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Simplified Documentation Requirements for Vessel Registration with the Singapore Registry of Ships

The Maritime and Port Authority ("MPA") of Singapore has recently announced changes to the documentation requirements for vessel registration with the Singapore Registry of Ships ("SRS"), effective from 2 June 2025. These revisions are designed to simplify and expedite the registration process, reducing administrative hurdles for shipowners and other stakeholders. Rather than outlining the general procedures for title registration, this article focuses on the specific amendments introduced by the MPA and their practical implications for new registrations and related parties.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES?

The changes are twofold.

First, shipowners no longer have to submit original documents for permanent title registration with the SRS. Copies of the relevant documents will suffice for permanent title registration.

It should be noted, however, that the above exemption applies only to new registrations and not in relation to a vessel already registered with the SRS. For instance, in change of ownership applications, shipowners must still submit any original title document requested by the MPA, such as the builder's certificate and/or bill of sale.

The second change relates to documents signed outside of Singapore. Previously, documents signed outside of Singapore had to be (i) notarised and (ii) legalised or apostilled before submission to the MPA. From 2 June 2025, documents signed outside of Singapore will no longer need to be legalised and apostilled – only notarisation is required.



HOW DOES THIS AFFECT EXISTING APPLICATIONS?

The revised requirements will only apply to new registrations from 2 June 2025. If a vessel registration application is in process during the transition period, the documentation requirements will take reference from the vessel's provisional Certificate of Registry ("PCOR"). The exemptions will only apply in relation to vessels with PCORs issued on or after 2 June 2025. For vessels with PCORs issued before 2 June 2025, the previous requirements to submit original documents for permanent registration and to arrange for the legalisation or apostille of documents signed overseas, continue to apply.

These changes aim to reduce the administrative burden on applicants and shorten processing times with the SRS. While no longer necessary, original documents as well as documents that have been legalised or apostilled may still be submitted to the MPA for new title registrations after 2 June 2025.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR NON-SHIPOWNERS?

It was previously the case that financiers would have to provide a mortgagee sighting letter to the MPA confirming that they have sighted the original title documents in relation to the vessel, before mortgage registration may proceed. This was usually needed if the shipowner had not submitted the original title documents to the MPA after the vessel had been provisionally registered.

Following the changes implemented, since original title documents do not need to be submitted to the MPA, it is possible that mortgagee sighting letters would no longer be required before mortgages may be registered. If so, it should be noted that this is only relevant to mortgages in relation to vessels newly registered with the SRS, including those pursuant to re-flagging applications and not to vessels already permanently registered with the SRS and undergoing a change of ownership. We note, however, that the changes are a recent development and it remains to be seen whether mortgagee sighting letters may indeed be dispensed with in practice.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In summary, the MPA's revised documentation requirements mark a positive step towards streamlining the vessel registration process with the SRS. By allowing copies of documents for new registrations and easing notarisation requirements for documents signed overseas, the changes are set to reduce paperwork and accelerate processing times. While these updates primarily benefit new applicants, it is important for all stakeholders—including shipowners and financiers—to understand the scope and limitations of the recent changes. As the maritime industry adapts to these changes, applicants can look forward to a more efficient and less burdensome vessel registration experience in Singapore.

More information regarding the simplified documentation requirements may be found on the MPA website at www.mpa.gov.sg.

For more details regarding documents required for the registration of (a) newbuilding vessels and (b) vessels transferring to the Singapore flag, please refer to [MPA's checklist](#).

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