

Parliamentary Counsel Office - New Zealand Legislation website

Purpose of agency

Provides free public access to New Zealand legislation

The Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO) is New Zealand's law drafting office. It is responsible for:

- drafting most New Zealand legislation
- publishing New Zealand Acts of Parliament, Bills, and Statutory Regulations, both in hard copy and online on the New Zealand Legislation website.

What high value public data has been released for re-use

Subscriber atom feed can be set up to alert users when new versions are available

The New Zealand Legislation website (www.legislation.govt.nz) was launched in January 2008, providing free access to Acts, Bills, Statutory Regulations, and Supplementary Order Papers. An integral part of the website is a subscriber section, which was promoted through data.govt.nz in July 2011.

The subscriber section provides access to current and previous versions of all documents, in XML and PDF formats.

When a new document or a new version of an existing document is published to the website, PDF and XML versions are added to the subscriber section.

The website also includes a subscriber web feed, which alerts users when new versions of documents are published.

The subscriber website, combined with the subscriber web feed, allows anyone to download and maintain their own database of New Zealand legislation.

In addition, in August 2011 the PCO released the Document Type Definitions (DTDs) for legislative documents. The DTDs define the structure of the XML versions of legislation.

Subscriber website and web feed combined allows users to create their own collection

Release rationale

XML data behind website is machine readable

- providing access to legislation is a fundamental part of the PCO's role
- there is no copyright in New Zealand Acts, Bills, or Statutory Regulations, simplifying release considerations
- the PCO provides access to legislation through the NZL website and through printed copies, but the XML data behind the website is well-structured and machine readable and need not be limited to the PCO's chosen publication platforms
- by making the XML versions of legislation and the associated DTDs freely accessible, the data becomes available to be used and repurposed by business, researchers, and citizens

Risk mitigation

There were no specific risks associated with the release, as the data was already published in another format and copyright considerations do not apply.

Cost and timeframe

DTDs freely accessible

It is difficult to identify specific costs in relation to the subscriber section, as it is an integral part of the drafting and publishing system as a whole.

Access to the DTDs could only be provided after they passed out of copyright, three years after their purchase.



Economic and social impacts

*Commercial users
subscribe to the
dataset, making it easy
to maintain the currency
of their products*

- four entries in the 2011 Mix & Mash NZ competition use the XML documents to examine and present law in new ways. The winner of the Open Government category, Definer.org.nz by Mohammad Abdullatif, uses defined terms to construct a dictionary of terms used in legislation
- private-sector publishers monitor changes to the legislation dataset using the subscriber web feed, allowing them to maintain the currency of their commercial products and to alert their own subscribers to legislative developments¹⁰

