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REACH MEDIA RELEASE

**SINGAPOREANS WELCOME BUDGET 2019 MEASURES TO ENSURE
FIRMS AND WORKERS STAY RELEVANT**

24 March 2019 – Six in 10 Singaporeans supported Budget 2019 measures to ensure firms and workers remain relevant, in particular, measures to transform industries and better support local businesses, as well as social measures including the Merdeka Generation Package and extension of CHAS subsidies.

2 These were amongst the findings of the Budget 2019 Feedback Exercise. More than 4,500 Singaporeans provided feedback across 14 different REACH platforms, including face-to-face engagements at Listening Points¹, dialogues, online feedback, WhatsApp chat group, and a telephone poll².

Skilled Workforce, Innovative Firms and a Vibrant Economy

3 About 84% from the REACH Listening Points and 71% of the respondents from the Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) poll agreed that the Government's efforts to transform industries and deepen workers' capabilities, will improve job opportunities for Singaporeans in the new economy. Singaporeans whom REACH spoke to called for the continuous emphasis and support for skills upgrading, particularly for mature workers.

4 On the Government's efforts to help Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) increase innovation and productivity through measures such as the Enterprise Financing Scheme, SMEs Go Digital Programme and SME Co-Investment Fund III, support level was at 83% at the Listening Points. Eight in 10 of the CATI poll respondents welcomed the move to raise the maximum salary criteria for the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS), which would allow more workers to receive Workfare pay-

¹ REACH conducted seven listening points from 18 February to 3 March 2019 to gauge Singaporeans' reactions to the Budget announcements. They were held at Singapore University of Technology and Design, National University of Singapore, Amoy Street Food Centre, Yew Tee Square, Nee Soon East, Chinatown Point and Jurong West 505 Market and Food Centre. We engaged 2601 Singaporeans face-to-face. The responses were gathered by convenience cluster sampling, representative for this sample only, and may not be generalised.

² REACH conducted a Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) poll on Budget 2019 poll to gauge Singaporeans' reactions to the Budget announcements from 19 February to 1 March 2019. Through the telephone poll, we managed to gather views from 1,449 Singapore residents aged 15 and above who had read or heard at least a little about the announcements in the Budget 2019 speech.

outs, while this was similarly supported at the Listening Points, with eight in 10 agreeing with the raise in WIS.

5 However, reactions to the Government's efforts to gradually reduce the number of foreigners in the Services sector were mixed. Of the 66% from the Listening Points and 58% respondents from the CATI poll who supported the reduction of the Dependency Ratio Ceilings (DRC), many cited the importance of long term manpower sustainability and unlocking potential employment opportunities for Singaporeans.

A Caring and Inclusive Society

6 Support on social measures was high as respondents noted the Government's efforts to provide stronger social safety nets. The Merdeka Generation Package that will help Singaporeans aged 60-69 years old stay active and better manage healthcare costs was supported by 85% of respondents from the CATI poll, similar to the 83% support level at REACH's Listening Points. While they agreed that the enhancement of Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS) subsidies will help more Singaporeans cope with their healthcare expenses, some respondents reiterated the need for healthcare costs to be kept affordable in the long term.

7 On the Bicentennial Bonus which includes CPF payments for Singaporeans with lower CPF balances, one-off Edusave and Post-Secondary Education Account (PSEA) top ups and personal income tax rebate, 76% of respondents from the REACH Listening Points and 66% from the CATI poll supported this move which they viewed as a good way to share the budget surpluses with Singaporeans.

Keeping Singapore Safe and Secure

8 On defence and security, more than 60% from both the Listening Points and CATI poll supported the allocation of about 30% of the national budget for Singapore's defence needs. Respondents noted that it was important that Singapore continues to stay vigilant against domestic and foreign threats, so that our interests can be safeguarded.

9 REACH Chairman Mr Sam Tan, who is also Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Social & Family Development, said: "These findings show that most Singaporeans understand that the Budget 2019 announcements addresses both short and long term needs of Singapore and Singaporeans. It is heartening that more Singaporeans are coming forward to share their views candidly."

About REACH

REACH (reaching everyone for active citizenry @ home) is the Government's lead feedback and engagement agency for engaging and connecting with citizens. REACH – part of the Ministry of Communications and Information – is committed to encourage and promote active citizenry through citizen engagement.