

## **Electoral boundaries 2015 report: Which will be the 'hot' seats in the coming general election?**

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SINGAPORE - Speculation about when the upcoming general election will be held gathered steam with the release of the electoral boundaries review committee's report (EBRC) on Friday afternoon.

Political observers predict that the 13 Single-Member Constituencies (SMCs) and the six four-member Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) will attract strong interest from the opposition parties.

While the field will become clear only on Nomination Day, we asked political analysts what could be the possible "hot" seats.

The wards that cropped up often were districts in the east where the Workers' Party is based, in particular East Coast GRC.

Holland-Bukit Timah was mentioned as an area where the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) may make a mark, especially as secretary-general Chee Soon Juan can now contest.

He was barred from running at the 2006 and 2011 elections because he was a bankrupt.

Other areas that could see fierce fights include Marine Parade GRC, MacPherson SMC and Potong Pasir SMC. East Coast, Jalan Besar, Tampines GRCs, Fengshan SMC "They (Workers' Party) are likely to continue to gun for East Coast GRC and Fengshan SMC that has been carved out of the old East Coast GRC as this is an area where they did fairly well.

They may also move to the five-member Tampines GRC which is more manageable in terms of size than the six-member GRC of Pasir Ris-Punggol. WP is rather systematic in terms of trying to gun for areas that are contiguous to their bases as they focus on connecting directly with the ground.

- Dr **Gillian Koh**, senior research fellow, Institute of Policy Studies

As in the 2011 General Election, wherever the WP puts up candidates, the contests in those constituencies will be competitive. I hold this view irrespective of the changes that the EBRC has now made. The excitement in the coming election will clearly be centred in the eastern half of the island, with particular focus on East Coast and Tampines GRCs.

- Dr Derek de Cunha, academic and political observer

Jalan Besar is a reincarnation of Moulmein-Kallang GRC which is traditionally a Workers' Party area. WP did well in East Coast in the last election, and now that it is a four-member GRC, it could make it easier for the WP to field good candidates. Fengshan SMC was carved out of East Coast GRC where there was a keen contest in 2011. I think we can expect a very keen fight.

- Associate Professor Eugene Tan, Singapore Management University

## Holland-Bukit Timah GRC

While the contest was not close the last time, the campaign was controversial. Dr Chee Soon Juan is now eligible to contest, and it was the SDP's main area of contest. I don't know if his campaign style has changed but if he goes in, we can expect some fireworks.

- Associate Prof Eugene Tan

## Holland-Bukit Timah, Sembawang GRCs, Bukit Batok SMC

The SDP has been working hard to put out policy papers as it wants to be seen as a serious contender for seats in Parliament. Their focus is on the West which is still an open field. WP is not on that side of the island.

They will also be likely to build on their presence in the last election in Sembawang GRC, Holland-Bukit Timah GRC and now there is a new SMC in that area - Bukit Batok SMC. The question is whether they will make a breakthrough in the western part of Singapore. These are areas where the SDP probably believes voters are interested in the policy issues and debates, rather than the micro retail politics of meeting the day-to-day needs of constituents.

- Dr Gillian Koh

## Marine Parade GRC

The greatest interest going into this election is where WP and SDP will contest. The WP because of their breakthrough in Aljunied and then their victories in the two by-elections held in Hougang SMC and Punggol East SMC. Now that little Joo Chiat SMC has been absorbed into Marine Parade GRC, will that cause the WP to move to the south and gun for that GRC?

- Dr Gillian Koh

## MacPherson SMC

MacPherson - assuming the PAP fields incumbent MP Tin Pei Ling - is a battleground where many opposition parties would have an interest in. It is a valuable opportunity for Ms Tin to prove her worth given the criticism she was subject to in the last election. If being a first-time mum, she goes on the campaign trail shortly after delivery, that may go down well with some voters.

- Associate Professor Eugene Tan

## Potong Pasir SMC

There is potential for Potong Pasir to be a close fight because voters still remember Mr Chiam (See Tong), and Mrs Lina Chiam is seen as his successor. The victory margin was the narrowest there in the last election. I am surprised that they have not touched it, kept the number of electors the same, as it didn't even come anywhere close to keeping to guidelines on the upper and lower threshold of voters.