

24 Feb 2023

Response by Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Education, for the Prime Minister, to Member of Parliament, Ms Sylvia Lim, on Lowering of Voting Age during the Committee of Supply Debate 2023, 24 Feb 2023

Minister Chan Chun Sing: On behalf of the Prime Minister, let me first address the cut by Ms Sylvia Lim on voting age. This is not a new suggestion. Both sides of the House have previously raised this suggestion and our previous considerations remain valid.

2 A number of countries have lowered their voting age. Some do it to increase voter turnout, others perhaps for perceived political advantage. We don't have the first problem and we should certainly not do so for the second reason. Some of them regretted doing so when the political outcomes were not as they have expected, although they would not say so publicly for political reasons. Others were not clear if this has led to better governance.

3 The opinions of our youths are indeed important. The majority of our youths under the age of 21 are in our post-secondary institutions and we do regularly and proactively engage our youths on national issues and societal issues to take into account their views in our decision making and policy formulation. MCCY, NYC, MOE, MSF and various other Government institutions do this on a regular basis. An example would be the Conversations on Singapore Women's Development in 2021. The views surfaced in these dialogues were considered in the White Paper which was tabled at Parliament last year.

4 However, if we take a step back, the evergreen challenge for any democracy is how do we deliver good governance and a good Government. And the key to that lies in two things. First, how do we have good people with the right values and right capabilities stand forth to serve. Second, how do we encourage every voter to not just think of his or her individual interest for the here and now; but also the wider interests of our society and future generations.