

Celebrations

ISSUE 102 – 2017





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From the President's Desk



ANTHONY BURKE
AFCC National President

Each and every one of us is different and unique, but one thing we share and have in common is being the best we can be.

As Celebrants we bring joy, comfort, happiness, guidance and so much more to the lives of many right across Australia. We also build trust, professionalism and respect for the work we undertake as Celebrants.

I reflect on the year that the AFCC has had including, membership growth, new resources, ongoing professional development, new marketing initiatives, annual conference, a new website, marketing and most importantly the support from you as members of this great association.

Being a Celebrant has to be one of the most satisfying occupations. We celebrate love, family, passed loved ones, new life, important life moments and all other celebrations in between.

As your National President it is an honour and a privilege to represent you. The entire National Committee strive to encourage, support and grow the AFCC and its members.

As 2017 is coming to a close and this being the final edition of *Celebrations* for the year, on behalf of your National Committee I want to say thank you for your support and commitment to the AFCC. Your support allows the AFCC to continue to be Australia's largest and premier association for Celebrants.

As we all look forward to 2018, I truly hope that the year brings you all could you wish for. As I mentioned, the AFCC National Committee is working hard for the benefit of members and will continue to do so.

On behalf of the AFCC National Committee we wish you and your families all the very best for a happy and safe Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Cheers
Anthony

"Be somebody, who makes everyone feel like a somebody"

Editor's Expose

IRENE HARRINGTON

Celebrations Editor



Another day, another edition of *Celebrations* magazine for AFCC members – our final edition for 2017.

Thank you as always, to those who have contributed with their articles, photos, services, stories and poems. And thank you to all who have contributed to the magazine this year. Your stories and articles help to make this a worthwhile benefit of AFCC membership.

As our final edition for the year, it's good to be able to spread some good cheer and this edition of *Celebrations* does that – especially with Christmas poems. Particular thanks to a guest contributor, Elizabeth McIver. What a talented octogenarian she is!

If you have been asked to conduct a Christmas Memorial Service, you will be interested to read the sample included herein. What a very special ceremony to be asked to do.

Also included in this edition is some interesting information on Workplace Health and safety issues. Please heed the advice provided as it could be invaluable to you in your work as a Celebrant.

I would like to extend good wishes to you and yours, as you begin to prepare for this special time of year. A time when we may eat too much, laugh a lot, spend more money than we intend (or should), enjoy catching up with friends (either in person or with Christmas cards) and just generally being involved in all the festive season has to offer.

How amazing we are: we fit all that in and continue to help people as we do our work as Celebrants!

May the year ahead be healthy, happy and prosperous with lots of ceremonies and good times.

Have a good festive season and an even better 2018.

A very special wedding

Contributed by
BRIAN RICHARDSON



Veronica's husband Peter passed away five years ago, just three months after being diagnosed with brain cancer.

They had a five year old daughter and two year old twin boys when their world crashed down around them.

While they had loving and ongoing support from family members, birthdays, anniversaries, special occasions and Christmases just hadn't been the same since Peter left their world.

Eric and Veronica came to see me in October and together we organised for them to be married, but there was a very special request; the wedding ceremony was to take place at Veronica's home on Christmas Eve and the children were to know nothing of it until then.

I arrived at about 8.00pm to be greeted at the door by a precocious seven year old who told me more than once, that he's not allowed to talk to strangers ... so he didn't.

The Christmas tree was decorated with baubles and flashing lights and I was offered a mug of mulled wine by Veronica's parents.

Santa Claus burst through the front door in full regalia, completely unrecognisable to me or the children. When he removed his beard, the children squealed with delight that Eric was actually a teacher from their local primary school. When they were all composed, Eric stood arm-in-arm with Veronica and the ceremony commenced short, but sweet.

The formalities completed, I was escorted to the door by that same precocious seven year old.

"I know he's not my real Dad," he whispered to me, "but this is the best Christmas ever and I know Mum's so happy ... and so am I."

A different Christmas story?

A young couple contacted me in March this year, frantic to marry as soon as possible. I saw them that day and did the paperwork.

They then disappeared from the face of the earth. Emails went unanswered. Phone calls rang out. A letter sent to their home got no response.

They had booked me for a month after the NOIM was signed and paid a deposit. I knew nothing about them other than their ethnicity and a few legal details so I used that to write a ceremony.

I referenced modern wedding customs for people of their culture and inserted a couple of readings.

As I wrote, I wondered if any ceremony would take place.

In April, the night before the ceremony date, they phoned. They were back in Australia and ready for their wedding, which was to take place at their home.

When I got there the next day, I found the house festooned with Christmas tinsel. The Christmas theme was continued inside. A huge tree had twinkling lights. Christmas cards were on the window sills. Christmas decorations hung everywhere. The many guests had brought presents wrapped in Christmas paper.

I'm a bit slow on the uptake, so I just thought it was an unusually themed wedding.

Of course the clue was in one of the gifts: a pram. The bride was pregnant and when they sent the photos home to China it would look as if she had married in December!



Contributed by
LIVIA RUSHWORTH



Christmas Poetry

Contributed by **ELIZABETH MCIVER**

It's not only the talented AFCC members whose contributions are valued in our magazine. AFCC Membership Manager Rhonda McIver, has a very talented Mother-in-law, who kindly penned the following Christmas poems for us to enjoy. Thank you Elizabeth McIver – your contribution is greatly valued and appreciated.



The Coming of Christmas

It's time again for Christmas, of friendships now renewed
Presents, cards to loved ones, so much that you will do.

Shops bedecked with tinsel, trees hung with stars and lights
Santa riding in his sleigh, a little child's delight.

Make this time for memories, pass on a bright new dream
Forget the things that trouble us, life's more than what it seems.

Hold out your hand to someone, be rewarded with a smile
Share your dream for happiness as we walk life's endless miles.

Make the promise that is Christmas a daily dream to hold
Enfold the people whom you love in the oldest story told.

Post Christmas Blues

The aftermath of Christmas is hanging like a pall,
Pervading all our thoughts, it cloyes and clings
Jaded decorations are taken from the tree
Stuffed in crumpled boxes and tied with knotted string.

A shank of ham reposes in a fridge now almost bare
The remnants of the turkey lie at rest
Don't speak of cold meat lunches, it drives one almost mad
Sausages and vegies sound the best!

No one wants to know about the wondrous sights and sounds
That heralded the joy of Christmas Day
Those presents that we carefully chose are marked for
quick exchange
It's hard to please some people anyway!

All the work that had been done to make the yard look good
Seems wasted when you view its battered state
Tangled in the shrubbery are bon-bons' toys and jokes
And the dog is chewing up a paper plate.

A call is made for offers to drive out to the tip
To take away the overflowing bins
The request is met with arguments about the council run
But it doesn't shift the bottles and the tins!

New Year's Eve is mentioned and a mild response is made
But wanes with thoughts that effort is required
It's just too much to think of, someone grunts aloud
Seems everyone around us is so tired.

When it's time to go to work again, most people are relieved
Normal is the word we want to hear
But then a sound assails us, someone calls out loud
'Your turn for Christmas lunch this year!'



AFCC Melbourne Conference 2018

Say it with a Smile 😊

22nd to 24th July, 2018

In Melbourne we do two things really well. Cold weather and food! And we are great at having fun!

So we thought we would combine these and have **“Christmas in July”**

On the first day of Christmas...

A Kris Kringle is being planned.... Surprises for all!

On the second day of Christmas...

The Committee is really pleased to announce we will be having a giving tree so delegates can contribute to Amnesty's prevention of child marriage and child exploitation.

On the third day of Christmas...

The ballroom at the Pullman is amazing - even the ceiling puts on its own light show!

On the fourth day of Christmas...

We have managed to get the talented band “Something Borrowed” to play.

“Something Borrowed” is a fantastic band who specialise in wedding and ceremony music – they play all around Australia. They are so much more than ‘just a wedding band!’ (For a sneak preview <http://sbd duo.com/>)

On the fifth day of Christmas...

As Christmas decorations flood the stores, this is a great time to think about your outfit for the Dinner Dance. Definitely Christmassy, definitely fun and over the top elegance is more than welcome.

There will even be prizes for the most festively dressed!

On the sixth day of Christmas...

There is so much more to come...

But we can't give everything away...

You'll just have to come to the 2018 AFCC National Conference in Melbourne to see, hear and experience for yourself.

We can't wait to see you there on Monday 23rd July, 2018!

BEVERLY AND JANE

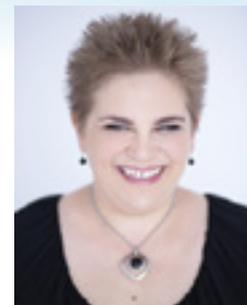
DDOs (Dinner Dance Organisers!)





Workplace Health and Safety legislation and Celebrants' responsibilities

Contributed by **SARAH AIRD**



Extreme weather events are increasing in Australia, from floods to bushfires and from extreme cold to extreme heat. These weather events are not going away and will only get worse.

I was sitting at my desk on a weekend in February (this year), when although I wasn't working, many of you and our other colleagues were and heat records were being smashed all up and down the Eastern Coast.

We all know that as much as we can advise brides and grooms of the importance of having a Plan B and taking care of their guests, often the bride is the one to make the decision as to whether or not to enact the Plan B and she's usually the one who spends the least amount of time standing in the weather.

So I wrote to the Marriage Law and Celebrants' Section of the Attorney General's Department and to the AFCC National Committee, hoping for some guidance and reassurance about our responsibilities and obligations under Workplace Health and Safety legislation. I set out the following information from the Model Work Health and Safety Act:

Division 2: Primary duty of care

1. A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of:
 - a. workers engaged, or caused to be engaged by the person; and
 - b. workers whose activities in carrying out work, are influenced or directed by the person, while the workers are at work in the business or undertaking.
2. A person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of **other persons** is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking [emphasis added].
3. A self-employed person must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, his or her own health and safety while at work. **Note:** A self-employed person is also a person conducting a business or undertaking for the purposes of this section.

Division 5: Offences and penalties

A person commits a Category 2 offence if:

- a. the person has a health and safety duty; and
- b. the person fails to comply with that duty; and
- c. the failure exposes an individual to a risk of death or serious injury or illness.

Maximum penalty:

In the case of an offence committed by an individual as a person conducting a business or undertaking or as an officer of a person conducting a business or undertaking—\$300,000

A person commits a Category 3 offence if:

- a. the person has a health and safety duty; and
- b. the person fails to comply with that duty.

Maximum penalty:

In the case of an offence committed by an individual as a person conducting a business or undertaking or as an officer of a person conducting a business or undertaking—\$100,000.

I noted my concern that these clauses could leave Celebrants, as "a person conducting a business", open to prosecution under WHS legislation if, for example, a wedding ceremony is held outside on a beach due to insistence by the couple, the temperature is in excess of 35 degrees and a guest becomes ill or dies from a heat-related illness.

I posed the following questions:

- Would Celebrants be liable in a case such as that outlined above, if we did not insist on moving the ceremony under our duty of care?
- Would Celebrants be within our rights to refuse to perform a ceremony under such extreme weather conditions?
- If a Celebrant did refuse to conduct a ceremony under such circumstances and a complaint was made by the couple to the MLCS, would the Celebrant be disciplined?

The response from MLCS was comforting. They stated:

Commonwealth-registered Marriage Celebrants must fulfil a range of legal obligations, including complying with the Code of Practice for Marriage Celebrants.

When conducting a marriage in extreme weather conditions, Celebrants should always put safety first. Celebrants could discuss a contingency plan with the couple and listen to local authorities in the event that a natural disaster or extreme weather conditions may risk the wedding and guests.

Celebrants have every right to refuse to put the safety of themselves, the bridal party and guests at risk. The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants will always support a Celebrant who has made a common sense decision with regard to safety and the suggestion of alternatives.

The department encourages all Commonwealth-registered Marriage Celebrants to ensure they maintain current professional indemnity insurance.

I posed similar questions to the AFCC National Committee, also asking them to consider seeking legal advice on these issues. Rhonda McIver was good enough to contact the Work Health and Safety Helpline and managed to speak to a helpful representative. He confirmed that Celebrants do NOT need any kind of workplace health and safety registration or insurance (such as WorkCover in Victoria), because Celebrants do not employ staff.

However, he noted Celebrants should have a duty of care to themselves and others in the vicinity of their work and that it is within the Celebrants' rights to refuse to conduct any ceremony where the Celebrant feels any risk for those involved.

Based on her discussions with WorkSafe ACT and the response I received from MLCS, the National Committee's responses to my specific questions were as follows:

What are our responsibilities as Celebrants under WHS legislation?

The Celebrant in charge of the ceremony is responsible for the duty of care to ensure the health and safety of the wedding party and guests. Example of measures for this risk is to check the weather report; suggest drinking water be provided when ceremonies are held outdoors with extreme temperatures forecast; ensure some form of adequate shade (secured gazebo/umbrellas); suggest another location.

Would Celebrants be liable in a case such as that outlined above, if we did not insist on moving the ceremony under our duty of care?

The Celebrant should eliminate any risk/s as reasonably practicable such as the likelihood of any hazards. If extreme temperatures exist then above suggestions should apply.

Would Celebrants be within their rights to refuse to perform a ceremony under such extreme weather conditions?

Yes. Celebrants would be within their rights to refuse performing the ceremony if extreme weather is a risk to the people attending, including the Celebrant. This should be stated in the Agreement between the Celebrant and the couple.

If a Celebrant did refuse to conduct a ceremony under such circumstances and a complaint was made by the couple to the MLCS, would the Celebrant be disciplined?

As stated by MLCS, "The Registrar of Marriage Celebrants will always support a Celebrant who has made a common sense decision with regard to safety and the suggestion of alternatives".

Even with all of this information and reassurance, I'm not sure if I would be brave enough to insist on moving a ceremony if I thought the conditions were dangerous. That's why it's so incredibly important that we talk to our couples BEFORE these situations arise, educate them about the dangers of extreme weather for their guests and try to come to a prior agreement about how such a situation would be managed; it's very difficult to do this on an already stressful day. We have every right to look after ourselves and a duty of care to those around us. So hopefully this information provides everyone with some leverage if it's ever needed!

I've had many, many conversations with Celebrants who do not believe we have a duty of care and do not believe that Celebrants could be liable for anything that happens to a couple, bridal party, or guest at a wedding.

"It's the venue's responsibility", "it's the couple's responsibility", anyone but us. I'm not convinced that's how an unhappy couple would see it if something went wrong and they were looking for someone to blame and I think it's worth being aware of our obligations and responsibilities under all possible legislation that relates to our work.

[Editor's note: Thank you Sarah for taking the time to present this information to AFCC members.]

Beach Weddings

Contributed by **LOU SZYMKOW**



What to be aware of if holding Beach Weddings – for Celebrants and couples

- 1) Pick the right beach and location – on or near the beach to make your beach wedding just as romantic and idyllic as you've ever dreamed of by planning it right. Despite the wind and sand, the ocean is nature at her very best and lends to the most magical backdrop,
- 2) Make sure a permit is obtained for the site, noting permissible guest numbers, any sound restrictions and time period where applicable and comply with the restrictions spelled out in the permit.
 - a. Arrange permit/s (re clean-up requirements, restrictions around use of umbrellas, chairs, flags, marquees, signs or arbours, licences for alcohol and/or catering and use of toilet facilities etc.).
 - b. For example, on the Gold Coast no mats, walkways, arbours etc are permitted and there is a one hour time limit including set up, ceremony and take down/ pack up.
- 3) Transport – consider the distance and ease of access to the ceremony site. Can your guests all get there?
- 4) An area on an esplanade, or on flat sand/grass/boardwalk is best, but avoid wet sand areas.
- 5) A spot with beach views removes some of the hazards and makes for nice photos,
- 6) A shaded area such as sails, a gazebo, or a natural cover will offer wind protection and reduce glare.
- 7) Check if you will have to share the use of the area (public) or is an exclusive site available.
- 8) You cannot stop the public from joining in so watch out for beach cricket, footy games and riders bursting through the middle of any guests.
- 9) Plodding through sand, can be laborious.
- 10) Be prepared to tolerate jet ski, party and wave sounds.
- 11) Watch out for seagulls, biting bugs, wind and water and light reflecting from sand and sea.
- 12) Avoid high heels.
- 13) Use insect repellent, sunscreen and umbrellas and have bottles of water available for guests.
- 14) Have lots of weights and clips on hand to hold down paperwork, table clothes, umbrellas etc.
- 15) Sand can play havoc with sound equipment, so it needs to be protectively covered, including during transport across sand.
- 16) Deeper voices can carry better over the sound of waves crashing.
- 17) Always have a Plan B as weather can be unpredictable.
- 18) Always set-up above the high tide point and NEVER on wet sand or you will meet the waves.
- 19) Wear suitable beach footwear or go barefoot.
- 20) Watch out for wind and sand blasting.
- 21) Waves sound can inhibit the ability to hear what is going on.
- 22) If there is seating, lay a platform to prevent chairs sinking into the sand and throwing guests over.
- 23) Having a basket of thongs or slippers can be useful for the comfort of guests.
- 24) Mornings usually have less wind, glare and more stable/pleasant weather.
- 25) Consider having the signing table off the beach, or undercover eg a nearby cabin veranda.
- 26) Be prepared with lots of clips for your ceremony script.
- 27) Have a Plan B.
- 28) Check wind direction for interference with the microphone and sound.
- 29) The couple, guests and Celebrant should not be looking into the sun, as scrunched faces ruin photos and can create glare headaches. Also, the Celebrant may not be able to read the script.
- 30) If the bride is wearing a veil, how will it be managed if there is a breeze. Avoid long veils.
- 31) Getting down onto the beach and back again, can be a challenge.
- 32) Elderly and disabled guests may not be able to access the beach.
- 33) Be aware of the possibility of nasties lurking in the sand.
- 34) Avoid extreme reflections from sun.
- 35) On the west coast, watch out for the “Fremantle Doctor”!
- 36) Where allowed, a large sheet of Perspex, matting or boarding can be buried just under the surface of the sand to provide stability for the bridal party, seats, tripods, sound equipment, signing table etc.
- 37) Be on time. The tide and sun wait for no one. You could be washed out or the temperature can drop to very cold.
- 38) Look for a sheltered area, but not too close to the rocks where there will be extra wave sounds.
- 39) Sand gets in everywhere and can burn.
- 40) A pull along cart that can be used on sand will help with the setup.
- 41) Wear a hat and lots of sunscreen.
- 42) The exchange of rings should be on top of a mat in case the ring gets dropped and if the mat slopes inward to centre, it will be easier to quickly recover the ring without it rolling off the mat.
- 43) Check the tide beforehand.
- 44) Check with the photographer about lighting, etc.
- 45) All microphones should have a wind sock.
- 46) Have a rehearsal the day before at the same time to check where tide, sound, sun, interruptions, etc.
- 47) Use grey paper as it reduces the glare compared to white paper.
- 48) Arrange for an usher, guide or escort to guide and assists guests.
- 49) Check the pathway to the site to avoid rocky areas, or difficult dunes.
- 50) Provide your guests with a simple map if the location is secluded or not directly in front of a landmark.
- 51) Ensure that your chosen music is amplified and doesn't require mains power.
- 52) It also needs to be powerful enough to be audible above shouts from other beach goers, jet skis and high winds.
- 53) All floral arrangements, greenery or sprays should be low-line and be pegged, securely tied or have weights or stones in the vase or base so as not to come loose as the beach breeze picks up.
- 54) Adapt your clothing style to the surroundings, so be as comfortable as possible.
- 55) Have a Plan B.
- 56) Guests may arrive 20-30 minutes before the bride, remain for the ceremony itself and then stay for photos afterwards, so offer seating if possible.
- 57) Offer favours such as sunscreen, thongs, fans, bottled water, ice creams and insect repellent.
- 58) And did I mention always have a Plan B : In the event of excessive heat, wind or rain, you will need to have an alternate/indoor venue and someone to direct guests.

The Three Trees

Contributed by **MICHAEL DILLON**



They stood tall and proud in the forest where the light shone green
And each by his own was driven, to fulfil their utmost dream
They lived by these ideals and never had any kind of doubt
That by visualising their goal, it would surely come about.

The first saw himself as a wooden chest, with the strength for all to hold
But in his heart he believed, he would be full of jewels and gold
So his single wish took all of his mind and gave him pleasure
He would hold in this box, the world's greatest treasure.

The second wanted to be a ship and to sail across the seas
To drift in the wind and to caress the sweet breeze
His single thought filled his mind that made him want to sing
His purpose in life was to carry a king.

The third wanted to be a symbol for the whole world to know
To point straight towards heaven and to continue to grow
His one and only goal he stuck to, time after time
When people think of heaven, they would see him as a sign.

Along came three lumberjacks with axes, swinging in a cruel frown
And measured up the three trees to bring them all down
Without any real sense of purpose and not needing any excuse
They cut down the trees and put them all to use.

The first became a feedbox, to hold grain and hay
The second became a small boat, to show fishermen the way
The third became 2 posts after the axes cruel division
But still the three of them never lost their vision.

Some months later the box was cleaned out, when the night was mild
A star in the east brought the men, to witness the birth of a child
When the baby was placed in the box, its vision unfurled
The first tree knew he held, the greatest treasure in the world

Some years later the boat was out on a lake, amidst a wild storm
He felt for the fishermen on board and knew his hull was worn
But one man stood up and spoke to the storm and said "Peace"
He knew he had a king onboard, and his quest could now cease.

Later again the third was selected as the posts began to grow moss
And were tied together to form the shape of a blessed cross
He supported the King as all saw his blood flow like pure red wine
When he rose three days later, he knew he would always be that sign.

They never lost their vision; they dealt in end products with no doubt
And let life carry their dreams forward and allowed life to bring it about.



Christmas Memorial Service

An AFCC member was asked to conduct a special service last Christmas in memory of loved ones who had passed and has provided the service in case other Celebrants are asked to do a similar service in the future.

Entry Music: *Miss You Most at Christmas Time* – Mariah Carey
Welcome: Funeral Director of chapel and invitation to supper
Introduction/commence service: Celebrant

Good evening everyone, my name is ABC and I am a Civil Celebrant.

On behalf of the team here at XYZ Funerals, I would like to welcome you all to our Christmas Memorial service.

Although you may be feeling anxious about attending this service tonight, having gone through the pain of losing someone special this year, we hope that coming together to acknowledge the life of your loved one will help you to feel that you are not alone.

We hope tonight provides you with a safe space to feel whatever you are feeling, with Christmas approaching this year, without your special person.

So before we go too much further, I would like to invite you to take a few moments of quiet reflection. To try to turn off from the hectic nature of life outside these doors and to focus on you, your loved ones and your family.

You may like to close your eyes and listen to the words of this song by Westlife. If it makes you teary, that's okay – if it makes you smile – that's okay too.

*They say there is a reason, they say that time will heal,
But neither time nor reason will change the way you feel.
For no-one knows the heartache, that lies behind your smiles,
No-one knows how many times, you have broken down and cried.*

I am sure there have been many times that you have broken down and cried since the loss of your loved one. We know it will be more difficult this year to celebrate Christmas knowing that someone very special is missing from the table.

Usually this time of year brings joy and you look forward to spending time with your family and friends. However, as the “spirit of Christmas” approaches this year, it simply reminds you of your loss and you anticipate the pain you will feel in your heart, long before the day itself.

As Christmas Day draws nearer, you may find yourself feeling increasingly anxious.

Grief can feel isolating at the best of times, let alone when everyone else seems to be so happy and looking forward to Christmas with their families.

Grief, I've learned, is really just love. It's all the love you want to give, but cannot. All of that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat and in that hollow part of your chest.

Grief is just love with no place to go.

Some of you in the room tonight, have already endured the pain of some first “anniversaries”, throughout this year. For others, your loss has been more recent.

Some of you may be reflecting on a long and full life with love and acceptance. Others may be feeling crushed, numb, disconnected.

You are all, no doubt, at different stages of your grief. As you struggle to rebuild your lives, reach out to one another. You share joy as well as pain. You share peace of mind as well as anger. You share faith as well as doubt. Most importantly, you will help one another to grow, as well as grieve.

You have the right to experience your own unique grief. You have the right to talk about your grief.

Please remember that you are not alone.

We hope that as you look around tonight, you will see that you are not alone and that you will feel supported in this “safe space”, that whatever you are feeling is OK.

Maybe it was your loved one who cooked the Christmas meal, sent the Christmas cards, or decorated the home.

With support from your family and friends, you will enter into this festive season knowing that your departed would have wanted you to continue with the things that you enjoyed together.

As you prepare for your Christmas celebrations and purchase gifts for those you love, take comfort in the knowledge that the greatest gift you can give or receive, is love. Even though you won't be buying a present for your loved one this year – you still give them your love.

Love does not end with death – you know this better than anyone. When life is no longer there, we have the ability to fill that space with our memories. The memory of your loved one will always remain with you. They may no longer be here with us, but the love and relationship that you and they nurtured together can never be denied or forgotten- death cannot really take them from you.

We cannot turn back the clock, but we can go forward in the knowledge and comfort that those we love remain with us. Love and cherished memories, live on in your heart forever.

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal.

So before we go too much further, I would like to invite you to take a few moments of quiet reflection. You may like to close your eyes and listen to the words of this song by Mariah Carey. Again, if it makes you teary, that's okay – if it made you smile – that's okay too.

Quiet Reflection time:

Music: Miss you Most at Christmas by Mariah Carey

So we have put life outside on hold for a few moments, we've tried to switch off our minds and focus on 'Just us' and I hope that you are now feeling up to honouring each of your loves ones.

We are going to play a lovely pictorial presentation, while your Christmas messages will be read out by xxxxxxx.

Pictorial Tribute

Photograph presentation will play and show each person's photo with their name while the reader will read deceased name and family message.

Music softly : Traditional Instrumental Christmas Song

Candle Lighting

Music: Now you belong to heaven, lyrics – Mari Olsen

We now invite you to come forward and light a candle in memory of the cherished person that you are here to remember and honour tonight. As the candles are lit, you may wish to consider this short verse:

Those we have loved and lost, are not apart from us, but a part of us. And their flame, although extinguished, burns on brightly in the hearts of those who knew and loved them.

Candle reflection time:

We are now going to have a short time for reflection. While the music is playing each of you will have an opportunity for your own personal thoughts. This can be a time of silent prayer, or simply a time to think about the joys of your relationship with your loved one.

Lights are dimmed and music commences

Music: I'll See You Again – Westlife

Words of comfort/suggestions for how to commemorate your loved one at Christmas.

The following suggestions may help you face this Christmas without your loved one.

1. Light a candle on Christmas morning and place it in front of a photo of your departed loved one.
2. Visit the cemetery or the final resting place of your loved one.
3. Donate a gift to a charity on behalf of your loved one.
4. Say a few words about your departed loved one as you sit down with family and friends for your Christmas meal together.
5. Write a letter to your loved one.

Please, we encourage you to be open and honest with those closest to you, about how you're feeling. Don't feel isolated in your pain – reach out and allow others to help and support you.

Conclusion:

We have remembered special people this evening. People you hold safe and warm in your hearts.

As we close our ceremony, reach out to one another with understanding and hope.

Those we loved, who have died, unite us. Your pain becomes my pain. Your joy becomes my joy. Your hope is my hope.

I would like to close with the following verse called:

Missing you at Christmas

Every day without you, since you had to go
Is like summer without sunshine and winter without snow.
I wish that I could talk to you, there's so much more that I would say
Life has changed so very much, since you went away.

I miss the bond between us and I miss your kind support
You're in my mind and in my heart and every Christmas thought.
I'll always feel you close to me and though you're far from sight
I'll search for you among the stars that shine on Christmas night.

May peace be your gift at Christmas and we wish you many blessings throughout the year.

Exit Music: What a Wonderful World

*Music Background: Give Love On Christmas Day
– Sarah Geronimo and Michael Buble Christmas Album*



Married and Mentored by Mum!

Contributed by **CLAIRE PARSONS**.
Photo Credit to Alex Kwong Photography

A penchant for statement glasses and bold lipstick isn't the only thing my Mum and I have in common – we're both Celebrants!

My Mum Diana, had always wanted to be a Celebrant and after a career in business and as a university lecturer, she pursued her interest. A professional writer, accomplished public speaker, diligent organiser and all-round creative: she was destined to be a Celebrant!

I was not even engaged when Mum embarked on this journey, but her official registration came through just in time to marry me! Being married by my own Mum just made the day even more special.

I often joke with friends that the ceremony was so magical that I'd get divorced just so we could do it again!

Mum went on to marry many of my friends, so I was able to see her in action. I was really moved by seeing her in her element. That sparked a fire in me and made me want to do it too.

Following the birth of my daughter Evie, I began my own celebrancy journey.

Now that I have been registered for two months, Mum is my Glinda the Good Witch, to my Dorothy Gale.



I am so fortunate to have Mum as my sounding board and mentor. It has definitely eased my novice nerves and we both provide each other with fresh perspectives. My mum is such a fantastic Celebrant that for now I'm content with being the second best Celebrant in the family.

Claire Parsons is based in Adelaide and her Mum, Dr Diana Carroll, now lives in Sydney, although she still does weddings in Adelaide and loves being a two-city Celebrant.

They are both proud members of the AFCC.

Reunited in Love Forever

Contributed by **RHONDA MCIVER**

Pictured right: 93 year old bride, Sylvia and her groom 88 year old Frank, married on 25 July 2017, with their Celebrant.

Sylvia and Frank met 20 years ago on Russell Island Queensland when Sylvia attended a choir session and noticed Frank. She asked him home for dinner and their love story began.

Recently, in Dodges Ferry, Tasmania where Sylvia and Frank lived together, Sylvia had a bad fall hitting her head and therefore loss of memory. Sylvia did not recognise Frank and to her he was a stranger and she wanted him gone! Devastated, Frank moved to Melbourne and Sylvia's son moved her to a nursing home in Canberra.

Not long after her move to Canberra, Sylvia's memory returned and she pined for her Frank to be back with her, but it took some four months and many love letters from Sylvia before Frank could join her again.

The Manager of the nursing home located Frank and arranged for him to be with Sylvia in the Canberra nursing home.

Frank wanted to be married and never to be separated again, but convincing Sylvia was another thing until she learned that she could keep the name of her first love and husband who passed away many years before Frank and Sylvia met.

So a wedding was planned.

The nursing home turned on the event of the year and Sylvia and Frank were married on the pontoon overlooking the pond with family and the whole nursing home involved.

I was honoured to be officiating for this loved up couple and I reckon they could show the younger brides and grooms how it is done!!



Update on the wedding story above from the Celebrant Rhonda McIver....

I recently received the sad news that the bride, Sylvia, had a serious fall which caused a brain bleed and sadly on 9th October she passed away.

Frank, her beautiful husband asked the family to contact me to officiate at the funeral to celebrate Sylvia's life. Although I had only presided at an interment of ashes at a graveside, I felt I needed to do this for Frank and for Sylvia. I was very fortunate to work alongside a Funeral Director who was professional, welcoming, relaxed and had confidence in me as a Celebrant to be able to perform this request from the family without any previous experience for a funeral.

I was supported by AFCC members, particularly Irene Harrington and two lovely local ACT Celebrants, Ruth Sadlo and Lisa Teasdale who have experienced many such ceremonies, as well as the AFCC Funeral Resources Guide.

The funeral was held in the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion, which for those of you outside of Canberra, is in the Arboretum and overlooks a splendid view of our city.

I was given the pleasure of speaking for most of the ceremony with a great granddaughter also telling her story on behalf of Sylvia's great grandchildren and it was truly an amazing experience, one for me that I will always be grateful: for the opportunity, but also the chance to say goodbye to someone who I felt I knew so well even though we only met by chance for a very happy, but short time of her long life.



Never Validly Married

Contributed by **DAVID SCHNEIDER**



David Schneider put a post about a wedding on Facebook and for everyone's interest, it has been reproduced here.

Just a few years ago, an unusual thing happened to me with regards to the legal work for a wedding. I hope my comments help many Celebrants understand what the conjugal status "Never Validly Married" means.

I had a bride ring me and ask my role as a Celebrant. So I opened my diary to check my availability and then she said she was already married so I assumed it was a referral of a friend of hers maybe.

She said she wants to be married AGAIN as her marriage seven months before was not done legally.

The Celebrant did not say the Monitum properly and totally skipped the vows, (that they wrote themselves, which is how she knew something was wrong).

She felt she wasn't legally married.

I asked if she had her official certificate from BDM (Vic) and she did as well as her ceremonial one.

I explained that the AG and BDM, whilst understanding that the marriage wasn't conducted properly, would consider she was definitely married.

Unfortunately she had six months of counselling because of the stress of not being married correctly and so she engaged the services of a lawyer and started the process of having another legal wedding.

I went to BDM and the AG and they all said, "tell her she is married", they did not want to go down the path of re-doing a wedding.

However, the bride stood her ground.

So what happened is that a new NOIM had to be completed, giving the one month's notice of course and in conjugal status, it is "never validly married".

I finally understood the ramifications of that terminology.

Then the Declaration of No Legal Impediment to Marriage and the new Marriage Certificate was completed etc, just like a normal wedding and a comment then went on the paperwork to BDM. This is because they have to remove the original marriage as though it never existed.

This all took months and many hours to do. I charged an hourly rate and not a fixed ceremony fee all because the original Celebrant rushed through. I understand she told the bride when it all came out into the open that she had to get to her next wedding, which is why she rushed things a bit.

Appalling!!

I just thought this might be a good "case study for why the phrase "never validly married" is there.



Reading for a farm wedding

Contributed by
CANDICE BYDDER

I've had a number of farming couples coming to Perth to marry in the past month or so. One of them inspired me to put pen to paper for a custom reading at their wedding:

Love is a lot like a farm. It's more than just throwing a bunch of seeds in the ground and hoping for the best.

Nurture it and it will be rich and abundant. Neglect it and it will become troublesome and wild.

Sure, there are factors you can't control – storms, conflict and breakdown. But floods will always subside, droughts will break and fences can be mended.

As for the rest, with patience, support and dedication, almost any challenge can be overcome.

Above all, remember that love is hard "yakka" and with time, you'll know every hill and valley in your relationship.

When you get there, it's the sweetest and most satisfying harvest of all.



Exciting News! AFCC Ceremony Folders



Contributed by AFCC Marketing Manager,
JULIE CHESSON

Some very exciting news for AFCC members. Currently in production are the AFCC Ceremony Folders.

These are similar to the Certificate Folders launched this year. The folders come in A4 or A5 sizes, with 20 strong plastic pages to hold your service notes. They are also in the same colours as the Certificate Folders – burgundy (which matches your Marriage Register if you still use that) and ivory.

Costs, including postage are \$80 for A4 folders and \$70 for A5 folders.

As they are still in production, no launch date has been set, but they will hopefully be available before Christmas (what a GREAT Christmas gift for the Celebrant who has everything!!!)



Another Christmas Poem

This poem has been featured in *Celebrations* before, but with lots of new members since the last time, it's getting another run. Nancy Batenburg provided this poem back in December 2011.

T'was the night before Christmas

– with apologies to Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863)

T'was the night before Christmas and all through the house
Heaps of creatures were stirring, not least was the mouse
The stockings were hung, by the open window with care
In hopes that St, Nicholas soon would be there.

My children were nestled, all snug in their beds
But I was up late, no words in my head.

My husband was snoring, after a late nightcap
But I sat with computer, no thoughts of a nap.

The couple were marrying, late on Boxing Day
And I, as their Celebrant, had no words to say.
They wanted hand-fasting, unity candles and sand
Readings and poems and a heavy metal band.

They had ring bearers, pages and nine bridesmaids
Taffeta, tulle, lace and brocade.

Caterers, orchestra, videos and Skype
Even a pergola and me, wired up to a mike!

My head was hurting, from trying to fit it all in
When out on the lawn, there arose a great din.
I sprang from my seat and flew like a bird
Tore open the window, to check what I heard.

The moon gave no clue, in the still dark night
But the scene became clear in the security light.
When what to my wondering eyes should appear
Was a huge, hulking sleigh and eight big reindeer.

My husband had drunk, but I not a drop
So this scene before me, was surely a prop.
By some well meaning friends, planting a find
Or my dearly beloved, a kind gesture in mind.

But there sprang from the sleigh, a driver dressed in red
He was in singlet and shorts, with a hat on his head.
A bundle of wedding things peeked from his back
And he looked like a book-seller, opening his pack.

His eyes, how they twinkled and his dimples how merry
His cheeks were like roses and his nose like a cherry.
He looked at me and I looked at him
What on earth was he doing, this backyard crim?

I thought he was a tramp, camped in my yard
And opened my mouth to shout long and hard
"I could call the reindeer and name them by name"
He offered as excuse, but it sounded quite lame.

I've seriously come, to help you by dawn,
To gift you the words, this isn't a con.

I knew in a flash, he was just what was needed
To make sense of it all, his advice I heeded.

Who knew that St. Nick was a Celebrant disguised?
Of course – Christmas is ceremony, I then realised.
Words dashed and they darted and we created a storm
And put all of the ideas into some sort of form.

By morning, my ceremony was almost complete
St. Nick and I sat quietly, fully replete.
I thanked him for his help, but suddenly afraid
That his Christmas journey, had not been made.

Oh my, oh dear, could I be the reason
Christmas is cancelled, the end of the season?
My distress quite clear, in a flash of insight
How selfish was I, working Santa all night.

"Don't worry about that" he said with a smile
The magic of Christmas is recorded on file.
"With a snap of my fingers and a crack of the whip
All presents are delivered, in less than a snip."

"But you, dear Celebrant, all through the year
Spread the cheer of Christmas to all that can hear.
You share in the joy and their sorrows as well
And cast magic before you and watch it swell.

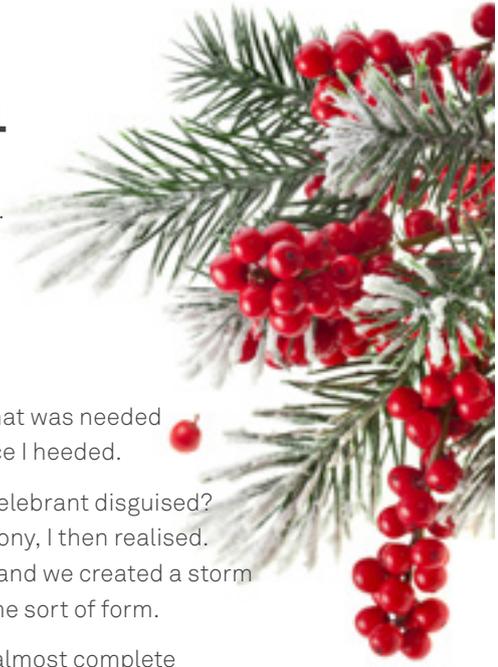
My real gift in life is to help you create
Put wishes inside every good person's fate."
He stacked up his books, put a bow on the top.
"These are a gift to you, so the good words don't stop,"

He tipped his head and gave me a wink
"I'll see you next Christmas – I'll come in a blink."
He hopped back in his sleigh, called reindeer by name
Just as the words of the poem, exactly the same.

"Now Dasher! Now Dancer! Now Prancer and Vixen!
On Comet! On Cupid! On Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch to the top of the wall
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all."

He sprang to this sleigh, to his team gave a whistle
And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle.
I heard him exclaim, as he flew with his deer
"To Celebrants all, I wish you great cheer!"

May the gift of your words light someone's life
And the New Year be a celebration of life."
And I heard them exclaim, 'ere he drove out of sight
"Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night."



The Last Quiz



We had a record number of entries for the Quiz in the last edition. Thank you to all who entered. However, Shauna Rowe is the winner of the last magazine quiz and has received an AFCC “Wedding Resources Guide”.

1. What is the name of our Insurance Broker? **David Federici, Focus Insurance Brokers**
2. Who is the AFCC Membership Manager? **Rhonda McIver**
3. Who are the two Facebook Co-moderators? **Tracey Matthies and Lou Szymkow**
4. What is the date for the next conference in Melbourne?
22nd to 24th July, 2018
5. What date was the Commonwealth Coat of Arms assigned to the Commonwealth of Australia by Royal Warrant?
19th September 1912
6. Who told us about “What is Dying”?
Leanne Meldrum
7. Who was the “Mistress of Ceremonies” at the WA Networking event with a difference? **Janet Prance**
8. What did Jo-anne Barnes write about?
2017 National Conference – her first National Conference
9. Who is the Moderator of the AFCC Chat Forum? **Brian Richardson**
10. How do you join the AFCC Chat Forum and who is the Moderator?
Login with your User Name and Password and click on AFCC Forum on the top menu bar. Brian Richardson

This Edition’s Quiz

We have one more copy of the new *AFCC Wedding Resources Guide* to give away to the winner of this edition’s quiz.

If you don’t win, this great publication can be purchased from the AFCC website for \$25 – **WHAT A GREAT CHRISTMAS PRESENT** idea!!!

The lucky winner will be announced in the first edition for 2018. Will it be your name?????

Entries should be sent to celebrations@afcc.com.au.

As always, current members of the National Committee are ineligible to enter.

Entries will be accepted between 1st and 10th December, 2017.

1. Who was reunited in love forever?
2. What are the names of Santa’s reindeers?
3. Who was the octogenarian guest poetry contributor?
4. Who was mentored and married by mum?
5. Who wrote “The Three Trees”
6. Who wrote about “A Very Special Wedding” and what were the names of the Bride and Groom?
7. Who explained what “never validly married” means?
8. What is the deadline for the next edition of *Celebrations*?
9. What is the date and theme for the Gala Dinner at next year’s AFCC National Conference?
10. What was suggested may help people face Christmas without their loved one if you were presenting a special Christmas Memorial Service?

Next edition of *Celebrations*

Do you have a great idea, a story about the AFCC, a reading you'd like to share or your thoughts on any topic Celebrant!

Please send photos if you can as well. The next edition of *Celebrations* has a deadline of 20th January, 2018. Please send any articles and photos to celebrations@afcc.com.au.



Help!

AFCC members who have enquiries, can request help by contacting the AFCC Helpdesk at: helpdesk@afcc.com.au.

Members requiring assistance about such things as website access, membership, payment problems, resources or any other concerns/questions, will have their queries directed to the relevant portfolio manager, who will respond as soon as possible.

Please remember though, we are all volunteers and undertake to answer queries as quickly as we can, at our earliest possible convenience.

AFCC Chat Forum

Did you know the AFCC has its very own chat forum located within the new AFCC Website?

The original AFCC Forum was closed due to Yahoo changes, however, your National Committee decided it was an important function so it should be included as part of the new website.

The AFCC Forum is another way we as members can interact, network, ask questions and share ideas. It is accessible by logging into the [AFCC website](#) using your individual login, then clicking on '**AFCC Forum**' found on the far right of the red menu bar.

To join existing discussions, click on the chosen topic and join the conversation.

If you would like to create a new topic, simply scroll to the bottom of the forum page and add your topic.

We encourage all members to read the *AFCC Chat Forum Rules* found at the top of the page. The page is moderated by National Committee member Brian Richardson.

If you have any questions, please email Brian via forum@afcc.com.au.

AFCC New Members

We are delighted to welcome 63 new members who have joined since 9th September, 2017. In welcoming you all, we encourage you to utilise all the benefits available, especially our new website with its mini website for you to promote your business, which will allow you to make the most of your membership. Don't forget, any queries can be sent to helpdesk@afcc.com.au.

Amelia	Haddock	Wright	ACT
Darren	Roberts	Scullin	ACT
Narelle	Blackadder	Nelson Bay	NSW
Allicia	Blyth	Ballina	NSW
Kate	Darnell	Cooperook	NSW
Anne Maree	Durnan	Penrith	NSW
Jay	Gibson	East Lismore	NSW
Kipley	Harris	Port Macquarie	NSW
Franziska	Jackson	Regentville	NSW
Jacqueline	Majer	Bronte	NSW
Brian	McGinn	Lake Illawarra	NSW
Leanne	Mcnamara	Jannali	NSW
Catherine	Potter	Broulee	NSW
Joanne	Novich	Kangaroo Valley	NSW
Nicola	Ross-Adams	Erina	NSW
Natalie	Shillington	Waverton	NSW
Cecilia	Tsai	Woollahra	NSW
Lisa	Wu	Arncliffe	NSW
Leigh	Boustead	Chapel Hill	QLD
Kerrie-Anne	Crane	Amiens	QLD
Brooke	Cramp	Brisbane	QLD
Christine	Cuthbertson	Petrie	QLD
Sean	Fernance	New Farm	QLD
Emily	Hall	Bongaree	QLD
Debra	Hunter	George Street	QLD
Chris	Kettle	Innes Park	QLD
Diane	Smith	Ascot	QLD
Anna	Staines	Wamuran	QLD
Bronwyn	Coulter	Adelaide	SA
Christina	Fowler	Panorama	SA
Robyn	Irving	Lewiston	SA
Rosie	Johnson	Grange	SA
Karen	Leuders	Seaford	SA
Philomena	McMahon	Reynella	SA
Deb	Petch	Loxton	SA
Deborah	Salt	Port Noarlunga	SA

Martin	Samson	Bridgewater	SA
Lyn	Wilksch	Barmera	SA
Eboni	Bennett	Montrose	VIC
Carol	Berry	Clifton Springs	VIC
Janette	Ellis	Blairgowrie	VIC
Janet	Ferguson	Warrnambool	VIC
Lauren	Goodman	Patterson Lakes	VIC
John	Harmon	Waurm Ponds	VIC
Dianne	Hutchins	Warrnambool	VIC
Alysha	Jackson	Greensborough	VIC
Patricia	Jamieson	Newhaven	VIC
Andrea	Kneebone	Knoxfield	VIC
Hugh	Koch	Hamilton	VIC
Jeanette	Koch	Eltham North	VIC
Emma	Newnham	Clifton Hill	VIC
Janine	Stephens	Pyalong	VIC
Rosemary	Taylor	White Hills	VIC
Adam	Townsend	Traralgon	VIC
Deborah	Watson	Wonthaggi	VIC
Mirielle	Wescott	Warburton	VIC
Jen	Weston	Wattle Glen	VIC
Marianna	Willis	Essendon	VIC
Suzanne	Balding	Bull Creek	WA
Angela	Burchardt	Westminster	WA
Denise	Sanders	West Busselton	WA
Carly	Tornatora	Yokine	WA
Nola	Walter	Mount Lawley	WA
Jodi	Bavin	Padbury	WA
Jenny	Windsor	Perth	WA
Gillian	Oats	Beechboro	WA
Leanne	Mifflin	Wembley Downs	WA
Karen	Kilner	Mandurah	WA
Bronia	Ramsay	Collingwood Park Albany	WA
Christine	McGuire	Waikiki	WA
Annie	Halse Smith	Kingsley	WA