

Malaysian Civil Societies for Older Persons Joint Statement in Response to Budget 2026 released on Friday, 17 October 2025

Civil Society Organisations for Older People Highlight Budget Signals and Call for Joint Delivery Systems

Malaysian civil society organisations working with and for older persons welcome the direction set in Budget 2026- expanded welfare allocations, stronger prevention through tax relief for vaccines, caregiver training, and senior living pilots. These are the right signals. This 2026 Budget will begin to deliver on the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP) which has a strong emphasis on preparation for the aged nation. We have, therefore, examined whether the government is keeping to their promises in the plan.

Malaysia became an ageing society in 2021. By 2030, 15% of our population will be aged 60 years and over and by 2044, a similar percentage will be aged 65 years and over. If we do nothing different, we face a smaller productive workforce, heavier family burdens, and rising costs from preventable illness, dementia, and avoidable hospitalisations.

We have spent the past week reflecting on the 'cautious' budget Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim read out. The key takeaways were the need to balance our fiscal deficit against the short-term wellbeing of the rakyat. Our immediate Ministry of Health (MOH) priorities were, therefore, addressed through more permanent posts and on-call allowance for doctors. There were also initiatives to divert patients to non-MOH hospitals. The increase in hospital capacity would address issues with long waiting lists and bed shortages fuelled by increasing need from population ageing. The increased emphasis on prevention was met with extension of tax rebates to all approved vaccines, which should encourage older adults to take up influenza and other available vaccines, reducing the need for hospital care.

The Prime Minister's announcement of, "preparations for an aged nation", was followed by the allocation for the Ministry for Women, Family and Community Development (MWFCD). RM1.26 billion will be provided for the welfare benefits of 180,000 (4.5%) of the 4million older persons in Malaysia- a 26% increase over the 1 billion for 2025, for social pension, activity centres, home help services and hospital transport. There will also be a RM5 million allocation for caregiver training and RM300 million spending on retirement housing on Baitumal land in Kepala Batas. This 26% increase is naturally welcome, and we sincerely thank the Ministry of Finance for this relatively large increase in view of fiscal constraints. We also particularly laud the government's commitment to improve care through much needed allocations for caregiver training, and we hope this will see a rapid increase in number of providers and

courses, leading to increased accessibility. The senior living pilot can set Malaysian benchmarks for affordability, safety, and connected services.

There are clearly many competing priorities. Therefore, while we did not hear any other mention when it came to older persons, we remain hopeful that allocations do exist within the granular details that were not published or read out, as the budget covers a wide range of circumstances. While we must provide for older adults who need care, preparation for the aged nation, as clearly stated within 13MP extends far beyond that. We look forward to structural reforms and other initiatives that will enhance economic productivity through extending working lives and expansion of the silver economy. We are now waiting in anticipation for evidence that the 2026 budget will deliver on the government's aspirations communicated through the Action Plan for Older Persons launched on 5th of October 2025 by MWFC, and the National Dementia Action Plan 2023-2030 and the Action Plan for Health Services for Older Persons launched on 1 October 2024. We are also hopeful, that the National Ageing Blueprint will become a public document.

If we, the government, civil society, private sector, local communities, act together, we can add healthier years, keep care closer to home, build service-integrated housing, and create dignified jobs in the care and silver economy. These advances must be locked into clear rules, fair funding, and transparent delivery so they outlast news cycles and truly reach families. Ageing is not a crisis—it's a coordination test. Bring one lever you control; we will match it with one we control. Together we will turn every ringgit into a result: healthier years, safer homes, real choices, and jobs with dignity for older Malaysians.

Gerontological Association of Malaysia (GEM)

Malaysian Healthy Ageing Society (MHAS)

Malaysian Society of Geriatric Medicine (MSGM)

Malaysia Association for Residential Aged Care Operators of Malaysia (AGECOPE)

USIAMAS

Malaysian Coalition on Ageing (MCOA)

Dementia Association of Malaysia (DAMAI)

Dementia Society Perak (BebeLEC Dementia Daycare)

Johor Bahru Dementia Association (JOBADA)

Penang Dementia Association

Sarawak Gerontology & Geriatrics Society (SGGS)

SeniorsAloud

Third Age Media Association

Kampungku

Malaysian Women's Action for Tobacco Control and Health (MyWATCH)

Nursing Care Association Selangor (NCAS)

Persatuan Pesara LPPKNM

Malaysian Falls Prevention Society (MyFalls)