

Overview

What are explanatory statements?

Explanatory statements explain what a legislative instrument does using plain or non-legal language. Explanatory statements can be used as additional information to help understand and interpret an instrument.

Explanatory statements were first prepared for Commonwealth regulations in about 1932 but those prepared before 1982 are generally not publicly accessible. In some cases, copies of pre-1982 explanatory statements may be available by request through departmental archives or the records of the [Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation – Parliament of Australia](#).

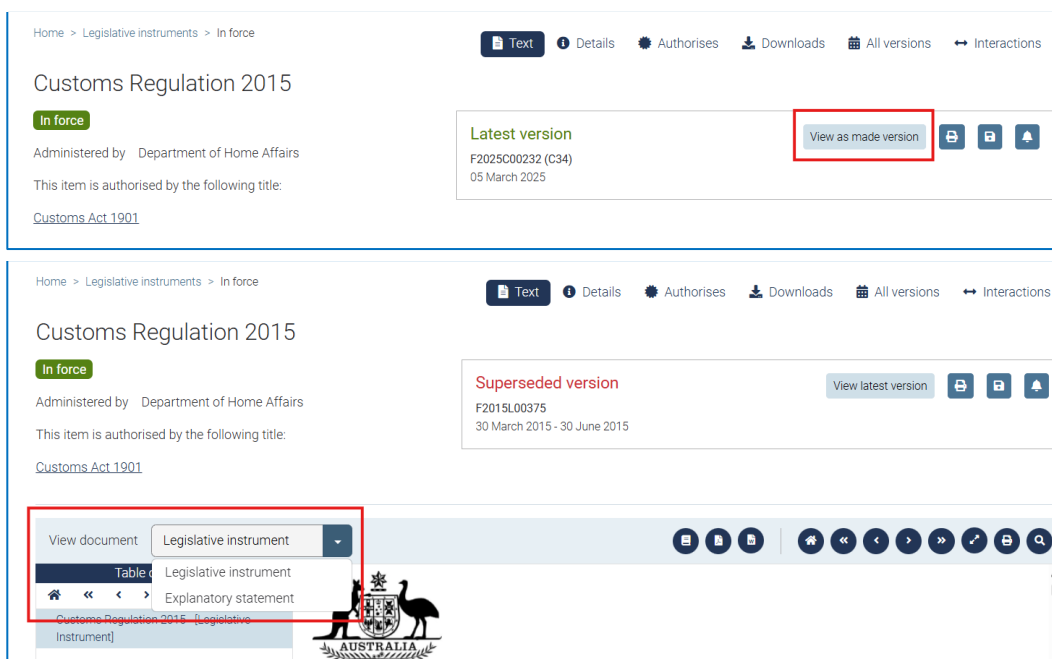
[Federal Register of Legislation](#)

Most explanatory statements that were prepared from 1991 onwards are available on the [Federal Register of Legislation](#) alongside their Commonwealth legislative instrument.

How to find an Explanatory Statement on the Register

View the explanatory statement

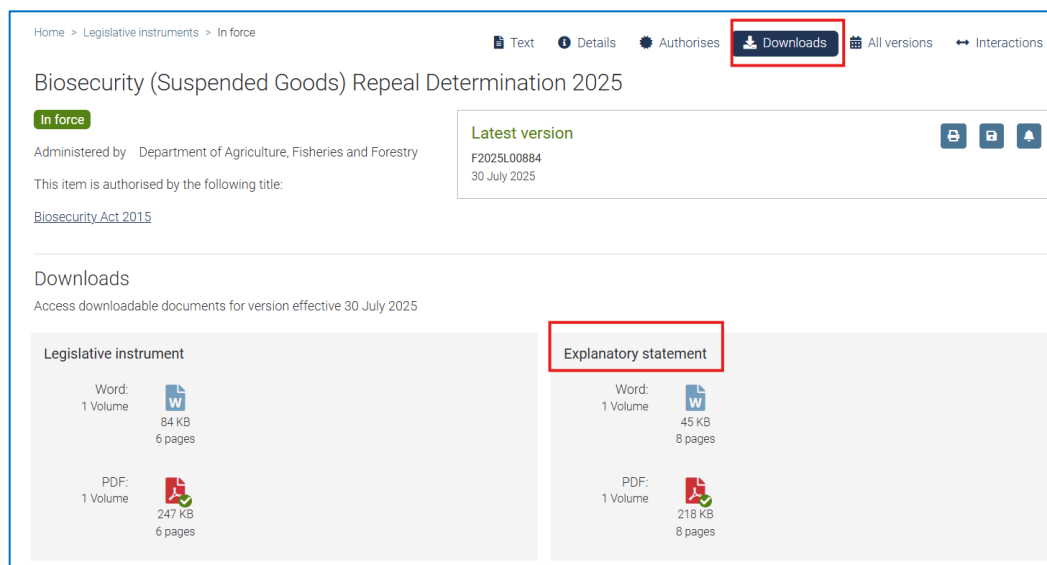
1. Search for the relevant legislative instrument on the [Register homepage](#) by name or ID number.
2. Select the 'View as made version'. A link to the as made version is also located on 'All versions' tab at the foot of the page.
3. Click on the drop-down menu next to 'View document' to see all available documents and select 'Explanatory Statement' to view the ES.



The image shows two screenshots of the Federal Register of Legislation interface for 'Customs Regulation 2015'. The top screenshot shows the 'Latest version' (F2025C00232 (C34), 05 March 2025) with a red box highlighting the 'View as made version' button. The bottom screenshot shows the 'Superseded version' (F2015L00375, 30 March 2015 - 30 June 2015) with a red box highlighting the 'View document' dropdown menu, which is open to show 'Explanatory statement' as an option.

Download the explanatory statement

1. Search for the relevant legislative instrument on the [Register homepage](#) by name or ID number.
2. Select the 'View as made version'. A link to the as made version is also located on 'All versions' tab at the foot of the page.
3. Select the Downloads tab to download a copy of the explanatory statement in a PDF or Word format.



The screenshot shows the 'Biosecurity (Suspended Goods) Repeal Determination 2025' page. The 'Downloads' tab is highlighted with a red box. Below the 'Downloads' section, there are two columns: 'Legislative instrument' and 'Explanatory statement'. The 'Explanatory statement' column is highlighted with a red box and contains two options: 'Word: 1 Volume, 45 KB, 8 pages' and 'PDF: 1 Volume, 218 KB, 8 pages'.

Online Resources

[AustLII](#)

Copies of explanatory statements from 1991 onwards are also available from AustLII at [Commonwealth of Australia Numbered Regulations Explanatory Statements](#). It is possible to search the explanatory statements by year or title.

[National Library of Australia](#)

The National Library of Australia (NLA) offers access to a microfilmed set of explanatory statements, covering the years 1982 to 1990, which were sourced from the Attorney-General's Department Library. The collection catalogue details are available at [Explanatory statements to statutory rules \[microform\]](#).

[Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation – Parliament of Australia](#)

The Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation assesses legislative instruments against a set of scrutiny principles that focus on compliance with statutory requirements, the protection of individual rights and liberties, and principles of parliamentary oversight. One of these [principles](#) is to make an assessment as to whether the [explanatory statement](#) that accompanies an instrument provides sufficient information to provide a clear understanding of the instrument. For information about the committee's work or information on legislation that has been assessed against the scrutiny principles see [Senate Standing Committee for the Scrutiny of Delegated Legislation – Parliament of Australia](#).