

**PRE-BUDGET 2025 YOUTH CONVERSATION - SUMMARY NOTES**  
**14 JANUARY 2025, 7.00PM - 9.00PM**  
**ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM, RIVER ROOM**

On 14 January 2025, 110 youths from diverse backgrounds gathered to discuss the considerations behind crafting the Budget 2025 policies.

The conversation was part of MCCY-NYC's series of SG60 engagements, which will lead to the development of the SG Youth Plan (SGYP). SGYP is a five-year action plan – created by youths, for youths – which will hold the hopes and aspirations of all youths, and to turn ideas into reality and turn passion into action with support from the rest of society.

Participants shared their views in a breakout discussion and heard from the panellists on the Budget themes: (i) SG60: Building Our Singapore Together, (ii) Developing a More Vibrant Business Ecosystem, (iii) Providing Opportunities for Skills Upgrading and Jobs for Workers, and (iv) Supporting Singaporeans Across Different Life Stages.

The session was co-organised by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) and the National Youth Council (NYC), and involved the following panellists:

- Ms Indranee Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, and Second Minister for Finance and National Development
- Mr Shawn Huang, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Finance and Education
- (Moderator) Ms Lim Kai Ning, #JobHacks Youth Panel member and co-founder of The Courage Chapter

**Context Setting on the SG Youth Plan**

The moderator began the session with a two-part Slido poll: "What do you imagine your ideal Singapore to be like?" and "My ideal Singapore would also be...".

The top result (82%) was "A society that values different definitions and pathways to success", and a Singapore that is "harmonious" and "inclusive".

**What do you imagine your ideal Singapore to be like? Select all that apply.**



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My ideal Singapore would also be...

Wordcloud Poll 92 responses 52 participants

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The moderator shared that NYC and its partners were embarking on a year-long series of engagements with youths and stakeholders, one of which was this Pre-Budget 2025 Youth Conversation, to develop the SGYP. She said that the SGYP was an action blueprint created by youths, for youths and for the world that they will lead, which builds on previous youth engagements by NYC and People's Association and will engage a wider spectrum of youths and whole-of-society stakeholders. She said that the SGYP will hold the hopes and aspirations of young Singaporeans with the intention of building the future Singapore they want to see by catalysing more opportunities, platforms, and resources for youths and others to take action together.

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**Key insights from the breakout discussions and panel dialogue**

**Theme: SG60 - Building Our Singapore Together**

*Issue: SG60 offers Singaporeans a chance to reflect on shared values, strengthen national identity, and renew their commitment to build a better and brighter shared future for all.*

**Discussion points from breakout groups:**

- Participants said that Singapore's national identity was characterised by its multicultural diversity, resilient spirit, stable governance, and unique cultural elements such as Singlish.
- Participants said that cultural appreciation was key to embracing diversity in Singapore and raised concerns about potential societal divisions such as anti-immigration sentiments.
- Participants suggested bringing back the “kampung spirit” to build stronger connections and extend inclusivity beyond race and religion. They called for more initiatives such as community engagements and volunteering opportunities.
- Min Indranee emphasised the importance of open-mindedness, collaboration and mutual learning between individuals, communities and generations as ways to overcome societal challenges. She encouraged youths to embody values of multiculturalism and inclusivity through active community engagement.

**Key insights from panel dialogue:**

*Participants asked (via Slido) on how wheelchair users could be more integrated in the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)'s Enabling Masterplan 2030.*

- Min Indranee shared that the Government was actively working on enhancing physical infrastructure by improving wheelchair accessibility and creating a barrier-free environment through a new building code on accessibility. An updated draft of the building codes had been released in December 2024 to make Singapore barrier-free.
- Min Indranee added that beyond infrastructure, the Government focused on fostering inclusivity and open-mindedness, such as hiring individuals with diverse needs to create a society with equal opportunities for all, in both physical spaces and workplaces.
- SPS Huang elaborated on the Government's efforts to provide equal learning opportunities for persons with disabilities and special needs. These efforts included initiatives such as building new schools like Pathlight, establishing Enabling Hubs, and setting up Enabling Business Hubs to support inclusion and accessibility across different domains.

**Theme: Developing a More Vibrant Business Ecosystem**

*Issue: Singapore needs to leverage its strengths and overcome resource constraints to boost economic growth, create quality jobs, and enhance productivity and innovation.*

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**Discussion points from breakout groups:**

- Participants said that businesses needed more guided support beyond funding, such as information on expanding supply chains, to help them expand regionally and globally.
- Participants suggested moderating the entry of foreign businesses into Singapore, to ensure local businesses are still able to thrive.
- Min Indranee said that the Government's role was generally to intervene in cases of market failure and not to teach the private sector how to do business. The Government was focused on helping to catalyse business growth by helping businesses innovate and encouraging citizens to upskill, such as through the "SMEs Go Digital" programme which supports small businesses to compete effectively.

**Key insights from panel dialogue:**

*Participants asked (via Slido) how the Government would ensure that everyone had equal opportunities in Singapore's highly competitive job market.*

- SPS Huang said that there were now various educational pathways that allowed Singaporeans to progress differently. He said that youths could leverage unique experiences like overseas internships to help them stand out, and highlighted the importance of developing both diverse experiences and technical skills.
- Min Indranee encouraged participants not to focus only on qualifications as many employers focused on a candidate's interview performance, and looked for traits such as authenticity, initiative and teamwork.

**Theme: Providing Opportunities for Skills Upgrading and Jobs for Workers**

*Issue: Amidst technological advancement and disruption, Singaporean workers need to continuously adapt and upskill to remain competitive.*

**Discussion points from breakout groups:**

- Participants brought up key concerns about volatile job markets, unequal access to job opportunities, and not being able to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Participants shared the importance of having a well-rounded approach in preparing students and workers to secure good jobs amidst economic uncertainties. They said that holistic development (beyond hard skills) was needed to allow workers to be more adaptable and able to thrive in a dynamic and uncertain economy.
- Participants said that while they recognised the importance of remaining updated with skills that complemented the use of AI, they were also concerned about AI replacing jobs such as Accounting.
- Min Indranee assured participants that while AI could transform industries, human judgment remained essential, and it would not displace individuals who knew how to use it. A part of the Budget was allocated to the national AI strategy, and programmes and policies to ensure that Singaporeans would be sufficiently equipped to work with AI.

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**Key insights from panel dialogue:**

*Participants asked (via Slido) what were some ways to inculcate resilience and a growth mindset within educational institutions.*

- Min Indranee highlighted the importance of continuous learning, supported by schemes like SkillsFuture. She noted that initiatives such as Values in Action aims to nurture socially responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to the community, and help students develop character and social responsibility alongside their academic pursuits.
- SPS Huang said that there had been a significant shift in Singapore's education and employment landscape to equitably accommodate diverse pathways for individuals at all stages of life, such as opportunities beyond traditional schooling in the form of work-study programmes and overseas internships.

**Theme: Supporting Singaporeans Across Different Life Stages**

*Issue: To ensure that Singapore remains a home for all generations, it is essential to refresh the social compact to provide comprehensive support for Singaporeans at every stage of life, fostering inclusivity and a sense of belonging.*

**Discussion points from breakout groups:**

- Participants shared that the low birth rate in Singapore could be attributed to the high cost of living and shifting societal values, such as prioritising self-love and personal freedom over traditional family structures.
- Participants highlighted the need for mindset shifts and support such as non-discriminatory workplace policies, flexible work arrangements, and financial assistance to support family building and caregiving responsibilities amidst a competitive and ageing society.
- Participants shared that creating inclusive infrastructure and programmes for seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers was crucial to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for meaningful participation in society.

**Key insights from Panel Dialogue:**

*Participants asked (via Slido) if there were plans to support young adults who were shouldering the responsibility of helping their families escape the poverty cycle.*

- SPS Huang said that the Government focused on empowering citizens and providing equal opportunities to all through the creation of multiple educational pathways, such as the progression from ITE to work-study diplomas and potentially university degrees thereafter.
- SPS Huang said that regardless of their starting point, youths could tap on the various support measures available such as SkillsFuture credits and opportunities for overseas exchanges and internships.

**Closing Remarks by Panellists**

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- Min Indranee noted that the youths were looking forward to an inclusive Budget and encouraged youths to leverage their unique strengths and embrace lifelong learning to navigate Singapore's evolving challenges.
- SPS Huang urged participants to "find the heart to do the right and better things for others" and to actively contribute towards building a resilient and inclusive Singapore.

Notes recorded by the NYC Youth Leadership and Engagement team.