

## MEDIA RELEASE

### DISCONTINUATION OF SPECIAL POLLING ARRANGEMENTS PILOT AT NURSING HOMES

At the 2023 Presidential Election (PE2023), the Elections Department (ELD) piloted special polling arrangements at 31 nursing homes ('the pilot') for voters residing in these nursing homes. The pilot was intended to allow ELD to assess the value of such special polling arrangements in future elections. To recap, the special polling arrangements comprised two modes:

- a) a polling station set up within the nursing home premises (special polling place) for residents to cast their votes; and
- b) mobile polling, where election officials (EOs) would bring the ballot box and ballot papers directly to residents to cast votes from their beds.

#### Key Observations and Feedback on Special Polling Arrangements

2 Post PE2023, ELD conducted a review of the pilot. The key observations and feedback received were as follows:

- a) Limited mental capacity of voters - Both EOs and political party representatives observed that, despite instructions and explanations from EOs, many residents did not understand why they were voting and the significance of their votes.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the proportion of rejected votes was high - of the total number of votes cast at nursing homes, 15.3% of the votes were rejected, primarily due to blank votes. This compares with 2% of votes rejected generally.
- b) Risks of compromising voting secrecy – Notwithstanding measures to provide voting secrecy during mobile polling, such as providing a portable lap booth (shielded at the front and sides) for voters to mark their ballot papers, as well as requiring all EOs to step away from the bed to allow the voter to mark the ballot paper, there remained concerns about voting secrecy being compromised. This is due to the close proximity of the beds to one another.
- c) Operationally challenging and resource intensive - About 300 nursing home staff assisted to facilitate special polling arrangements at the nursing homes. Some nursing home operators shared that it was operationally challenging for them to support the conduct of special polling arrangements because this placed added demand on the nursing home staff, on top of their core duties to care for the nursing home residents. About 20 EOs were deployed in each nursing home to serve about 300 or less nursing home voters while

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<sup>1</sup> As it was the first time that special polling arrangements were conducted in nursing homes in an election, the Returning Officer allowed political party representatives to observe the conduct of the special polling arrangements at a designated nursing home within a stipulated period of time at PE2023.

a similar number of EOs serves between 2,501 to 3,000 voters at each ordinary polling station.

### **Discontinuing Special Polling Arrangements**

3 In view of the above and given the added operational complexities to implement special polling arrangements in a General Election, ELD will not continue the special polling arrangements at nursing homes beyond the pilot.<sup>2</sup> Nursing home residents can continue to vote at their allotted polling stations.

4 ELD would like to express our appreciation to the nursing home operators and staff who worked with us on the pilot.

**ISSUED BY  
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT  
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

**15 OCT 2024**

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<sup>2</sup> Added complexities could include having to manage a large number of polling agents from political parties observing processes at nursing homes on polling day at a General Election, as the residents will be voting in different electoral divisions,