

**SPEECH BY GUEST-OF-HONOUR MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI,
MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER RESOURCES &
MP FOR TAMPINES GRC AT THE LAUNCH OF SINGAPORE RED CROSS
COMMUNITY HEALTH ON WHEELS ON 29 JULY 2018**

Good afternoon.

The rapidly aging population in Singapore brings about many challenges that as a community we have to resolve in the coming years. Today, there are 450,000 people above 65, and by 2030 - that's in 12 years, and many of us will still be alive - the number will double. There will be another 450,000 people aged above 65, making a total of 900,000 seniors. For every person above 65, the medical cost of supporting them is about \$4,500. By 2030, we will have to add \$2-billion in medical cost. Therefore, it is important that we do this work together.

I am glad to hear that Singapore Red Cross was amongst the first organisations to benefit from the Gift of Mobility Fund that SMRT launched last year, to commemorate 30 years of MRT operations. It is a great way to contribute to society; to do something now, for the elderly population. The programme *Community Health on Wheels* is a wonderful idea of bringing healthcare closer to the communities. And it is important to build the capacity from now, and not later. The key part of sustainable support, is with community taking care of community. Because nothing beats the young taking care of the seniors. And nothing beats the well-off caring for the needy.

I am glad the Singapore Red Cross has moved its emphasis from schools to the community. It used to be very active mostly in schools, through the uniformed group.

Now the Singapore Red Cross is bringing ancillary services to the elderly in the community - including health checks, physiotherapy services, psychosocial support and health counselling. These services complement the nation's healthcare network, and ensure continuity of care for patients, especially those who are mobility challenged.

Over the years, the Singapore Red Cross has established a strong and trusted presence in Tampines and have served its residents very well. Red Cross volunteers have helmed several Health Education & Awareness talks, on topics such as Caring for Caregivers; Frailty and Fall Risk; Diabetes and Sharing of Community Resources, and three Health Check deployments. With CHoW roving to the rest of Singapore in the coming months and years, hundreds if not thousands will benefit from the services it provides. I hope CHoW will be a welcome presence in the community - a presence that's in demand. By the way, 'Ciao' is an Italian word for 'Hello', so there you go.

Three years ago, when [I launched the Singapore Red Cross' Community Led Action for Resilience](#) at Tampines, I lauded your special focus on resilience, and your initiative to care for the elderly in an inclusive and sustainable manner. Since then, through your numerous initiatives, the Red Cross has forged strong partnership with various community stakeholders. Today, volunteers are organised and serve by districts; they have developed an intimate understanding of the needs and preferences of the vulnerable; and they have built a strong and trusted presence in the community. This is especially important not only to have a robust framework of support for the vulnerable, but also to engender a resilient community.

Many people around the world, even during the World War 2, trust the Red Cross. The Red Cross is known to treat the wounded regardless of which warring faction the casualty belonged to. Many regard it is a healing organisation that helps bring people, even enemies, together.

Your efforts are appreciated. Thank you for serving the vulnerable amongst us, and for inspiring more volunteers on this journey of caring volunteerism, to make Singapore a better home for all of us. Congratulations on the launch of the Singapore Red Cross' *Community Health on Wheels!*

Thank you.