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MEDIA RELEASE

COMCARE DISBURSED \$170 MILLION IN FY 2022 AS COVID-19 RECEDED

Amidst the economic and labour market recovery in 2022 as COVID-19 receded, fewer households needed ComCare assistance. The cash assistance provided per household increased, due to regular adjustments to ComCare support.

Fewer ComCare beneficiaries in FY2022

2 Around 36,400 households received ComCare assistance in FY2022. This is a 18%-21% decrease from FY2021 and FY2020 respectively, when the number of ComCare households went up during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3 The decrease was mainly driven by the drop in households receiving Short-to-Medium Term Assistance (SMTA) amidst the economic and labour market recovery in 2022. Singapore's resident unemployment rate fell from 4.1% in 2020 to 2.9% in 2022, while the proportion of SMTA households with a main applicant who was seeking employment decreased from 22% in FY2020 to 15% in FY2022. Households whose members entered jobs that provided sufficient income for their basic needs in FY2022 would not have needed ComCare assistance.

More cash assistance provided to households

4 MSF disbursed \$170 million in ComCare cash assistance in FY2022, 11% less than the \$191 million disbursed in FY2021. Disbursements also remained above the pre-COVID annual average of around \$136 million from FY2017 to FY2019.

5 Households on ComCare received a higher level of cash assistance on average in FY2022 compared to previous years. This was because MSF had implemented various measures to enhance support for ComCare clients in FY2022.

- a. In response to inflationary pressures from supply chain disruptions and the conflict in Ukraine, all new ComCare SMTA clients between April and

September 2022 received at least six months of assistance. Clients who renewed their SMTA during the same period received at least three additional months of assistance. SSOs also exercised greater flexibility to provide clients with more assistance when needed. This complemented the Government's broader efforts to help Singaporeans cope with cost-of-living concerns, such as the Household Support Package and enhancements to the Assurance Package.

- b. MSF also increased the assistance quanta for ComCare SMTA and Long-Term Assistance (LTA) from 1 August 2022, following our regular ComCare reviews. A one-person household on ComCare LTA now receives \$640 per month, up from \$600. SMTA households also received higher cash assistance and support for their utility expenses. These reviews reference price data from the Department of Statistics and other sources, and factor in projected inflation.

Making ComCare Assistance More Convenient, Comprehensive, Coordinated

6 MSF continues to make it more convenient for families to apply for ComCare and other assistance:

- a. Since May 2022, ComCare SMTA applications can be made online via the SupportGoWhere portal.
- b. Starting from April 2022, we progressively rolled out ComCare scheme bundles to automatically refer or qualify eligible clients for MSF's Student Care Fee Assistance (SCFA), MOE's Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS), MOH's Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS), IMDA's Digital Access@Home scheme, and MOE's Higher Education Bursary (HEB) and Higher Education Community Bursary (HECB).

7 We also review the scope, coverage, and payout quanta of ComCare schemes regularly for them to remain relevant and adequate. As part of these regular reviews, the per capita household income benchmark for ComCare was raised from ≤\$650 to ≤\$800 in July 2023.

8 Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, said: "While the number of households needing ComCare assistance dropped as the impact of COVID-19 receded, the amount given to each household rose on average. We had introduced temporary measures and increased ComCare assistance rates in 2022 to provide more support amidst inflationary pressures. The Government will continue to monitor developments that may affect livelihoods in Singapore, particularly those of lower-income families. To continue our efforts to ensure social support remains relevant and adequate, we will enhance ComCare coverage and access, where necessary."

9 If you encounter a neighbour, friend, or family member who needs support, you can call the ComCare hotline at 1800-222-0000 or refer them to the nearest SSO or Family

Service Centre for assistance. Those looking to make a difference in the lives of families and individuals in need can visit the MSFCare Network portal to explore volunteering opportunities that match their preferred causes and interest areas.



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