

MEDIA RELEASE
8 FEBRUARY 2006
COMMITTEE ON AGEING ISSUES PUSHES FOR
FOUR OUTCOMES TO ACHIEVE
SUCCESSFUL AGEING FOR SINGAPORE

1. To prepare for an ageing population, the Government should work with the private and people sectors to achieve **four outcomes**: provide a range of elder-friendly housing, make Singapore a barrier-free society, provide holistic and affordable eldercare and healthcare services, and encourage seniors to lead active lifestyles.
2. This was the call made by the Committee on Ageing Issues (CAI), who presented to the Government today 39 recommendations to achieve “Successful Ageing for Singapore”. The CAI comprises representatives from the people, private and government sectors, and was set up in December 2004 to make policy recommendations to prepare Singapore for an ageing population.
3. The eight key recommendations by the CAI are listed below.

OUTCOME 1: ELDER-FRIENDLY HOUSING

4. The CAI proposed **varying the length of land leases as shorter land leases facilitates the development of retirement housing** [1] as another housing option for seniors. This will meet the different preferences of a diverse group of seniors.
5. Singapore is a nation of home owners. **Reverse mortgage schemes should be offered to elderly HDB flat lessees at commercial terms** [2] so that seniors would be able to monetise their homes to meet other needs in old age, whilst retaining a roof over their heads.

OUTCOME 2: BARRIER-FREE SOCIETY

6. The CAI recommended that **all HDB housing estates should be barrier-free [3]**, in an effort to make Singapore an “Accessible City”. Such an enabling environment must provide seniors with unhindered access from homes to public amenities, communal and recreational facilities. To achieve this, there should be more ramps, step-free pathways and roads flushed with pavements in our housing estates.

7. The CAI would also like **all new buses in Singapore to be low-floor, step-free and wheelchair accessible [4]** to complement the efforts to bring about a barrier-free physical environment and rail system. This measure will also benefit other user groups like disabled persons in wheelchair and families with young children in prams.

OUTCOME 3: HOLISTIC AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE AND ELDERCARE

8. The CAI also proposed that the **Government should top up the Medisave accounts of less well-off Singaporeans when there are budget surpluses [5]** to help the elderly defray healthcare costs.

9. In order that seniors will have access to healthcare and eldercare services that are easy to use, convenient and close by, the CAI proposed that **family physicians play a greater role in the management of healthcare needs of seniors [6]**. This will allow seniors with multiple conditions to visit one doctor instead of a few different doctors for all of his/her healthcare needs.

OUTCOME 4: ACTIVE LIFESTYLES AND WELL-BEING

10. The CAI recommended that the **Government set up a \$10 million GO! Fund (Golden Opportunities! Fund) to seed more programmes and activities for seniors and by seniors [7]** so that they can participate actively and continue to contribute to society. This complements the Committee's recommendations to provide elder-friendly exercise equipment in all sports facilities and within housing estates, and provide more learning opportunities for seniors at our universities and polytechnics. These recommendations will encourage seniors to pursue the lifestyle of their choice, be it sports, learning, or contributing through volunteering in social organisations.

11. Finally, the CAI recommended that the **Government continues to build on strong family ties to ensure that the family continues to be the first line of support [8]** by fostering strong bonds between generations. Intergenerational bonding can be promoted through the provision of family recreational areas in HDB housing estates, support to service providers in the development of intergenerational programmes, and greater public awareness of intergenerational cohesion through public campaigns.

12. Currently, one in 12 people in Singapore is above 65 years of age. By 2030, it is expected that one in five will be above 65 years. The CAI noted that if the people, private and public sectors work together to make early preparations, growing old in Singapore can be a pleasant and fulfilling experience.

13. The full report is attached and may also be read at www.mcys.gov.sg/successful_ageing. The various Government ministries are studying the report and are expected to respond to the 39 recommendations in the coming weeks.

Committee on Ageing Issues
c/o CAI Secretariat, MCYS