



THE STATUTES OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

DEFAMATION ACT 1957

2020 REVISED EDITION

This revised edition incorporates all amendments up to and including 1 December 2021 and comes into operation on 31 December 2021.

Prepared and Published by

THE LAW REVISION COMMISSION
UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF
THE REVISED EDITION OF THE LAWS ACT 1983

Defamation Act 1957

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Section

1. Short title
 2. Interpretation
 3. Broadcast statements
 4. Slander of women
 5. Slander affecting official, professional or business reputation
 6. Slander of title, etc.
 7. Unintentional defamation
 8. Justification
 9. Fair comment
 10. Apology in mitigation of damages
 11. Reports of judicial proceedings
 12. Qualified privilege of newspapers
 13. Application of Act to broadcasting
 14. Limitation of privilege at elections
 15. Agreements for indemnity
 16. Evidence of other damages recovered by plaintiff
 17. Consolidation of actions for libel
 18. Separate assessment of damages in certain cases in actions for libel
 19. Severance of defences
 20. Consolidation of actions for slander, etc.
 21. Savings
- The Schedule — Newspaper statements having qualified privilege
-

An Act relating to libel and slander and other malicious falsehoods.

[6 May 1965]

Short title

1. This Act is the Defamation Act 1957.

Interpretation

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires —

“broadcasting by means of telecommunication” means publication for general reception by means of telecommunication;

“newspaper” means any paper containing public news or observations thereon or consisting wholly or mainly of advertisements which is printed for sale and is published in Singapore either periodically or in parts or numbers at intervals not exceeding 36 days;

“telecommunication” means any system for the transmission, emission or reception of signs, signals, writings, images and sounds of all kinds by means of radiowaves, wire, cable or other electromagnetic systems;

“words” includes pictures, visual images, gestures and other methods of signifying meaning.

Broadcast statements

3. For the purposes of the law of libel and slander, the broadcasting of words by means of telecommunication shall be treated as publication in a permanent form.

Slander of women

4. Words spoken and published which impute unchastity or adultery to any woman or girl shall not require special damage to render them actionable.

Slander affecting official, professional or business reputation

5. In an action for slander in respect of words calculated to disparage the plaintiff in any office, profession, calling, trade or business held or carried on by him at the time of the publication, it shall not be necessary to allege or prove special damage whether or not the words are spoken of the plaintiff in the way of his office, profession, calling, trade or business.

Slander of title, etc.

6.—(1) In any action for slander of title, slander of goods or other malicious falsehood, it shall not be necessary to allege or prove special damage —

- (a) if the words upon which the action is founded are calculated to cause pecuniary damage to the plaintiff and are published in writing or other permanent form; or
- (b) if the said words are calculated to cause pecuniary damage to the plaintiff in respect of any office, profession, calling, trade or business held or carried on by him at the time of the publication.

(2) Section 3 applies for the purposes of this section as it applies for the purposes of the law of libel and slander.

Unintentional defamation

7.—(1) A person who has published words alleged to be defamatory of another person may, if he claims that the words were published by him innocently in relation to that other person, make an offer of amends under this section; and in any such case —

- (a) if the offer is accepted by the party aggrieved and is duly performed, no proceedings for libel or slander shall be taken or continued by that party against the person making the offer in respect of the publication in question (but without prejudice to any cause of action against any other person jointly responsible for that publication);
- (b) if the offer is not accepted by the party aggrieved, then, except as otherwise provided by this section, it shall be a defence, in any proceedings by him for libel or slander against the person making the offer in respect of the publication in question, to prove that the words complained of were published by the defendant or were published by the defendant innocently in relation to the plaintiff and that the offer was made as soon as practicable after the defendant received notice that they were or might be defamatory of the plaintiff, and has not been withdrawn.