

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PRESS RELEASE  
31 AUGUST 2012, 6 PM**

**ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S SPEECH  
AT THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF  
THE INAUGURAL AGC-SMU LAW REFORM  
ESSAY COMPETITION**

Good evening Justice Menon, Dean Professor Yeo Tiong Min, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

2. It is my honour to present the prizes and awards to the recipients of the inaugural AGC-SMU Law Reform Essay Competition. While there are presently many mooted competitions to expose students to the skill of oral advocacy, there was a conspicuous absence of any local essay competition for students to try their hand at analysing and suggesting reforms in a selected area of Singapore law. It inspired in me hope for the future generation of parliamentary draftsmen and law reformers when I learnt that this competition was actually initiated by two law students from the SMU Law Society — Andrea Lim and Elycia Koh. My predecessor Justice Menon, who has a keen interest in nurturing both law reform as well as budding young lawyers, warmly endorsed it to encourage and to increase the level of interest and awareness of law reform work in Singapore among law students.

3. In this inaugural run of the competition, we invited students to propose reforms in the areas of the maintenance of parents and the protection of the elderly from neglect and abuse, issues that require a carefully calibrated and mature approach as they touch on sensitive family relationships and the controversial issue of whether filial piety ought to be legislated.

4. I am extremely delighted that SMU students have risen to this challenge to analyse and suggest reform in an area of law that most students are not expected to be familiar with. I am told that the judging panel, including the Dean of the SMU Law School and the Parliamentary Counsel in my Chambers, had a tough time deciding on the winning entry.

5. In the course of reviewing the essays, I have taken note of a number of significant proposals. Allow me to give you a flavor of some of the more noteworthy proposals we received. In the area of maintenance of parents, one proposal was to broaden the category of potential claimants or applicants under the Maintenance of Parents Act to include a person who has treated and raised another person as his or her own child, consistent with the principle of reciprocity underlying the Act. Other essays suggested pegging the minimum age of an applicant seeking maintenance, to the retirement age (which has been raised from 60 to 62 years since the Act came into force). The authors submit that this was the original intent of the Act. Yet another proposal is to amend the Intestate Succession Act to allow an indigent or a financially

dependent parent to claim maintenance from a deceased's child's estate even where a will has been made.

6. As regards protection of the elderly from neglect and abuse, there were proposals to create a central agency that will be responsible for elder protection matters, with powers to investigate and intervene in suspected cases of elder abuse. Legislative provisions to enhance the criminal penalties for elder abuse were also proposed. The students drew inspiration from the enhanced penalties for abuse of domestic maids by employers under the Penal Code. There were also suggestions to re-examine our laws with regard to protection of the elderly against financial abuse, which was also alluded to this week in a Straits Times article by Associate Professor Chan Wing Cheong of the National University of Singapore.

7. I am pleased to announce that the participants in the competition will have the satisfaction of knowing that they may be making an actual contribution to law reform in Singapore. This will provide an immense level of satisfaction and in turn attract and encourage students to take part in future years. My officers will be compiling a list of the feasible proposals for submission to the relevant Ministries for their consideration. The policy makers in the Ministries might find them useful when they next undertake a review of the legislation.

8. Finally, my congratulations to the authors of the three prize-winning essays, and the authors of two other essays commended by the competition judging panel. I would also like to thank the Dean Professor Yeo Tiong Min, Associate Professor Kelvin Low, Assistant Professor Eugene Tan, and the students from the SMU Law Society for working closely with Audrey Lim, Soh Kee Bun and Melvin Shen from my Chambers to ensure the success of the competition.

9. I look forward to the next competition and I hope more students will be interested, not just in the cash prizes or the opportunity to intern with the Legislation and Law Reform Division of my Chambers, but in the opportunity to contribute proposals that may make a difference to our society. Hopefully, through this competition, my Chambers will be able to recruit some suitable candidates to join the Legislation and Law Reform Division in AGC.

\* \* \*

**Media Contact:**

Li Jin Haw (Ms)  
Assistant Director, Corporate Relations Unit  
Attorney-General's Chambers, Singapore  
Email: [li\\_jin\\_haw@agc.gov.sg](mailto:li_jin_haw@agc.gov.sg) Tel: 6332 4693