

Matrix of AWARE's concerns, recommendations and questions in relation to allocations in Budget 2012 as well as comments by Ministers and MPs

AWARE's concerns and recommendations		Allocations in Budget 2012 relevant to AWARE's recommendations	AWARE's questions	Comments by Ministers & MPs in Parliament	Other supportive budgetary allocations not in AWARE's recommendations
AWARE's 1st concern: Comprehensive healthcare for an ageing population					
1	Free Medishield coverage for life	Increasing Medishield coverage to 90	<p>Why are we stopping at 90?</p> <p>Tharman Shanmugaratnam (Minister for Finance): "More Singaporeans are living to 90 and beyond".</p> <p>A further question to the Minister for Health (see column on the right): If some people above 90 are going to drop out because of expensive premiums, then why not let them do so? At least make the option of Medishield available to those who can afford it.</p>	<p>Gan Kim Yong (Minister for Health and Govt Whip): "Be very cautious to extend Medishield beyond 90, as there is limited risk-pooling at ages far beyond the life expectancy, which currently stands at 82. With the small number of people with a higher risk profile, the premiums can be very expensive and they may become unaffordable for some and they will drop out of the scheme. Nonetheless, we will study how we can help those above 90 in other ways."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher CPF contribution rates for older workers and older self-employed persons • Higher income tax relief for older workers • Silver housing bonus • Enhanced lease buy-back scheme • GST voucher system for elderly households staying in 1 to 3 room HDB flats.
2	Periodic top-ups of Medisave accounts from budgetary surpluses in proportion to the age of the recipient as well as household income	One-off Medisave top-up			
3	Govt's portion of health care expenditure should be increased to at least 20%	More hospital beds: by 2020 the no. of beds will increase by 30% in acute hospitals and by >100% in community hospitals.	<p>Does increased spending on hospital beds alone produce better health outcomes?</p> <p>Would better health outcomes be achieved through a healthcare system organised around the needs of patients and the population, rather than the needs of professionals</p>		

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		and healthcare organisations?		
4	\$600 million Medifund top-up			
5	Higher subsidies in the intermediate and long-term care sector – all patients in community hospitals will now qualify for govt subsidies. Middle-income group will receive the largest increase in subsidy rates. Subsidies of nursing homes, community and home-based care will also be raised. Two-thirds of Singaporean households will qualify for subsidies, up from 50% currently.			
6	New subsidy for installing elderly-friendly features in homes – at least 95% of cost.			
7	Expansion of long term and community-based care will be expanded significantly by 2020.			
8	GST absorption for intermediate and long-term care sector			
9	Make mandatory a specific percentage of a husband's CPF to be deposited into his stay-at-home wife's Medisave account	<p>Why is no attention paid to the fact that many women do not have enough Medisave?</p> <p>At retirement, women have less than half of the CPF that men have and therefore significantly less</p>		

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			Medisave. 2001: 30% of men but only 7% of women could rely on their own Medisave.		
10	Increase the recruitment and training of adequate staff in numbers and expertise to match Government's initiative to increase the number of eldercare centres	Not addressed	How will the increased number of eldercare centres be staffed?		
11	Waiting time for admission into a nursing home should be shortened significantly/	Not addressed	Is the current waiting time of 49 days to remain?		
12	Subsidies given for the long-term care of elderly family members, on the same basis as for the childcare subsidy which is pegged to the monthly income of \$3500.	Not addressed	Why is long-term care of the elderly not recognised on the same basis as the care of children?		
13	Singles – men or women – who are caregivers and who employ FDW should be given tax relief on the levy they pay to MOM	\$120/mth grant (for lower and middle-income families) for hiring a foreign domestic helper to care for an elderly member at home.	Does this subsidy support caregivers (usually women) who take time off work (fully or partially) to take care of their elders because they cannot afford to hire a domestic worker even with the subsidy?		
14	Subsidies for regular caregivers of the elderly should recognise that the caregivers may be part of an extended family, rather than only immediate family members.	Not addressed	Who will be eligible for this subsidy? Will it extend to elderly people who live alone and others cared for by extended kin or friends?		
AWARE's 2nd concern: Comprehensive support of lower income and vulnerable groups					
15	Public spending on social programmes should be restored to the pre-1990 level of around 20% of GDP and should gradually increase in the next few years to around	Not addressed	What is the percentage of public spending in Budget 2012? • Historic trend: public		

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25% as the population ages.		<p>spending decreased from about 25% in 1980s to about 20% in 1990s to 16% of GDP in 2011.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smallest proportion among developed economies, including HK, S Korea, Taiwan • GDP increased by more than 5 times since 1990s. 		
16	<p>Increase the maximum qualifying average monthly income to include those up to the 30th percentile</p>	<p>Household incomes of the Ministry of Education financial assistance schemes for schools will be raised. All families who meet either the gross household income ceiling of \$2,500 or the per capita income cap of \$625 will qualify for subsidies. Will benefit an additional 40,000 students.</p>	<p>Are subsidies for school-children enough to deal with the real wage declines in the bottom 3 deciles and wage stagnation in the next 2 higher deciles?</p> <p>Why are other low-income people excluded – singles, single mothers, couples without children, families without children of school-going ages?</p>	<p>GST voucher – permanent system of offsets. State has set aside \$3.6 billion to finance the scheme for the first five years.</p>
17	<p>The Student Care Fee Assistance scheme will be enhanced and extended to help more lower-income families with monthly household income of up \$3,500. Larger families will also benefit from the new per capita household income criterion. The enhancements to SCFA will benefit 3,700 children.</p>			
18	<p>A new per capita household income criterion for the Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme and the Centre-based Fee As-</p>			

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	sistance for Childcare			
19	Eligibility criteria for ComCare and Public Assistance should be revised upwards to include household incomes of more than \$1,500 per month up to 30 th percentile	Not mentioned in Budget 2012 but	<p>.....▶</p> <p>Chan Chu Sing (Acting Minister for Community, Youth & Sport, MCYS; Minister of State for Information, Communication and the Arts, MI-CA): “We will raise the monthly household income criterion for ComCare assistance for these groups from \$1,500 to \$1,700....</p> <p>...We will raise the per capita income criterion to \$550, so that more of such families can be assisted as we take their circumstances and burden into account.</p> <p>We will make similar adjustments to the Citizen’s Consultative Committee (CCC) ComCare fund, which provides temporary help at the constituency level.</p> <p>...This year, we will extend the PA scheme to more needy senior citizens. Some have children who are low-income earners themselves. We will raise the children’s monthly income criterion from \$1,000 to \$1,500, so that more elderly needy with adult children who are themselves in need will be eligible for Public Assistance.</p> <p>There are also seniors with no family support but who have some regular payout although these may not be sufficient for basic living expenses. In 2010, we extended the PA scheme to those receiving CPF payouts lower than the PA rate....</p>	

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			<p>From April, needy elderly with non-CPF income sources below the PA rate will also be eligible for Public Assistance. These can include pensioners, and those receiving small payouts under the Lease Buy Back Scheme or ElderShield. Under PA, they can receive an additional cash grant over and above their pension or payouts. With these enhancements, ComCare will reach out to many more Singaporeans. In FY 2011, MCYS disbursed about \$70 million through ComCare to help about 67,000 families. With these changes, we expect to disburse another \$20 million each year, for an additional 15,000 beneficiaries.”</p>	
20	Financial assistance and other social support currently available to Singaporean women should be made available to the foreign wives of Singaporeans when they are in distress as they are without any other form of support or safety net, apart from their own husbands	Not mentioned in Budget 2012 but ▶ Will foreign wives eventually be able to apply for foreign assistance and other social support?	<p>Teo Chee Hean (Deputy PM): Long Term Visit Pass-Plus will be given to foreign wives with at least one Singaporean child. A foreign wife without a Singaporean child will be evaluated by the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority.</p> <p>Benefits of the LTVP+:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-year stay in the first instance, renewable for up to 5 years per renewal (instead of 1-year stay) • Health-care subsidies for in-patient services at restructured hospitals • Able to work subject to prospective employer obtaining MOM's letter of consent, without being counted as foreign 	

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				workers	
21	Payouts of the workfare income supplement should be divided equally between cash and CPF to meet the immediate needs of those in financial distress.	Not addressed	As the cash portion of workfare is less than half of the amount paid to the person's CPF account the WIS, is there sufficient support for the immediate needs of those with low income?		
22	Increase the amount of WIS to take into account the impact of inflation.	Not addressed			
23	Financial assistance should take the inflation rate into account and should be adjusted annually	Not addressed			
24	With reference to the ILO-UN social protection floor initiative, a comprehensive approach to national social security strategy should be designed, based on a diagnosis of priority needs. This would help Singapore to balance its increasingly advanced economic development with the amelioration of the negative effects of widening income inequality.	Not addressed			
AWARE's 3rd concern: Widened access to subsidies for infant care and childcare					
25	Access to childcare subsidies, motherhood benefits and housing benefits should be widened to include all mothers, without discrimination against unwed mothers or stay-at-home mothers	Not addressed		Janil Puthucheary(MP, Pasir Ris - Punggol GRC): "Single unwed mothers face many challenges and are unable to claim some benefits that other lawfully wedded mothers do. One of these benefits is to be covered under the Child Development Co-Savings Act which entitles the mother to a total of 16 weeks of maternity leave. Sir, the current poli-	

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			<p>cies made may correctly seek to reinforce the role that the single woman's parents play in supporting the family unit. However, maternity leave could be seen primarily as being of benefit to the infant. Women who have adequate maternity leave are more likely to fully breast feed for the recommended time, with this having significant long-term benefits to the child in terms of growth, development and bonding with the parents. These beneficial effects cannot be addressed in any other way except by allowing the mother and the infant to spend time together.</p> <p>While there are provisions for mothers to claim more maternity benefits if they subsequently marry, this is a narrow view, only addresses the concept of reward, and does not in any way provide for the needs of the infant in the first four months' life. We should not deny a Singaporean child equal access to his mother in the early days of his life. Would the Ministry review extending full maternity leave benefits to all Singaporean children, regardless of the status of their mothers?"</p>	
26	More childcare facilities at workplaces should be promoted	Not addressed	Gan Thiam Poh (MP, Pasir Ris – Punggol GRC): "With more women being encouraged to join the workforce, measures must be in place to ensure that we have enough affordable childcare centres in convenient locations affording good quality	

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			<p>care. Many young couples have expressed reservations about having more children as they are not confident that they will be able to provide good care with both parents and increasingly grandparents active in the workforce. Hence, I would like to request that the Government consider regulating and possibly standardising the fees at childcare centres. At the same time, would the Ministry consider providing more generous increases in childcare subsidies to make the fees more affordable for Singaporeans? Hopefully, this will encourage Singaporeans to have more babies. In addition, would the Government explore the possibilities of expanding the capacity of schools to incorporate the provision of childcare and before and after school care services by the operators? This will provide a convenient service to many parents with children in different age groups.”</p>	
27	Infant care should be expanded and made more affordable.	Not addressed		
28	A high quality of childcare services should be assured to encourage mother to return to work.	Not addressed		
29	Flexible working arrangements should be promoted by providing more effective incentives to employers to introduce such measures.	Not addressed		
30	Paid paternity leave of two weeks should be made mandatory.	Not addressed		
31	Single fathers with dependent children	Not addressed		

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	should qualify for the same tax relief on the levy given to female employers of foreign domestic workers.				
32	One month of the current four-month maternity leave should be converted to parental leave to be taken by either spouse.	Not addressed			
33	Active parenting by men should be promoted and misinformed stereotypes of fatherhood and manhood should be dispelled.	Not addressed			
AWARE's 4th concern: Enabling persons with disabilities to be equal members of an inclusive society					
34	The Government should provide free or subsidized medical benefits for persons with disability.	Better adult care subsidies for Singaporeans with disabilities will be aligned with those for the elderly. The capacity of day activity centres for the disabled and disability homes will be increased by 250 places (25% increase) and 180 beds (or 21% increase) respectively.	How would increasing the no. of places or beds in day activity centres and disability homes provide medical benefits for disabled persons? Why is special employment credit given only to employers of SPED graduates? Why are there no incentives given to employ disabled people who are not SPED graduates? (See 2 nd bullet point on the right.)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-school children with mild speech, language and learning delays will be able to receive learning support intervention and if necessary therapy intervention to help them while they are in mainstream pre-schools Extension of special employment credit to employers that hire Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) of all ages who have graduated from VWO-run Special Education (SPED) schools regardless of age. The SEC for PWDs will be at 16% of the employee's monthly income, up to \$240/mth. Extension of workfare

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				<p>income supplement to all PWDs who have graduated from VWO-run SPED schools regardless of age. About 1,400 work-capable PWDs will benefit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handicapped earned income tax relief for disabled workers of all ages will be doubled effectively YA2013. About 1,000 PWDs will benefit.
35	Not addressed	Have persons with disabilities been consulted at any stage about their transport needs?		
36	Not addressed			
37	Not addressed	<p>How will the livelihoods of people with disabilities be supported, other than SPED graduates whose employment is being encouraged?</p> <p>How are unemployed disabled people supposed to meet their daily needs?</p>		
38	Not mentioned in Budget 2012 but▶	Vikram Nair (MP, Sembawang GRC): "In looking after the needs of people with disabilities, it is also equally important to keep in mind another group: the care-givers. The 31-member member Enabling Master Plan Steering Committee pre-	

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			<p>sent a 300-page report to the Acting MCYS Minister last month. The report aims to address the needs of persons with disabilities as well as their care-givers. I believe that there were 41 recommendations in that report on how to better integrate a person with disability in society.</p> <p>I understand from newspaper reports that MCYS has already begun working on several of the recommendations such as transport for the disabled. I just wanted to get greater clarity on how the MCYS intends to follow up on other key recommendations and which ones it intends to implement....</p> <p>In families where potential care-givers, such as parents, are no longer in a position or able to provide for children because it may well be the case that the children outlive their parents, what assistance can be provided for these persons going forward?"</p> <p>Halimah Yacob (Minister of State for Community, Youth and Sport, MCYS) responded as follows:</p> <p>"Let me share with you, Sir, how we will be doing this in three main areas – first and the most important, is to provide information and referral. As a first stop, families can turn to the Centre for Enabled Living (CEL) established by MCYS. Families can find information on elderly and dis-</p>	

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			<p>ability care services, financial assistance schemes and caregiver training programmes, through its website. Those who are less comfortable with the Internet can also call CEL's helpline – 1800 8585 885. In the coming years, CEL will improve its case coordination so that elderly, adults with disabilities and their families can get help in putting together care plans that meet their needs, and fit their circumstances.</p> <p>Second, we will do more to improve caregiver training.... This will improve the quality of care for elderly. Caregivers can also gain more confidence that they are taking proper care of their elderly family members, thus reducing their anxiety and stress.</p> <p>CEL has been working with VWOs and other training providers to develop more of such training courses. They will be in English, Mandarin, Malay or Tamil to cater to various caregivers. Together, they expect to train up to 10,000 caregivers this year. We will continue to subsidise these courses with the Caregiver Training Grant. CEL will also administer the new additional \$120 per month Foreign Domestic Worker (FDW) grant. This will cover families with a per capita income of up to \$2,200, who look after their elderly with high care needs.</p> <p>Sir, they include those with severe dementia who cannot perform three</p>	

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			<p>or more Activities of Daily Living, such as not being able to feed themselves, bathe, use the toilet, or move around independently. We are budgeting about \$25 million over the next five years for this purpose. We will require their foreign domestic helpers to go for caregiver training. CEL will launch the new FDW grant in the third quarter of this year.</p> <p>Finally, on the support for caregivers, we will provide more respite options. Apart from IDFs and En-suite Social Home-based Care services...., CEL will also look at how it can develop more support services, such as counselling and elder-sitter programmes, to address the psycho-emotional stresses that caregivers often experience.</p>	
39	Measures to protect women and girls with disabilities from all forms of violence at home and in the community should be promoted in all institutions, services and programmes	Not addressed		
40	The effectiveness of the Open Door Fund grants should be monitored so as to increase the number of companies willing to hire persons with disabilities.	Not addressed	Ms Denise Phua Lay Peng (MP, Moulmein-Kallang GRC): "Let me first thank the MCYS Minister and his team for the strong support of the latest Enabling Masterplan for the Disabled. I seek a status update on how the team might track and report on the Plan's progress in the future. Next, the need for a Master plan - MCYS has allocated a budget of \$2.1 billion; small com-	

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			<p>pared to MINDEF's budget of \$12 billion. I believe that MCYS is in fact the best defence for Singapore with its mission to build a cohesive and resilient society. However, in budgetary terms, many of us are not certain if Singapore's cohesion and resilience reflects a position of break even, surplus or deficit."</p> <p>Tan Chin Siong (Senior Parliament Sec, Ministry for Foreign Affairs & MCYS, Mayor of Central Singapore District): "Following feedback from the Enabling Masterplan Committee, we have reviewed the Open Door Fund, including simplifying the application process, approval processing time as well as the length of application forms. These changes will take place with immediate effect.</p> <p>[On SPED] Some Members have raised concerns that the schemes are confined to only SPED graduands. During the past week's Budget Debate, we heard Ms Denise Phua and Ms Jessica Tan's suggestion for persons with disabilities who have not attended or graduated from SPED schools to receive the Special Employment Credit. Allow me a brief moment to explain our thinking on this. The SPED school criterion was meant to target the group of persons with disabilities who are more likely to encounter difficulties finding employment and earning a reasonable wage.... Nonetheless, we appreciate that there may be other individuals</p>	

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			<p>who have not attended SPED schools. So I would like to assure Ms Phua and Ms Tan that equally deserving applicants who face difficulties can come into the scheme, even if they have not attended SPED schools. So we intend to use the existing SNSS Committee to evaluate such exception cases.... So, we hope to reach out to more...enlightened employers and encourage them to sign up with the Open Door Fund.”</p>	
41	Housing grants should be given for persons with disabilities who choose to live independently	Not addressed		
AWARE's 5th concern: A publicly available database of vulnerable groups in Singapore society				
42	Research resources with scientific support should be mobilised to collect data of vulnerable groups in Singapore, so as to provide data that is sufficiently detailed, consistent, regularly updated and disaggregated by sex, age and citizenship.	Not addressed	<p>Why are there no reliable statistics on vulnerable groups in Singapore, -- sufficiently detailed, consistent, regularly updated and disaggregated by sex, age and citizenship?</p> <p>Why was the Central Registry of Disabled Persons closed in 1987?</p> <p>This was, in any case, only a register of users of disability services? Why is there no full register of persons with disabilities?</p>	

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43	Data on the prevalence rate of disability in Singapore should be collected and analysed systematically, with a periodic review of the definition of 'disability' to ensure ongoing relevance.	Not addressed			
44	Data should specify the degree to which the health and well-being of different sectors of the population are being compromised, including their exposures to risk factors, as well as an assessment of whether their needs are adequately met by current provisions.	Not addressed			
45	Analysis of the disaggregated data should be undertaken at regular intervals to monitor situational dynamics and to make policy adjustments to meet changing needs.	Not addressed			
46	This database of vulnerable groups should be made available to the public, together with clear documentation of budget allocations to the different groups.	Not addressed			