

**Response to “How big data can make cooling measures obsolete”
– ST Forum, 17 Mar 2015**

1 Apr 2015

Dear Editor

In his opinion piece for The Straits Times (“How big data can make cooling measures obsolete”, 17 Mar 2015), Sam Baker, co-founder of SRX Property, argued there is a lack of pricing transparency in the property market. His article contained over simplistic assumptions as well as inaccurate and misleading statements.

2. First, to set the record straight, government agencies that deal with housing issues, such as the Housing & Development Board (HDB), Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and Council for Estate Agencies (CEA), did not collaborate with SRX to develop X-Value.

3. Second, there is no lack of pricing transparency in Singapore’s housing market. The URA and HDB have been releasing data on the transacted prices of individual private and public housing units on our respective websites free of charge for many years to help home buyers to make informed decisions. For instance, HDB publishes daily prices of resale transactions on the HDB InfoWEB, as soon as they are registered. URA and HDB have also been releasing online information on the rentals of individual private and public housing units. In fact, we understand that SRX has been relying on such open-source property data from government agencies for their work.

4. Third, Mr Baker also surmised that a market valuation for each home would have prevented cases of misrepresentation and questioned the need for the CEA to be formed. The CEA was set up specifically to raise the professionalism of the real estate agency industry and safeguard consumer interest, and not based on whether market pricing information was available.

5. Lastly, it is untrue that the Government is unable to monitor the prices of properties in different market segments. Government agencies have up-to-date and comprehensive information on individual sale and rental transactions of housing units and use them to monitor property market trends and formulate policies.

6. In our view, the movement in property prices is due to a complex mix of internal and external economic factors, such as the economic outlook, interest rates, liquidity, market sentiments, and business and investment strategies of industry players. It does not hinge on the availability of a market value for each home alone.

7. Regardless of the market condition, buying a home is a long-term commitment. The key is one's ability to finance the purchase over the long-term, which requires financial prudence.

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