

THE SINGAPORE PERSPECTIVE

A brief history of national conversations

THE Our Singapore Conversation (OSC) is by no means the first time Singapore has embarked on a national public consultation exercise.

There have been at least three previous exercises since 1991. None of these though was as large in scope or as ambitious as the on-going OSC.

The first notable public consultation exercise here was called The Next Lap. It was led by a Cabinet sub-committee called the Long Term National Development Committee and headed by then Acting Minister for Information George Yeo.

They produced a 160-page book that mapped out broad plans to make Singapore a nation of distinction. The recommendations ultimately led to, among other

things, schools going to a single session, the setting up of Edusave and the establishment of the country's third university, the Singapore Management University.

Five years later, in 1996, came the next exercise known as Singapore 21.

Singapore 21 was an action plan to take the country into the 21st century. The project was an idea first mooted by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

A committee chaired by then Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean conducted more than a year of discussions with about 6,000 Singaporeans from all walks of life. The findings were then distilled into a report released in 1999.

Some of the issues raised then remain relevant today.



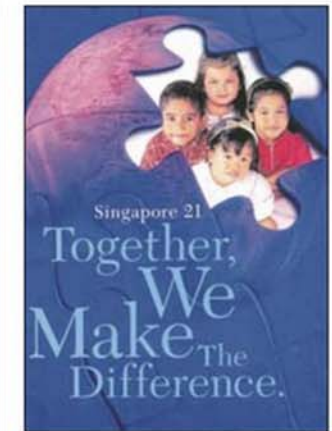
For instance, Singaporeans spoke about wanting to live less stressful lives while retaining their drive and also about balancing the need to attract talent with the need to look after Singaporeans.

The public consultation in 2002, Remaking Singapore, would also deal with some similar themes, such as an over-emphasis on materialism in society.

The committee was chaired by then Minister of State (National

Development) Vivian Balakrishnan.

The process threw up some contentious suggestions that were dismissed, like allowing the jobless to withdraw some of their CPF funds.



The cover of the Singapore 21 report (above), which was released in 1999. The Singapore 21 committee conducted more than a year of discussions with about 6,000 Singaporeans from all walks of life. The idea was first mooted by Mr Goh Chok Tong (left picture, in white shirt) and the committee was chaired by Mr Teo Chee Hean (in blue shirt).

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Eventually, of the 74 proposals it made, 60 received the Government's nod in 2004.

Among the most popular: The introduction of a five-day work week.

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