



PLUS

Plain Laws Understandable by
Singaporeans



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**NEW SINGAPORE STATUTES ONLINE (BETA VERSION)
AND OTHER PLUS UPDATES**

The Attorney-General's Chambers ("AGC") has revamped its *Singapore Statutes Online* website as part of the "Plain Laws Understandable by Singaporeans" project ("PLUS project") and in line with its mission of supporting the Rule of Law in Singapore.

2 The *Singapore Statutes Online* is the official online repository for Singapore's legislation. Maintained by the national law drafting office within AGC, the *Singapore Statutes Online* provides the public free of charge 24/7 access to all of Singapore's legislation in a single location.

3 The *Singapore Statutes Online* revamp focused on what can be done to make Singapore's written laws in the online environment more accessible to the varied users of the statute book. To do this, 2 online public surveys were conducted by AGC in November 2013 and September 2016 under its PLUS project, with the second survey giving users a say in the design and features of the new *Singapore Statutes Online*.

4 AGC has rolled out a beta version of its new *Singapore Statutes Online* website (at <https://sso.agc.gov.sg>) to give users time to transition to the new *Singapore Statutes Online* and to also obtain users' feedback on its features and functionalities.

5 The new website makes it easier for laypersons to find legislation relevant to them, with more search facilities, prominent displays to aid navigation, and features that facilitate access via mobile devices. Advanced users of legislation enjoy customised

search options and faster retrieval of legislative provisions. The text is copy-and-paste friendly and more printing and downloading options are provided.

6 Chief Legislative Counsel in AGC, Mrs Owi Beng Ki, said, “We embarked on our PLUS project in 2013 with the support of the then Attorney-General, Mr Steven Chong. As keepers of the Singapore statute book, we are firmly committed to ensuring that our laws remain understandable and conveniently accessible to those to whom the laws apply. The revamp of the *Singapore Statutes Online* website is just our most visible step taken to that end. With nearly more than 4.8 million visits to the *Singapore Statutes Online* in 2016, one of the biggest challenges was figuring how to present the complex information on the website logically and still intuitively enough for the very varied users of our legislation, comprising laypersons, parliamentarians, the Judiciary, the public sector, the business sector, legal professionals and academia. I am grateful to all those who participated in our surveys, and to the small team of AGC officers who worked tirelessly and above their normal duties the past year to make the new website possible.”

Other PLUS project updates

7 Since 2014, AGC has been progressively implementing changes in law drafting as part of its PLUS initiatives. This includes writing in shorter sentences and simpler English, such as using “must” instead of “shall” to signify mandatory obligations, using “however” or “despite” instead of “notwithstanding” and omitting words like “hereby”, adopting gender-neutral terms, replacing Roman numerals with Arabic numeral, and breaking down provisions into parts to aid the readers.

8 New laws are now drafted in plain English as far as possible¹. The Explanatory Statements to Bills are even more detailed. They no longer just summarise amendments. In appropriate cases, illustrations or descriptions are provided on how the amendments work².

9 For amendment Bills, the Leader of the House Ms Grace Fu announced in Parliament in May 2017 that AGC will commence a pilot project in July 2017 to make available to the Members of Parliament soft copies of the Act being amended with the amendments tracked. AGC is undertaking this in support of parliamentary democracy.

10 The PLUS initiatives are on-going. AGC welcomes feedback from the public (at <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Feedback>) on these initiatives.

¹ One recent example is the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore (Amendment) Act 2016 (on the recent changes to the Elected Presidency), passed by Parliament in November 2016.

² A recent example is the Town Councils (Amendment) Bill 2017, passed by Parliament in March 2017.

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FACT SHEET ON PLUS PROJECT AND SINGAPORE STATUTES ONLINE

What is PLUS project?

The PLUS project is the “Plain Laws Understandable by Singaporeans” project that AGC embarked on in 2013 to ensure that our written laws remain drafted and presented in a manner that is clear, readable and more easily understood by the people to whom the laws apply. The scope of the PLUS project includes modernising the text and design of Singapore’s written laws and enhancing the features of the *Singapore Statutes Online*.

2 From 12 November to 12 December 2013, AGC conducted an online public survey to better understand the needs, preferences and expectations of the readers of Singapore’s legislation and users of the *Singapore Statutes Online*. A total of 1,058 respondents participated in the survey, of which —

- about 70% were people without legal training;
- about 60% were young adults (between 20 to 39 years of age);
- about 46% were from the public sector; and
- about 34% were the general public.

3 The survey covered different aspects of the drafting and presentation of legislation, including the use of plain English, aids to understanding, amending language, and the layout and design of published and online legislation. The PLUS survey findings are published at [https://www.agc.gov.sg/What We Do/Legislation and Law Reform Division/PLUS.aspx](https://www.agc.gov.sg/What_We_Do/Legislation_and_Law_Reform_Division/PLUS.aspx).

4 Since 2014, AGC has been progressively implementing changes in law drafting and related areas in response to the PLUS public survey.

Singapore Statutes Online

5 One key focus of the 2013 PLUS public survey was the design and features of the *Singapore Statutes Online*. The origin and development of the *Singapore Statutes Online* are set out below:

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| 15 Nov 2001 | AGC, together with the Ministry of Law and the Ministry of Finance (Managing for Excellence Office), launched the <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> . |
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| | The website provided the public with free online access to all current Acts of Parliament. |
| 15 Oct 2011 | The <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> was upgraded. It contained all current Acts of Parliament and subsidiary legislation of Singapore. |
| 12 Nov-12 Dec 2013 | The first PLUS public survey was conducted. |
| 2014-2015 | AGC made interim enhancements to the <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> in response to the PLUS public survey feedback. Notable enhancements included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to historical versions of legislation; • access to Bills tabled in Parliament; • access to PDF versions of legislation and Bills; and • better printing options. |
| 2016 | AGC started on a complete overhaul of the <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> to fully implement the 2013 PLUS public survey feedback. |
| 2 Sep-1 Oct 2016 | AGC conducted a second PLUS public survey specifically to give users a say in the design and features of the new <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> . |
| 7 Jul 2017 | A beta version of the new <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> was rolled out to give users time to transition to the new <i>Singapore Statutes Online</i> and to also obtain users' feedback on its features and functionalities. |