

Chapter 7

The Way Forward

1. An ageing population is a demographic reality which Singapore, like many other countries, will have to confront in the future. It will bring challenges to our society, and we must make preparations now to meet these challenges.

2. Since the 1980s, Singapore has taken steps to address ageing-related issues. In particular, following the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Ageing Population report which was published in 1999, we have redoubled our efforts, and much has been achieved in the last five years. Training initiatives by the Ministry of Manpower have expanded the employment opportunities of older workers. Housing policies continue to promote the social integration of our seniors, by not segregating them from the community at large, while allowing them to “age-in-place”. Efforts to improve barrier-free accessibility in the built environment and transport system are underway. A range of community healthcare and eldercare programmes and services have been put in place, to support families in caregiving and provide opportunities for our senior citizens to be engaged in society.

3. Yet more remains to be done. In fact, we need to step-up efforts over the next five years, before the “baby-boom” generation reaches 65 years of age and bring about a more rapid pace of population ageing. The issues are also becoming more complex and intricate because of Singapore’s changing population profile as well as changing expectations and preferences.

4. The CAI report represents an effort by the Government, people and private sectors, by voluntary welfare organizations, media and academic members, working together to chart a course for the future. This “Many Helping Hands” approach offers us the best chance of success in tackling such a complex, multi-faceted and cross-sectoral issue.

5. Completion of the report is only a first step in an ongoing process. Implementation of the recommendations will again require all parties to continue to work closely together. The Government needs to adopt an integrated approach and encourage greater coordination and collaboration between agencies. It needs to set policy direction, provide resources and address the legislative requirements where necessary. Equally, if not more important, is the need for community support and ownership of ageing concerns. Individuals have a responsibility to help seniors living among us, to exercise patience and offer assistance when needed. Organizations can, for example, give feedback and adopt human resource practices that support employees in caring for their older family members. Hospitals can work with community eldercare providers to provide seamless care for seniors.

6. It would be wrong to view seniors as a burden to society. They are not. Seniors, with their knowledge and experience, provide a vast potential of resources. The baby boomers could unleash one of the most untapped human resources and play critical roles in ensuring a vibrant Singapore, from the economic to the social sectors. The recommendations of the CAI are aimed at harnessing the value and contributions of seniors to benefit themselves and society in general.

7. Moving forward, the CAI will continue to be an advocate and champion for seniors, and continue to consider and make recommendations on ageing-related issues. CAI will also work with the Government on refinements to the recommendations to facilitate their implementation. It will be supported by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports as the Committee's Secretariat. The CAI hopes that it will continue to have the support of all sectors in our society, as it strives to achieve the vision of 'Successful Ageing for Singapore'.