



# Editorial style guide *summary*

## AGS's editorial style summarised in 1 page

NOT AGS'

see exceptions on page 13

lowercase

OGC only group with a public acronym

NOT Dispute Resolution Group  
NOT DR

NOT Commercial Group

Full act title including date is italicised

NOT the FMA Act or 'the FMA Act' or **bolded**

lowercase m not spaced  
NOT space M

All heading lowercase except first word and proper nouns

NOT e.g. NOT eg,  
capitals because specific

lowercase because generic

always capital when Commonwealth of Australia Constitution of Australia

NOT 6<sup>th</sup>

unintroduced acronym – there are very few: IT, BA, LLB, CEO, PhD, HR

AGS is one of Australia's largest national legal service providers with offices in every capital city and approximately 320 lawyers who cover some 40 different areas of law related to government. We provide expert advice and representation through 3 national practice groups:

— the Office of General Counsel (OGC)

— AGS Dispute Resolution

— AGS Commercial.

AGS is established under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*. However, most of AGS's clients are Commonwealth departments and agencies covered by the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (FMA Act). In 2010–11, the total legal services expenditure by FMA Act agencies was \$598.9m, an increase of 4.7% from 2009–10.

### About our government and administrative law services

Our government and administrative lawyers regularly advise on areas such as governance (eg decision-making), administrative review, judicial review, Ombudsman enquiries, Crown liability, statutory interpretation, tort law, freedom of information (FOI) and privacy and employment law. We also represent clients in royal commissions, inquiries and coronial inquests. We have Australia's leading specialists on constitutional law, public international law and national security law.

We advise on the appointment of ministers and the establishment of Commonwealth departments under s 64 of the Constitution.

### This text

This text is a demonstration of principles contained in the AGS *Editorial style guide*, which is based on the Commonwealth's *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, 6th edition.

CEO Ian Govey's message to staff about the style guide is to 'use it', which is similar to his message to departmental secretaries and agency heads, 'Use AGS.'

All numbers expressed in numerals NOT spelt out

Spaced en-rule NOT long dash

1 space after a full stop

colon NOT semi-colon NOR dash NOR hyphen

no punctuation at end of point

no punctuation at end of point; not followed by and OR or

Full stop on last dot point

However must not be used as a conjunction

always en-rule (long hyphen)

NOT per cent NOR percent

always hyphen

acronym in caps even when reference term is lowercase NOT FoI

lowercase when generic

always lowercase and space NOT s.

All titles (except acts) lowercase except first word and proper nouns

lowercase when generic



## AGS Editorial style guide summary

The AGS Editorial style guide is based on 3 principles:

- **Keystroke reduction:**
  - full stop and one space
  - numbers expressed in numerals not spelt out
  - no punctuation in abbreviations.
- **Minimal punctuation/capitalisation:**
  - dot point lists without punctuation or capitals unless each point is composed of sentences
  - sentence case for headings (first word capitalised and all other words lower case unless proper nouns)
  - ‘specific’ capitals (Secretary of the Attorney-General’s Department) vs ‘generic’ lower case (secretaries of government departments).
- **Plain English:**
  - appropriate word selection for the likely audience (provide definitions if introducing words that may be unfamiliar, either in text, footnote or glossary)
  - short clear sentences.

### Specific points

- **AGS’s** not **AGS’** and **AGS** not **the AGS**
- **AGS Dispute Resolution** not **Dispute Resolution Group**
- **AGS Commercial** not **Commercial Group**
- **Abbreviations** should have full stops removed: **eg ie etc cf**
- **s** not **s.** This is the same for **v J JJ CJ p cl reg para vol Sch Pt Ch Div Sub-div**
- **Numbers:** numerals including **1–10** and commas for thousands **1,000** etc
- **%** not **per cent** nor **percent**
- **Dates:** **26 January** not **January 26th** nor **January 26** (remove **th, nd, st, rd**)
- **Time:** **9.30** not **9:30**
- **Dashes** should be **a spaced – en rule** not **an unspaced—em rule**
- **decision-making** not **decision making**
- **in order to** should be **to**
- **for the purpose of** should be **for**
- **by means of** should be **by**
- **in excess of** should be **more than**
- **with respect to** should be **in**

*Note: Client, court and legal document style preferences override AGS style when necessary.*

It is based on 3 references:

- Commonwealth *Style manual for authors, editors and printers*, 6th edition (there is a copy in each AGS Library)
- *Macquarie dictionary* (*Oxford dictionary* is a secondary source)
- *Australian guide to legal citation*, 3rd edition.

It has 3 sections:

- **AGS-specific style:** how we refer to ourselves and our teams (p 4)
- **Legal style:** incorporating the OGC style guide (p 7)
- **General style:** defines AGS preferences where there are alternative styles possible (p 9).