2007 to 2011 chose not to or were unable to progress to a full-time programme in a local autonomous university (AU). This is about 4,400 students per year. Of which, about 1,600 per year, or two in five, were male students who have served their National Service. Most of the students who do not progress to the AUs have been pursuing other upgrading options based on their interest and strengths, such as polytechnics, arts institutions, overseas universities and private education institutions, or proceed to work.

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