

“The Can-Kicking Conundrum: How Cooling Measures Solve Today’s Crisis by Creating Tomorrow’s”

We’re treating the symptoms of Singapore’s property fever, but the medicine is creating a more dangerous long-term illness.

The Singaporean Dream, Deferred

Meet Alex and Li Ting. For the past three years, their lives have been a masterclass in financial discipline. They skipped the lavish weddings and European holidays, meticulously saved every spare dollar, and finally, their combined income met the stringent Total Debt Servicing Ratio (TDSR). They had their loan approval in hand, ready to win their place in the Singaporean dream.

They found a 4-room resale flat in a mature estate. It was home. They offered a strong \$25,000 above indicative valuation, confident their prudence had paid off.

They were outbid in hours!

This scenario repeated itself few times. Each losing bid was higher than the last, each viewing a demoralizing scrum of desperate couples. They played by the rules of financial prudence, yet they were being priced out of the market those very rules were supposed to protect. The “cooled” market felt like a pressure cooker.

Then came the news that made their struggle feel trivial — an Executive Apartment at Block 850 Woodlands Street 82, a suburban public housing flat which was sold for a record \$1.27 million.



The \$1.27M Wake-Up Call

Last week, a HDB Executive Apartment in Woodland sold for a record \$1.27 million.

Let that number sink in. This is not a penthouse in the core central area. This is not a luxurious condominium. This is public housing. The very bedrock of Singapore's affordable homeownership pledge.

This sale is not an anomaly; it is a symptom. It is the loudest possible alarm bell that our current strategy of layering on cooling measures is failing to address the core disease. We are not solving the affordability crisis; we are just kicking the can down the road, and the \$1.27M price tag is the cliff the can just rolled over.



The Three Vicious Cycles of Our Cooling Measures

The government's intentions are sound: ensure stability and protect buyers. But the outcome has created a system of vicious, self-reinforcing cycles.

Vicious Cycle 1 "The Supply Constriction Trap (It's the MOP, not the SSD)"

The Intention **The 5-Year Minimum Occupation Period (MOP)** ensures that HDB flats are occupied by owners and not treated as short-term speculative assets. This is a cornerstone of the "home for living, not for speculation" policy.

The Reality This necessary rule, combined with the overall market heat, creates a powerful supply bottleneck. For five years, every single BTO flat that is launched is effectively removed from the resale supply pool. With a record number of BTOs launched in recent years to meet demand, we are simultaneously constricting the future resale supply for half a decade.



The \$1.27M Link This is where the can-kicking becomes clear. The pent-up demand from thousands of couples like Alex and Li Ting, who cannot secure a BTO, builds up over years. When flats *finally* exit their MOP, this demand explodes onto a limited resale market. This effect is supercharged for specific flat types. Crucially, HDB no longer builds Executive Apartments (EAs). This means the supply of these large, spacious public housing units is fixed and permanently shrinking. The competition for these rare, coveted properties becomes ferocious, directly leading to record-breaking, mind-bending prices like the \$1.27M sale at Blk 850 Woodlands street 82



Vicious Cycle 2 "The Lifetime Debt "Solution"



The Intention **The Total Debt Servicing Ratio (TDSR)** stops people from borrowing more than they can afford monthly.

The Reality Since buyers can't borrow more per month, they simply borrow for longer. The 30-to-35-year mortgage has become the new normal.

The Consequences We haven't solved affordability; we've stretched it over a lifetime, creating a generation of "asset-rich, cash-poor" retirees still paying mortgages.

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Vicious Cycle 3 “The Aspiration Penalty”

The Intention	Additional Buyer’s Stamp Duty (ABSD) targets investors and foreigners.
The Reality	It brutally punishes the Singaporean family trying to upgrade from an HDB to a condo for more space. They are hit with a massive tax on their second property, trapping them.
The Ripple Effect	Trapped upgraders can’t sell their HDBs. This further tightens resale supply, fuelling the very price inflation that makes upgrading impossible—a perfect, self-defeating loop.



WHERE IS THE CAN ROLLING NOW? THE LOOMING CLIFF

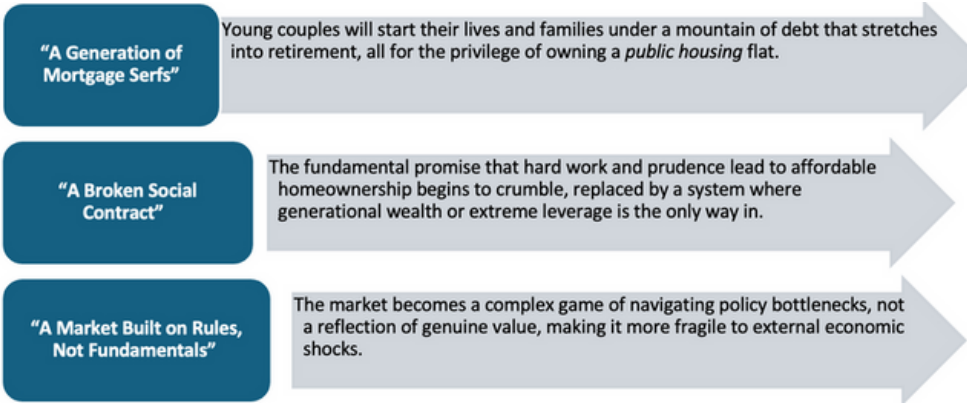
If we continue this path of treating symptoms with measures that constrict supply, the consequences are no longer theoretical—they are already here, and they are accelerating.

The million-dollar HDB is no longer an anomaly- it is the new normal.

Consider this: as of 1 October 2025, there have been 1,243 HDB flats sold for over \$1 million in Singapore during the first nine months of this year alone. This staggering figure has already surpassed the 1,035 million-dollar transactions for the entire year of 2024.

Let that sink in. We haven't even finished the year, and we've already set a new record. This isn't kicking the can down the road; this is the can exploding.

This data is the direct result of the paradoxes we've created. The supply constraints and pent-up demand are systematically pushing more and more flats into a price bracket that was once unthinkable for public housing. If this trend continues, we face a future of:



Conclusion “The Unavoidable Truth of the Can-Kicking Conundrum”



The record-breaking HDB prices are not the problem; they are the final symptom. They are the logical endpoint of a system that has prioritized using short-term fixes to manage a long-term structural issue. The “Can-Kicking Conundrum” has run its course. We have reached the point of diminishing returns where each new cooling measure delivers less stability and more unintended damage—frozen mobility, generational debt, and a distorted market.

The question is no longer how to cool the market, but what kind of housing system we want. Is it one where public housing remains a guaranteed, affordable home for Singaporeans, even if it means tempering its potential as a high-return investment? Or do we accept that it is now a full-fledged financial asset, with all the volatility and inequality that entails?

Kicking the can was a strategy for a different era. The \$1.27 million Woodlands flat is the signal that era is over. The conversation must now shift from managing the crisis to transforming the system.



Disclaimer: The views expressed in this blog are the author's own and are for commentary and educational purposes only. They do not constitute financial or legal advice.

To illustrate broader market trends, this article uses a fictional narrative scenario involving the characters “Alex and Li Ting.” This couple is not based on any specific individuals but represents a composite of common buyer experiences.

All data and facts, including the transaction at Block 850 Woodlands Street 82 and the statistics on million-dollar HDB flats, are sourced from the HDB Resale Portal and other public records. The analysis and conclusions drawn from this data are those of the author.