

SINGAPORE EQUALITY

justice.equality.progress

SUPPORTING OUR NATION'S PLEDGE

A simple guide to giving feedback

To: All Singaporeans

*“We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, **regardless of race, language or religion**, to build a democratic society based on **justice and equality** so as to achieve happiness, prosperity and **progress for our nation**”* SINGAPORE NATIONAL PLEDGE : 1996

As a citizen of Singapore each of us is familiar with the words of our national pledge, a pledge many of us have spoken many times before. But there are elements within our society that seek to undermine it. They are intent on pushing their own agenda based on their religious beliefs as the social norm, and intent on ensuring the inequalities in the law among Singapore citizens remain unchanged. They are organised, and as long as the majority of Singaporeans remain silent then their voices will be the only ones heard.

In their own words they seek to “*turn Singapore God-ward*”, to build a “*righteous generation*”

We need to ensure that all of our voices are heard so that any debate that affects us as citizens of Singapore is not one sided. All of us should be concerned, not only with moral future of Singapore, but with **justice and equality** for **all** its citizens. We should not allow a religious minority to define a moral view that is based on their religious beliefs, one that affects all citizens of Singapore.

We must register our strongest unwavering support for the separation of state and religion to minimise the influence of these religious organisations so that all decisions made in relation to the laws that govern Singapore apply to all citizens of Singapore equally.

To facilitate action, we have put together a simple “Guide to Giving Feedback” for your wise and discerning response. But first of all, please carefully read the following reminders and recommendations:

1. Remember: Regardless of a person’s chosen religion they are not our enemies. We must reach out to them to show we love and we care about our country and in so doing remind these individuals that a person’s chosen religion is between them and their God, and that Singapore is a secular state with a separation of state and religion.
2. This Guide is meant for mass distribution to everybody. The reason is simple. Everyone needs to understand the rationale and impact if we do not keep the separation of state and religion intact.
3. Therefore, it is very important for all Singaporeans to give feedback to the Government and those same religious organisations in an acceptable manner through the available channels. We must emphasize the fact that through this exercise, we are speaking up as citizens of Singapore — courteously and courageously—as we are already encouraged to do by the Government through official feedback channels
4. Distribute the softcopy or hardcopy of this Guide to all Singaporeans. Everyone should have a copy so that they cannot say later when a given law is changed, or a new law enacted, they were not informed of how they could register their protest against such change.

WRITE DIRECTLY TO RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

A Simple Guide to Giving Feedback

WHY WRITE DIRECTLY

Every Singaporean needs to send a message directly to these religious organizations and to the government, that while such organisations are free to follow their beliefs, they do not have the right to push those beliefs as a social norm.

They need to be reminded that Singapore has a diverse culture and as such many do not share their view which is rooted in their specific religious beliefs.

They need to be reminded that Singapore is a secular state with a separation of religion and state.

They need to be reminded that as a secular state the laws must apply to ALL citizens equally and that we, as Singaporeans, must honour our nations pledge to ensure that we build a society based on “**Justice**” and “**Equality**” regardless of “Religion”.

WHAT TO DO

A: Here is a quick and easy first step for Facebook users:

1. Post a status update on your own page with this simple statement: “I support our nations pledge to build a society based on justice and equality”.
2. “Like” any pro-comments you may come across on your News Feed in relation to building an inclusive Singapore, and “Dislike” any negative comments. This simple action makes a difference. .

B: Here’s another way you can immediately act on your convictions:

3. Write a simple note expressing your concern on the impact of religious views in a secular state to any one of the following:
 - (a) PM Lee Hsien Loong (through the Prime Minister’s Office)
 - (b) DPM Teo Chee Hean, head of the National Population and Talent Division. The Family institution falls under this division.
 - (c) Cabinet Members or your MP
 - (d) Feedback Unit REACH: www.reach.gov.sg/feedback.aspx

Email Addresses are on Page 11 and 12 of this Guide.

4. Pay your MP a visit at the “Meet the People” session to personally express your concerns. Ask him or her to bring the issue up with his fellow MPs or with the Minister in charge of the issue or whoever is best placed to address your concern.

WHAT TO SAY

Below are 2 samples to give you an idea of what you can say when you write to the Minister or to the Feedback unit (REACH) or to any religious organisation. Review each sample carefully. Do not use them verbatim. It is very important that you express your concerns in your own words and writing style. Most importantly, be civil and succinct.

Dear So-and-So (eg: Minister for Law, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Social and Family Development, Minister for Education, etc)

TO A MEMBER OF GOVERNMENT

1. I'm writing to express my concern at the extent at which many of the religious organisations attempt to influence Singapore law in line with their religiously beliefs. As a Singaporean who believes in our nation's pledge of "Justice" and "Equality" I strongly believe we must ensure that our laws impact everyone equally. To do this we must remain a secular state and listen to all sides of any discussion ensuring that any decisions made allow us to build the progressive society we have pledged to build. If the only point of argument to a change in law is one based on religious beliefs then it can be acknowledged, but ultimately must be put to one side. We must ensure that our society continues to be based on "Justice" and "Equality" regardless of "Religion". If we do not then we have failed in our nation's pledge.

TO A RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION

2. While I appreciate your right to follow the religion of your choice, that choice is between you and your God. Any beliefs you may hold as a result of that choice cannot be placed across the wider society as a whole, many of whom do not follow that same religion. With respect, while as an individual you are free to challenge any decisions the government may make with regards to the laws of the land, that challenge should not be one that is based solely on your religious belief. We are a secular country with a separation of religion and state and are striving to build a society based on "Justice" and "Equality" regardless of "Religion". If you try and push those religious beliefs as a social norm then you are in direct contradiction to our nation's pledge.

SUPPORT THE HPB's FAQ ON SEXUALITY

A Simple Guide to Giving Feedback

WHY SUPPORT THE ORIGINAL HPB's FAQ ON SEXUALITY

The HPB has the responsibility to **ALL** of the citizens in Singapore. It's original FAQ on sexuality was much publicised and applauded for its inclusive nature, as well as the sensitive and unbiased way it handled LGBT issues.

HOWEVER, the same group of religious organisations targeted this FAQ because of its LGBT related content. As such links to information that could potentially save lives was removed from the FAQ. Indeed, the same religious groups asked the FAQ be instead linked to "cure" options for homosexuality.

While there may be no "conclusive" proof that homosexuality is genetic there is enough evidence available to support the fact that sexual orientation is genetic and/or biology in nature, and not learned as the supporters of these "cure" therapies claim, In fact the pioneers of these so called therapies have already apologised to the LGBT community and admitted that they do not work and in fact can cause more harm than good. As such many countries have already started to ban them.

As long as the majority of Singaporean's stay silent on these issues then we are allowing the actions of these groups to dictate, based on their religious beliefs, what information we as citizens should have access to as a result.

If we, as *citizens* of Singapore, believe in our nations pledge and do not wish to see such religious beliefs influence what information we have access to through the HPB then we need to act now.

WHAT TO DO

A: Here is a quick and easy first step for Facebook users:

1. Post a status update on your own page with this simple statement: "I support the HPB's FAQ on sexuality".
2. "Like" any pro-comments you may come across on your News Feed in relation to the HPB's FAQ on sexuality and "Dislike" any negative comments. This simple action makes a difference. .

B: Here's another way you can immediately act on your convictions:

3. Write a simple note in support of the HPB's FAQ on sexuality to any one of the following:
 - (a) PM Lee Hsien Loong (through the Prime Minister's Office)
 - (b) DPM Teo Chee Hean, head of the National Population and Talent Division. The Family institution falls under this division.
 - (c) Cabinet Members or your MP
 - (d) Feedback Unit REACH: www.reach.gov.sg/feedback.aspx

Email Addresses are on Page 11 and 12 of this Guide.

4. Pay your MP a visit at the “Meet the People” session to personally express your concerns. Ask him or her to bring the issue up with his fellow MPs or with the Minister in charge of the issue or whoever is best placed to address your concern.

WHAT TO SAY

Below are 6 samples to give you an idea of what you can say when you write to the Minister or to the Feedback unit (REACH). Review each sample carefully. Do not use them verbatim. It is very important that you express your concerns in your own words and writing style. Most importantly, be civil and succinct.

Dear So-and-So (eg: Minister for Law, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Social and Family Development, Minister for Education, etc)

1. I'm writing to state my support of the HPB's original FAQ on sexuality. It is an unbiased and inclusive FAQ that caters to all Singaporeans regardless of sexual orientation. They should be applauded for their effort. I fully support the HPB's original FAQ on sexuality and it's links to sites that provided more specific information that could potentially save lives.
2. We are writing as concerned parents. The HPB is there to support all Singapore citizens and not just the majority. My children or in turn theirs may one day have a need to access information in relation to LGBT, potentially lifesaving information, links to which have now been removed. We support the original FAQ on sexuality and ask for those same links to be reinstated.
3. I wish to register my point of view that I consider sexual LGBT orientation natural as already evidenced in over 1,500 other species. Removing information and links to information that could potentially save lives for LGBT citizens is therefore not acceptable. Please reinstated the original FAQ on sexuality with all appropriate links.
4. I am a teacher and as a teacher the most powerful tool in our arsenal is information. By removing links to LGBT related contact the HPB has in turn restricted the flow of information to these inquisitive minds. As an educator I must make a stand and ask for the original HPB FAQ to be reinstated with all appropriate links to ensure that our children have access to information that may be of use to them or their children in turn and potential save lives.
5. The Government has made considerable efforts over the last decade to reinforce the Family as an institution in Singapore. There was even the Public Education Committee chaired by Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon to study and make recommendations towards this end. However, there are many families who would turn to the HPB for information because one of their children is LGBT. By removing LGBT related content and links the HPB are telling those families that they are seen as less than equal. In our nations pledge we use the word “equality” and need to live up to that pledge. As such I support the HPB's original FAQ on sexuality and ask that the appropriate links that could save people's lives are reinstated.
6. We are Singaporeans. We want to be a progressive society. Without change there can be no progress. By editing the original HPB FAQ on sexuality and removing links that could potentially save lives, morally, we are allowing discrimination to persist in our society. The original HPB FAQ on sexuality should be restored with all appropriate links.

SUPPORT THE REPEAL OF 377A

A Simple Guide to Giving Feedback

WHY SUPPORT THE REPEAL OF 377A

Section 377A ("Outrages on decency") of the Penal Code of Singapore is the main remaining piece of legislation which criminalises sex between mutually consenting adult men. It states that:

"Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to 2 years"

It is a law that the government has already been quoted numerous times in the media and online that they will not enforce. There are many supportive comments that what people do in the privacy of their own home is entirely up to them. HOWEVER, the law as stated currently makes even a private consensual act a criminal offence.

While there may be no "conclusive" proof that homosexuality is genetic there is enough evidence available to support the claim that sexual orientation is genetic and/or biology in nature, and not learned as the supporters of so called "cure" therapies claim. In fact the pioneers of these same therapies have already apologised to the LGBT community and admitted that they do not work and in fact can cause more harm than good. As such many countries have already started to ban them.

Section 377A stated as is targets a minority of our citizens directly. There are many other laws in place to cover "gross indecency" that already apply to all citizens equally. Section 377A is not only out dated (and has already been repealed in many other countries), but one that is ineffective given that the government has already stated it will not be enforced.

Some religious organizations are highly vocal on this issue and want to make sure that this law is never repealed. They use phrases such as "not normal" despite mounting scientific and medical evidence to the contrary, and "immoral" in the sense that it is in opposition to their own religious beliefs. They are entitled to those opinions, but they are not entitled to try to force those opinions as the social norm. "**Justice**", "**equality**", "**regardless of Religion**", words at the very heart of our nations pledge are being ignored.

If we, as citizens of Singapore, believe in our nations pledge and do not wish to see such religious beliefs become points of law then we need to act now.

WHAT TO DO

A: Here is a quick and easy first step for Facebook users:

1. Post a status update on your own page with this simple statement: "I support the repeal of 377A".
2. "Like" any pro-repeal 377A comments you may come across on your News Feed and "Dislike" any negative comments. This simple action makes a difference.
3. On Law Minister Mr K. Shanmugam's Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/k.shanmugam.page>): Look for his post dated 4th January 2013 at 11pm. Click "Comment" and state your support for the repeal of 377A. A simple one-liner is sufficient: "I don't support 377A" or "377A: should be repealed!" or "remove 377A".

B: Here's another way you can immediately act on your convictions:

1. Write a simple note in support of the repeal of 377A to any one of the following:
 - (a) PM Lee Hsien Loong (through the Prime Minister's Office)
 - (b) DPM Teo Chee Hean, head of the National Population and Talent Division. The Family institution falls under this division.
 - (c) Cabinet Members or your MP
 - (d) Feedback Unit REACH: www.reach.gov.sg/feedback.aspx

Email Addresses are on Page 11 and 12 of this Guide.

2. Pay your MP a visit at the "Meet the People" session to personally express your concerns. Ask him or her to bring the issue up with his fellow MPs or with the Minister in charge of the issue or whoever is best placed to address your concern.

WHAT TO SAY

Below are 11 samples to give you an idea of what you can say when you write to the Minister or to the Feedback unit (REACH). Review each sample carefully. Do not use them verbatim. It is very important that you express your concerns in your own words and writing style. Most importantly, be civil and succinct.

Dear So-and-So (eg: Minister for Law, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Social and Family Development, Minister for Education, etc)

1. I'm writing to state my support for the repeal 377A. It is an outdated and unjust law for Singapore. I believe in justice and equality for all of our citizens, it needs to be changed.
2. We are writing as concerned parents. We realise that if we do not repeal 377A, Singapore will remain a unjust society where laws target a specific minority ? Is that the kind of Singapore we are proud of and want for our children? No way! Please repeal 377A.
3. I am young and single. I am writing because I shudder at the way society is going today. Do I even want to get married, have children, and then put them at risk growing up in a society that discriminates against same sex relationships?. I say NO to keeping 377A.
4. I have homosexual friends. I do not discriminate against them. I care about them. I have noticed the pattern in other countries: repealing laws such as 377A has led to the legalising of same-sex marriage. I support same-sex marriage. Change 377A and help us build an inclusive Singapore!
5. I wish to register my point of view that I consider sexual LGBT orientation natural as already evidenced in over 1,500 other species. It bothers me that we would give a court hearing to people who challenged 377A only for them to lose that battle. Please help Singapore progress. Please repeal 377A.
6. 377A must not be allowed to be our moral standard. We are Singapore. We want to be a progressive society. Without change there can be no progress. Morally, we are allowing discrimination to persist in our society. We must push our nation forward to ensure such discrimination does not exist in our society.

7. I am a teacher. Repealing 377A means that one day our children in all our schools will be taught that homosexuality is an accepted norm. MOE says we must emphasize values and build character. By granting a court hearing for the repeal of 377A, we are effectively building on our own national efforts to build character. I am very excited. Educators must make a stand to repeal 377A. It's about "moulding the future of our nation" and ensuring that our children have access to information that may be of us to them or their children in turn.
8. We must redefine what we mean by the term "Family". It IS no longer one man as Father and one woman as Mother in a marriage or relationship. We need to emphasis that a family is a unit that is held together by the love the people have for each other and any children that may form part of the unit, from same gender relationships, to single parents, to heterosexual relationships. That is the Singapore I want, one that does not discriminate. We need to repeal 377A!
9. As parents and responsible citizens of Singapore, we are very disturbed by recent reports of sexual acts posted on the internet, teachers having sex with their students, sexual acts performed in public areas, adultery, underage prostitution, etc. How can we justify keeping 377A when we have no such laws in place for the majority of heterosexual Singaporeans. We need to repeal this law now and focus on ensuring that we implement laws that protect ALL citizens and not just target a minority.
10. We are heartened by recent government efforts to promote family formation. We hear such assuring words: "Family values must be the starting point, and I hope the young people here will agree with me that they want to have their own families, because they enjoy growing up in a loving environment, that they also want to carry on and bring the love to their own children and the future generations." (Ms Grace Fu, Minister in PMO at an outdoor dialogue with residents in Yew Tee. Source: Singapore News, 4 November 2012). However, we watch with dismay as 377A has not yet being repealed despite the number of challenges to it. How do we explain to our children, who are part of our family, should their sexual orientation be other than heterosexual that they are less than equal in the eyes of the law?
11. The Government has made considerable efforts over the last decade to reinforce the Family as an institution in Singapore. There was even the Public Education Committee chaired by Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon to study and make recommendations towards this end. So we are totally baffled why 377A is not already repealed. The Family as an institution in Singapore will eventually collapse when children who's sexual orientation is other than heterosexual are told that they are seen as less than equal in the eyes of the law. We must resoundingly accept the repeal of 377A.

WHAT ELSE

A: You may want to begin your brief note by referring to one of the following current news:

1. Law Minister's meeting with Sayoni, a lesbian group. Read more about this in Law Minister's Facebook page. (<https://www.facebook.com/k.shanmugam.page>)
2. Channel News Asia Online: "Singaporeans becoming more tolerant of gays, lesbians: NTU study" <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/singaporelocalnews/view/1246880/1/.html>
3. Upcoming court hearing on 377A (Jan 25th and Feb 14th). <http://www.singapolitics.sg/news/state-contest-new-challenge-anti-gay-law#.UPE5lgA-hiA.mailto>

B: You may want to close by asking specific questions that require a response. Ask what they are going to do about the issue. Express hope that they will do what is right for the good of Singapore and for the good of the coming generations. Be gentle, polite and sincere.

DO's and DON'Ts

1. Don't use similar templates and standard scripts. Our sample texts are meant to give you an idea of what you can say. So, remember: it is very important that you express your concerns in your own words.
2. Don't write long-winded complaints. Keep your letter short and succinct.
3. Be respectful, especially if you are directly challenging someone else's opinion. Everyone is entitled to their opinion no matter how misguided it may be.
4. Write as a concerned citizen, a parent, a teacher, a student, a doctor, a homemaker, etc.
5. Use your personal email address.
6. Don't procrastinate. Write when the issue or event is still current or soon to take place (eg: mention the Law Minister's dialogue with the lesbian group, or mention the recent article on the NTU study, or the upcoming court hearing on 377A).
7. Don't presume you know it all. If you are meeting your MP or if you are invited for dialogue, ask your friends for further guidance and/or resources to prepare yourself well.
8. Don't forward emails as this will leave traces of the contact chain and the thread of conversation from previous writers who may or may not agree with you.
9. Do encourage your friends and family to follow you when you comment or write an email. The more unbiased support the issue has the better.

SOME EMAIL ADDRESSES

GOVERNMENT DIRECTORY

Online Source: Singapore Government Directory

1. Prime Minister
Mr LEE Hsien Loong
lee_hsien_loong@pmo.gov.sg
2. Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security; Minister for Home Affairs
Mr TEO Chee Hean
teo_chee_hean@mha.gov.sg
3. Minister, Prime Minister's Office
Mr LIM Swee Say
lim_swee_say@pmo.gov.sg
4. Minister for Communications and Information
Dr YAACOB Ibrahim
yaacob_ibrahim@mci.gov.sg
5. Minister for Defence
Dr NG Eng Hen
Ng_Eng_Hen@mindef.gov.sg
6. Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law
Mr K Shanmugam
k_shanmugam@mlaw.gov.sg
7. Minister for Health
Mr GAN Kim Yong
gan_kim_yong@moh.gov.sg
8. Minister for Education
Mr HENG Swee Keat
heng_swee_keat@moe.gov.sg
9. Minister, Prime Minister's Office; Second Minister for the Environment and Water Resources; Second Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms Grace FU
grace_fu@pmo.gov.sg
10. Acting Minister for Social and Family Development; Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defence
Mr CHAN Chun Sing
chunsing@msf.gov.sg
11. Acting Minister for Manpower and Senior Minister of State, Ministry of National Development

Mr TAN Chuan-Jin

tanchuanjin@mom.gov.sg

12. Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth; Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Communications and Information

Mr Lawrence WONG

lawrence_wong@mccy.gov.sg

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Online Source: online directory (stclassifieds)

13. Family and Home Gate

family.foundation.future@lovesingapore.org.sg

14. Family and Home Gate Coordinator

jason.family@lovesingapore.org.sg

15. The Methodist Church in Singapore

feedback@methodist.org.sg

16. Faith Community Baptist Church (FCBC)

Lawrence Khong

info@fcbc.org.sg

17. National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS)

admin@nccs.org.sg

18. City Harvest Church (Suntec)

info@chc.org.sg

For a complete list of Churches in Singapore together with their respective email addresses you can use the link below.

<http://directory.stclassifieds.sg/singapore-directory/churches/q/offset/40/page/1>