

## **MND to do More to Help Families Live Close Together**

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Singapore — Application numbers in the latest Build-to-Order (BTO) and Sale of Balance Flats (SBF) joint exercise — which closed at midnight yesterday — reflected a strong demand from buyers to live near or with their families, with one in three applying for the enhanced Married Child Priority Scheme (MCPS).

As at 5pm yesterday, there were also 123 multi-generation families that applied for the 56 units of Three-Generation (3Gen) flats in Tampines GreenRidges — the first housing project in Tampines North.

Commenting on the figures, National Development Minister Khaw Boon Wan said his ministry would do even more next year to help extended families live close by. These include launching another 360 3-Gen flats — including 150 units in Tampines — as well as 1,200 and 2,200 new flats in Tampines North and Bidadari, respectively, with priority given to those whose parents or married children are already living in the respective areas.

“Our housing policies will continue to support strong family formation,” Mr Khaw added.

Under the enhanced MCPS, up to 30 per cent of the flat supply will be set aside for MCPS first-timer families and up to 15 per cent for second-timer families. The allocation varies between mature and non-mature estates, as well as among flat types.

The enhanced scheme took effect from the latest BTO-SBF joint exercise, which was also the first in which 3Gen flats were offered in a mature estate.

Previously, family members who wished to live close to one another received extra ballot chances for their new flat applications. These applicants, under the old MCPS, used to make up about a quarter of flat bookings at each exercise.

Mr Chris Koh, director of Chris International, noted that more buyers wishing to live near their families would be drawn to the enhanced scheme, given that it sets aside a portion of flats for them compared with merely giving them extra ballot chances. He added that the allocation and the actual demand appeared to be in equilibrium, going by the application numbers.

Property analysts had previously said they expected high demand for the enhanced MCPS, noting the importance of parental support for couples hoping to start a family.

Sociologists yesterday noted that filial piety remained strong here. Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser of the National University of Singapore (NUS) added that ties between young couples and parents today were better compared with the past. Fellow NUS sociologist Paulin Straughan said flat hunters would be thinking of caring for their parents in old age. “What is important is for us to have different options for different families,” she said.

More than 7,500 flats were put up for sale in the year’s biggest and final exercise.

Demand from singles for two-room flats continued to be strong. In particular, more than 30 applicants were vying for each unit at the Sengkang Anchorvale Fields project.